

THE PROPER BOSKONIAN

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Correspondence may be addressed to the club

NESFA
BOX G MIT STATION
Cambridge, Mass. 02139

or to the editor
Sheila Glover D'Amassa
19 Angell Drive
East Providence, RI 02914

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Covers: Marilyn Hawkes

Interior artwork: Roseanne Zaino p. 2 Mike Symes p. 13

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SOME SORT OF EDITORIAL

Some of you have suggested in your letters that I express more of my personality in the pages of PB. Well, I take that very kindly of you, but I don't think I will. PB is not my fanzine, really; it's NESFA's fanzine, your fanzine. I see my role as editor to make PB expressive of the club personality, or at least of those members who are interested in writing for and to a fanzine. I'm working on my own fanzine, one that will reflect my interests and persona; here I'm more interested in yours.

My theory that a more frequent PB would get more of you interested in contributing articles and writing letters and commenting on and discussing and otherwise interacting with the fanzine seems to be working. There were more letters than I had room for, always a gratifying circumstance. Melissa Dowd has promised me an article for the may issue; so has John Spert. Mark Keller will be back with more fringe SF, and Mike Blake, despite the tale of woe recounted in this issue, will continue reviewing and recommending other fanzines to you.

This time around we have the conclusion to ATTACK FROM THE THIRD DIMENSION, and The Return of David Stever to Real Fanac, as the editor emeritus of PB shares with us some Secret Ways to prevent oneself from drowning in New Wave, Old Wave, any wave books. As co-owner of 16,000 books, I can assure you that, after ten thousand, nothing works.

As always, I need letters, egoboo, artwork, articles, reviews, letters, and egoboo. If you have an opinion about something science fictional or fannish, share it with the rest of us.

And As always, Don D'Ammassa is thanked for his typing and general helpfulness.



FANHISTORICA

I knew this job had its risks when I took it, but I never expected one of them to be getting bludgeoned with an unstapled issue of PB by the dissatisfied editor of a fanzine I had reviewed.

The weekend we collated PROPER BOSKONIAN, Sheila and Don had guests. Jerry Kaufman and Suzle Tompkins, editors of the noteworthy SPANISH INQUISITION, Stu Shiffman, fan artist extraordinaire, and Gary Farber, budding fanhistory expert and publisher of the infrequent personalzine DRIFT, all found themselves earning their keep by making endless rounds of the collation table in the D'Ammassas' basement.

"I thought we left New York to get away from all this," complained Suzle.

As I jogged the pile of collated-but-unstapled copies to align the pages evenly, I noticed how every time Gary rounded the table to the series of pages containing my column, his normally hyperfast collating speed slowed to a crawl. It was only natural, I thought with pride, that as a fellow devotee of fanzines he would find my reviews the most interesting thing in the issue.

But as I watched, it became apparent something was wrong. He was speeding around the table in a blur to get back to the section with my pages, where he dropped to a snail's pace. His normally carefree countenance was growing dark, his almost neo-ish smile of enthusiasm had been replaced by a pout of disapproval.

I was puzzled. What in the world was there in my fanzine column that could possibly upset Gary Farber, of all people? Surely it couldn't be anything personal. Why, as far as I could remember I hadn't even mentioned him by name even once --

Uh-oh.

It finally came back to me, two weeks and three hundred copies too late.. Gary was even now bearing down on me. I backed away, up against the wall lined with shelves. I could go no further. Rolled up into a deadly weapon in his hand was an unstapled PB. I tried to sidestep him at the last minute but he was already upon me.

Mike! he cried. Whap! "Why aren't I mentioned in the review of FANHISTORICA #1?" Whap! "I co-edited that issue, Mike!" Whap! "I introduced the articles, had my own editorial and everything! Why, Mike?" Whap! "Why?"

I couldn't stand up to the co-founder of Short F st-Talking Hyperfandom. I was being beaten to a pulp. I had second-degree paper cuts over ninety percent of my body. In defeat I said Uncle, and Thrush for good measure. It had been a careless oversight on my part to neglect to mention Gary's valuable contribution to the first issue of FANHISTORICA, I assured him.

But his steely glance told me abject apologies were not enough. Very well, I consented quickly, I would be more than happy to correct my mistake in print in my next column for PROPER BOSKOWIAN.

Slowly, almost reluctantly, he lowered the blunt instrument of persuasion.

"That should be acceptable," he admitted. Then he swung the PB up at me once once more. "But about this other matter -- "

I cringed.

"--When can you have that humorous column ready for the next issue of DRIFT?"

I gulped. "Any time you want it. Give me a deadline. When's the next issue of DRIFT coming out."

Gary grinned crookedly. "RealSoonNow."

I sighed with relief.

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Other than the usual assaults on reviewers by angry faneds, the fanzine scene of late has been rather lethargic. The really outstanding items arrived in the tail end of 1976. Nothing of true note has arrived since the beginning of the year. Needless to say there are many fanzines I do not get so it is entirely possible there are some excellent publications I am not aware of the existence of, but I do not consider myself responsible for noticing zines I do not receive.

The most visually-impressive fanzine I have received in a long while is the third issue of Victoria Wayne's SIMULACRUM. SIM looks for all the world like a revived ENERGUMEN typed on a Selectric (Mike Glicksohn said I was the only one ever to notice and complain about the crooked letters on his typewriter. Well, it was about the only thing between him and perfection).

I have a weakness for high quality mimeography of this type. Anybody can paste up an offset zine and use lots of white-out, but doing your own stencilling and mimeography takes skill. Sheila has that skill, and so does Victoria.

SIMULACRUM 3 is a pleasure just to leaf through and look at. The artwork ranges from good to excellent, and the front and back covers, by Stu Gilson and Al Sirois respectively, are among the best pieces to come from these talented artists thus far.

A complete consideration of the contents of an eighty-page fanzine would take too much time, so I will attempt to summarize the parts that I found of interest. Cy Chauvin's fannish fable "The BNF of Oz" was amusing, but may be too much of an in-group joke for the average reader. Wayne Hooks, who does most of the book reviews, is very good at his set task and I find most of his points well taken even when I violently disagree with them. However, I was not as impressed by the book reviews by Victoria herself. The bone of contention lies in her use of the phrase "pointless new wave crap", but that's another kettle of fish entirely. Suffice it to say that as a literary critic Victoria is an excellent fanzine reviewer.

Which I meant more seriously than you may think. She knows how a zine is put together and her fanzine review column is very interesting. She spends more time talking about the layout on the zines she likes than any of us but Mike Glicksohn. Her philosophy behind the reviews is to "praise favourites" and ignore crudzines, which is one I am not in total agreement with myself but is close to the slant I have been asked to adopt for this column. And there is some wisdom to simply mentioning the current crop of fanzines are for the most part unexciting and recommending those that are worthwhile rather than spending ten pages on a dozen crudzines in order to prove the point. However, at this juncture I see I am perilously close to falling prey to that affliction of many fanzine reviewers, reviewing other fanzine reviewers instead of reviewing fanzines.

SIMULACRUM 3 also has humor by Dave Jenrette, Michael Carlson, and Janet Small, and serious articles by Doug Barbour and Wayne Hooks. The discussion in the lettercolumn is Meaningful and Serious, and may remind many readers of MYTHOLOGIES, that so-called personalzine put out by Don D'Whasisname. This may not be coincidence as Victoria lauds MYTHOLOGIES as her "favourite fanzine". The influence is apparent. Highly recommended.

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Would you object to literary critic reviewing a novel that was out of print? No? Good, for by happy analogy you will also not object to my reviewing a fanzine which may not be generally available.

The fanzine in question says it is "distributed to contributors, through FAPA, and to very important people like you". If you think you are very important, or can write a letter of sufficiently earnest entreaty, you may be able to get it.

The publication is none other than Lee Hoffman's legendary SCIENCE FICTION FIVE-YEARLY, the world's oldest regularly published fanzine. Started in 1951, SFFY is older than I am (which may make the collective bones of the regular contributors creak a little more wearily).

If the sterling list of contributors is any indication, the high reputation of SFFY is in this, the 25th Anniversary Bicentennial Issue, suitably maintained. I think -- I wasn't even in fandom when the last issue came out, although I still hope to be when the next is published. There is humor by Bobs!Tucker and Toomey, fannish reminiscences by Bob Bloch, Harry Warner, and Ted White, and editorials by Lee and Terry Hughes, WHO WAS ASSISTANT EDITOR OF THE ISSUE (I'm not going to make the same mistake twice -- Terry is much bigger than Gary Farber!). One thing that is immediately obvious is this fanzine has so many Bobs in it that it hardly stands still long enough for you to read it. But catch it if you can -- otherwise you'll have to wait until 1981.

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Easier to obtain and much more frequent is another example of the specialized genzine that has recently come to my attention. Amanda Bankier's excellent THE WITCH AND THE CHAMELEON is several cuts above JANUS (a personal favorite reviewed last issue) as a feminist-oriented fanzine. Sorry, Jeanne and Janice.

Contributors to WATCH include Vonda McIntyre, Suzy McKee Charnas, Joanna Russ, and Raccoona Sheldon. The average lettercolumn features discussion by Ursula K. LeGuin, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Kate Wilhelm and (*cough*) Jerry Pournelle. Most issues also have had work by Jennifer Bankier, who is an extremely promising writer. Highlights of recent issues have included an in-depth survey of the story content of recent prozines by Vonda McIntyre in #3, thoughts on the Women in SF panel at Discon in #2, and an outstanding article by Marleen Barr in the double issue 5/6 on the treatment of women as characters in science fiction works by Eugene Zamiatin (WE), H.G. Wells (WHEN THE SLEEPER WAKES), and Olaf Stapledon (LAST AND FIRST MEN).

The graphic quality of WATCH has improved tremendously from the indifferent mimeo of the early issues, where illoes were close to non-existent and layout was haphazard, to the superlative offset and above average illoes of the most recent, #5/6. I recommend THE WITCH AND THE CHAMELEON very highly.

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Details on the above: SIMULACHUM 3 is available from Victoria Wayne, PO Box 156 - Stn D, Toronto, Ontario M6P 3J8, Canada, for the usual, editorial whim, "a big box of Droste", or "very reluctantly for \$2.50" (promise to loc).

SCIENCE FICTION FIVE YEARLY #6 is available only from Lee Hoffman, 350 N.W. Harbor Blvd, Port Charlotte, Florida 33950. Try pleading.

THE WITCH AND THE CHAMELEON comes from Amanda Bankier at Apt 6, 2 Paisley Avenue S., Hamilton, Ontario, Canada (she doesn't seem to list the postal code). Subscriptions are three for four dollars for #5/6 onwards, or \$1.50. Issues 2-4 are 75¢ each.

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At odd intervals the fanzines that fill up Box G at the MIT Post Office in Cambridge for which NESFA trades PROPER BOSKONIAN and/or INSTANT MESSAGE are bundled together in a big pile and dropped off with Sheila so she can update the mailing list and file them away. The only person who seems to read them in Boston is apparently George Flynn. At even odder intervals I ask Sheila where the stack of fanzines is, and root through them looking for zines less than four to six months old. Sometimes I do not succeed.

I would prefer zines to be reviewed to be sent directly to me and marked as such. It takes forever for the zines in trade to reach me, and as such I cannot vouch for their availability. By the time I get a zine in this fashion, it may be out of print. Be that as it may, below are listed the fanzines received by PB since the deadline of the last issue, with a few exceptions consisting of two I received myself. Onward...

ASH-WING 20. Frank Denton, 14654 - 8th Avenue S.W., Seattle, WA 98166. 40 pages, mimeo. Available for samurai swords, crock pot recipes, rustling autumn leaves (gold or red), used valve caps (metal only, please) and warmth". The usual. Very good genzine, although this issue has no lettercolumn (heresy!). Recommended.

CHECKPOINT 75, 76. Peter Roberts, 38 Oakland Drive, Dawlish, Devon, UK. Six pages each, mimeo. The usual, news, or 6/\$1. For those interested

in fandom beyond our shores, a very useful British newszine, light and informal in tone but informative in content.

DIEHARD 9. Tony Cvetko, 29415 Parkwood Drive, Wickliffe, OH 44092. 22 pages, mimeo. The usual or 75¢. A genzine I usually enjoy, but this issue is all letters and rather fuzzily reproed.

DON-O-SAUR 47. Don C. Thompson, 7498 Canosa Court, Westminster, CO 80030. 40 pages, mimeo and offset. The usual, 35¢, 6/\$2 or 12/\$3.50. The Special Tromp on Don D'Amassa Issue of the ever-popular personal/letterzine. Recommended if you can jump into an argument in media res.

KARASS 27. Linda E. Bushyager, 1614 Evans Avenue, Prospect Park, PA 19076. 16 pages mimeo. For the usual, news, 40¢, or 5/\$2; "Send no more than \$2." Fannish news, views and reviews. Recommended of its type.

THE SF&F NEWSLETTER, numbers 1 through 13. Don Miller, 12315 Judson Road, Wheaton, MD 20906. The usual, news, or 30¢, 4/\$1. The frequent newszine of one of fandom's most prolific publishers. Cons, zines and books comprehensively listed.

STAR FIRE 8. Bill Breiding, 151 Arkansas St, San Francisco, CA 95107. 50 pages, mimeo. Available for the usual, \$1.50, or "Love letters of substantial quality and fever" (sic. -- somewhere between fever and fervor). Except for that lapse, the proofreading is improved over the last issue, although the contents are not as interesting. And the last twenty-five pages in this copy of #8 are stapled in upsidedown. M Maybe next time.

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Send fanzines for review to me at 168 Rhode Island Avenue, Pawtucket, Rhode Island 02860. Until next issue, may you never run out of corflu.

-- Mike Blake

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conclusion

PERPETRATORS: ATTACK FROM THE THIRD DIMENSION

Richard S. Holmes (Instigator)
David T. Wolff (Editor)
Annemarie Bernard
Albert J. Corda
Mary L. Hainsworth
Christine Ingalls
Steven B. Kovner
John A. Major

CHAPTER FIVE

Once More, Horace van derHoot, Imperial Secretary for the sciences, faced Emperor Uberhuns in the throne room. He was quietly sweating as he considered the fact that the non-human spy sent by the Cerians had escaped and done vast damage to the computer center adjacent to the palace. It was not van derHoot's fault, of course, but there was no way to tell how the Emperor would take the news. Worse, just prior to the destruction of the equipment, van derHoot had received an update on the quasar situation.

"Well, is that despicable creature dead yet? Or can't anybody tell?" demanded the Emperor.

"Your Magniloquence, my assistants assure me that he is quite dead, having been reduced to component atoms when he tried to destroy the paper dehomosenizer." Van derHoot continued with a rush, "But there are more grave problems facing the Empire!"

"Your silly little quasars, I suppose? You know, van derHoot, I just got around to figuring out how long it'll take those things to get here. Assuming they travel at the speed of light, hmmm...let me see..."

"But that's the point, Your Magnolia," broke in van derHoot. "The latest calculations show...they're now going faster than light."

The Emperor paused for a moment, trying to recall if that was allowed by classical Einsteinian/Heisenbergian physics.

"That's just plain stupid, van derHoot! They'd get infinitely massive, and turn inside out, and all kinds of weird things! It's just not kosher! ...Is it?"

"They've turned into black holes."

"Ahh..."

"And at their current acceleration, they'll get here in a matter of days or weeks!"

Carson was determined not to black out and wake up not knowing where he was. Not again. So he just barely managed to slap on his helmet as the cabin air leaked out. His diced ship was slowly falling away in a thousand pieces. He soon had no choice over his actions, though, as a tractor beam took hold of him and drew him to the Cerian ship. He noted that the Black Dove also resembled chunks of beef stew, and he suddenly had a craving in his stomach. His visions of pepperoni were interrupted by a near collision as Vanessa, Dr. Zinn, Attila, and Mischer hurtled past him into a gaping orifice in the Cerian ship. Apparently they had quite a few tractor beams.

As he struck the edge of the orifice and bounced in, he continued his thought: "And nobody knows how to use them."

Poor IGOR! When he was installed in the Lost Cause, they had slipped his central function unit into a bracket mounting, and thus he was connected to every part of the ship by control lines he actually felt were his own. As a heuristically programmed machine then, he felt as if he had become blind, deaf, and dumb when the ship had been reduced to toy blocks. He was unfortunate, though, to have his main unit intact. If only he could free himself of the mounting bracket... there! The bracket was free, and he was no longer spinning. Broken wires with voltage across them and intact wires carrying current and generating a magnetic field allowed him to get some sense of where objects were around him. The pieces of Carson's ship as well as those of the Black Dove were drifting apart rather lazily, except for five masses speeding towards a much larger mass. IGOR exulted (as much as he could, being mostly hypertronic circuits) at his good fortune in drifting toward the Cerian ship. He would contact it in a matter of moments, and he could probably employ his magnetic mounting feet in attaching himself to the ship.

Carson found himself bound in an interrogation room. "Not again," he moaned to himself. "I've had enough of this kind of treatment. Why can't a hero of the spaceways get anywhere nowadays? Why just last year..."

His thoughts were interrupted by the sudden appearance in the doorway of the most beautiful female he had ever seen in his lecherous life. He almost cried in anguish when he heard her speak to the huge tanned Adonis by her side.

"Duh, Smitty -- Whaddawe do widdem now?"

"I dunno, Doris. Suppose they know anything about Earth defenses? Maybe we just better wait for the captain. He's the one who wanned them alive."

"Hokey doke."

Vanessa looked blank for a few moments and then burst into laughter. Soon Attila joined her, and then Carson, and then Zinn, until finally even Mischer was giggling.

They were cut off when a Herculean figure dressed in a form-fitting blue and gold uniform strode into the room and commanded:

"Silence!"

They shut up. He continued. Pointing to Carson:

"What is your name?"

"Cougar Carson, of the United Space Patrol Service. I demand to know why you've sliced up--"

"Silence!"

He turned to Vanessa. He glared at her with a look bordering on disgust. He looked over all the men with undisguised contempt.

"You," he said, turning to Zinn, "what is your name?"

All Zinn could manage was a splutter.

"Odd name... Doris! Smitty! Put them in separate rooms as we prepare to move to Earth."

Smitty spoke up. "Does that mean we'll be following the rest of the fleet?"

"Of course! You don't think they'd leave a scout behind. They need us up front."

In the meantime, IGOR had attached himself to the hull and was attempting communication with an acutely dull navigation computer.

Landfill was of course an Imperial colony. As such, there was a representative of the Empire in charge of all political affairs, such sundry items as the tax structure and selective enforcement of a complex set of vice laws, and of course he lived in the overweight lap of luxury.

This fortunate gentleman was the Imperial Viceroy Sir Winston "Lucky" Camel-filters. He had lived on Landfill for almost seventeen years now, enjoying every minute of it. He had even had a new mansion built on the edge of the capitol city of Nova five years ago. In fact, the only facet of "Lucky's" existence that did not cause him great pleasure was his wife Tareyton. But he learned to live with her-- after all, it was easy to get lost in a 437 room mansion. He hadn't seen his wife in almost a week.

His dealings with the pleasant people of Nova were usually through intermediaries such as servants and personal guards. He could not tolerate their oily skins and bad breath. Thus it came as quite a shock to Sir Winston when the eight tactical units of the Landfill Unified Movement of the Proletariat stormed his mansion and declared open revolution against the Empire.

Zinn would have been quite shocked also, had he known -- the Landfillers were supposed to wait for his message to okay the maneuvers. Landfillers were impatient.

On Cerium, things were looking less than delightful for Sergeant Sargent. He had not been fed for almost a week, and he began to wonder if he would be fed at all -- he had not been very cooperative with his Cerian interrogators.

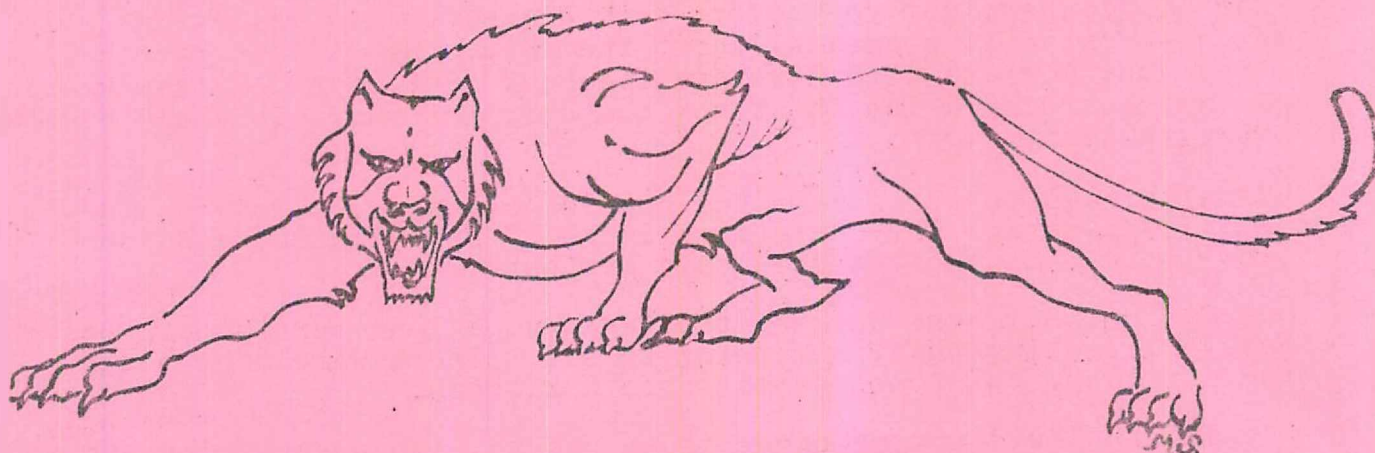
Once more he surveyed his surroundings. He was in a cell about eight feet on a side, with three concrete walls, a smooth cement floor, a brick ceiling, and bars against the last wall. The bars had looked absurdly spaced when he had first been thrown in the cell. He had tried to squeeze through them, but they were an inch too close together. But wait...it had been days since he had eaten anything. Perhaps if he tried now...

He slowly rose from his cot and stuck his head through the bars to look either way down the long corridor. There was no sign of the Cerians. He edged sideways through the bars until he was almost halfway out. Just a little more and he'd have it. He strained some more, trying to will his body to flatten out. He began to sweat; moments later, with a loud POP!, he found himself on the floor of the corridor. A broad smile playing across his face, he picked himself off the floor and trotted down the corridor.

At that very moment, Carson was being thrown into a cell in the Cerian spaceship. "Odd construction," he thought to himself as he examined the concrete walls, cement floor, brick ceilings, and iron bars spaced farther apart than General Frumble's front teeth. He tried squeezing through, but couldn't quite fit. As he struggled, one of the guards picked up his shovel and swung it at Carson, who was by now thoroughly stuck. He looked up in time to see the broad shape swing toward his face, then all he saw were stars.

IGOR was firmly attached to the hull, and his hypertronic circuits chuckled to themselves in delight as he studied the layout of the ship and the automatic guidance system. He was vaguely aware of the nature of the ship, until he sensed the vast fleet they were approaching. This was a lead scoutship, one that would take the front position as the fleet headed to their destination. Destination...and what was their destination? Cold horror surged through IGOR's circuits as he realized that the attack force was headed for Earth!

As IGOR was thinking hard about what to do, and wishing his master was near (he was, but IGOR didn't know that), a small meteor, perhaps the size of a marble, was speeding on a collision course with IGOR. At thousands of kilometers per second it would bore through the heart of IGOR's brain, barely crease the Cerian ship, and then plummet through space -- leaving a dead IGOR behind!



CHAPTER SIX

Ten... nine... eight... seven... six... five... four... three... IGOR, attached to the hull of the Cerian ship, helplessly watched the approaching meteor. There was nothing he could do. In moments he would be reduced to so much scrap metal.

IGOR waited to die.

Suddenly the rockets on the Cerian ship fired to correct the trajectory to Earth. The meteor whizzed by, missing IGOR by mere millimeters!

IGOR now realized he must try to keep the fleet from getting to Earth, and that he must also find his Master. He did not know that Carson was still aboard the Cerian vessel.

He began investigating the ship's navigation computers, appalled by their simplicity. Certainly something could be done... hmmm... Eventually, through the security software, he discovered that Carson was aboard.

Meanwhile, inside the Cerian ship, things were getting interesting, and also crowded. Cougar Carson was making not too subtle advances to Doris, who was getting rather angry about the whole situation.

She and Smitty were attempting to put their prisoners in separate rooms, as they had been instructed. It wasn't that easy. For one thing there weren't enough rooms. (Cerians can't count that well.)

"No," said Doris, "I don't think we should put Carson in with Vanessa, or with anyone for that matter."

"I wouldn't mind being in with Vanessa!"

"I'm sure you wouldn't."

Dr. Malachi Zinn wondered to himself why the Cerians were going to war.

"I've heard of faces launching a thousand ships," he thought to himself, "but fertilizer launching an interstellar fleet?"

Harold Mischer, not yet having been placed in his cell, wandered aimlessly -- or so it seemed -- about the ship. He did not particularly impress the Cerians with his intelligence. But what did they know? Mischer was learning a lot about how the ship was run. It would eventually come in handy.

Finally, all the prisoners had been stored away. The rooms were small and dark. They were also locked. But Vanessa, down to her last bobby pin, thought she could get out.

On Cerium, Sergeant Sargent trotted down a long corridor in search of food, or, lacking that, something to eat. There were many rooms off the corridor, but none seemed to be a kitchen.

"Well, Ah could eat my boots if Ah had to. Ah guess Ah've eaten worse before," he thought.

Then, thinking better of his idea, he renewed his search for food in earnest.

It seemed like hours later when, in desperation, Sgt Sargent walked into an unlabeled room. It was a kitchen. Greedily he tried the remains of food in the pots and pans. It wasn't very good, or even sort of good, but it was food.

"No wonduh Cerians are so dull," he mumbled to himself, gulping down something at least a week old. "Their food is so dull."

"Now maybe Ah'll be able to do something about this situation. Ah just might be able to outsmart the Cerians!"

The revolution on Landfill was coming along quite well. (Of course, not from Sir Winston's point of view -- he was rapidly losing his mansion.) The Landfill Unified Movement of the Proletariat was gaining power. Sir Winston was getting quite ill from their bad breath and oily skin. He was barricaded in the third floor gymnasium, hoping to avoid having to surrender. During a lull in the fighting he had found an old device, a "Hypertronic Field Decommulator" if you could believe the nameplate. He had a vague memory that it was a weapon of some sort.

"Probably blow every fuse in the continent if you turn it on," he grumbled. "Well, even that would help." The cord was barely too short to reach the nearest outlet. Sir Winston began looking for an extension cord.

On the Cerian ship, Vanessa had freed Harold Mischer from his cell, and now Mischer had plans. On his earlier trot through the ship he had found out where most of the important controls were located. Now he intended to seize them.

But Vanessa had plans, too, so Harold was delayed a while. That was certainly an interesting experience, he mused as he tucked in his

shirt afterward. I was beginning to doubt if there was a first time for everybody...But duty called.

"Come with me," he said to Vanessa. "You might be needed."

"Sure, honey, whatever you say."

They walked down a corridor to a room marked Main Control Center. Feeling very brave, they entered.

The room was empty. The Cerians were out to lunch. The computer was controlling everything.

Mischer and Vanessa would now try to stop the fleet from reaching Earth.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Attila, meanwhile, was getting very hungry -- especially after he discovered that he would not be fed for another two weeks. So he pounded upon the door and shouted that he was ready to talk. Within minutes a Cerian showed up and entered the cell. Attila nimbly bit him on the wrist and dodged through the still-open door. Immediately there was a great commotion; Cerian guards chased him, firing at him with utter disregard to the safety of their fellow crewmen (or the integrity of the ship's hull). Attila dashed through an unmarked door -- and discovered his mistake.

"This must be the recycling machinery," he dimly thought. "And that was the access hatch to it... Who in the Galaxy would be stupid enough to leave the access hatch unlocked?" were his last thoughts. Obviously the Cerians were. At any rate, there was now one less character to keep track of.

Back in Main Control Center, Mischer was trying to talk to the computer, with mixed results.

"I'm not sure I understand you fully," was the most common reply.

IGOR was doing much better. He had been scanning options and wavelengths, in his ironheaded way, trying to find a maximally useful course of action. It would have been easy to take over the Cerian computer, but IGOR preferred to have his entire plan planned first. As he scanned, he came across the broadcast wavelength of Radio Landfill. He noted with distaste that the usual government declarations and mindless entertainment shows, while disgusting enough themselves, had been replaced. The stream of revolutionary fervor and obscenities was almost as upsetting as the station's new name: Radio Free Landfill. Had a revolution occurred on Landfill? IGOR considered the idea.

From the sounds of it ("Resistance is scattered, ineffective, and speedily being crushed") the revolt was meeting considerable difficulty. Perhaps, if Carson could be freed... maybe... yes!

"Hello, Cerian computer," IGOR tentatively transmitted through the hull.

The Cerian mechanism cheerfully replied, "READY! For help, check the documentation. It's around here somewhere... hmmm..."

IGOR's transistors sank. The Cerian computer, which had forgotten its own name, was so slow that IGOR could compute circles around it. It would take time, valuable kiloseconds, to get any useful information from it. So IGOR accessed the documentation himself, ignoring the protests of the security software ("HEY! Stop! You isn't supposeta be in that stuff! Hey, get outta there! Halt!"). Quietly cycling to himself, IGOR muttered:

"First things first...shut up that idiot security program..."

The security system's protests broke off.

"Fake the navigational data..."

The ship imperceptibly changed course.

"Glitch up the weapons systems..."

Gun turrets swiveled drunkenly.

"Right. Master would be proud of me!

As the Cerian fleet unsuspectingly turned toward its new destination, Carson was doing his best to be interrogated by a Cerian female of astonishing beauty. He had managed to make her use interrogation techniques that reminded him of a certain house of joy back on Beta Bunny. His own investigation was going quite well, in fact. He knew he would eventually have to escape...but later.

Doctor Zinn had gotten thoroughly lost. The door to his cell had never been locked (on inspection, he found it didn't even have a lock), so he left. The first thing he found was a floor map. Unbeknownst to him, it had been installed backwards, upside down, and on the wrong ship. So he wandered up and down the corridors vainly trying to find something...anything. Eventually he lucked upon a men's room. Rather to his surprise, no disasters occurred within, and shortly after that he found a small arms room. Fearing to find minuscule limbs, he looked inside. His fears were again ungrounded. There was a variety of hand held weapons, including a full assortment of micronukes.

"They must have gotten them from USPS surplus," he decided, choosing a portable nucleonic resonator. He experimentally diced a wall.

Stepping outside, Zinn tried dicing other objects: the storeroom, a bulkhead, a fire extinguisher, two Cerian guards, and a NO SMOKING sign. Things were going fairly well, he mused. The Emperor was hamstrung by Zinn's masterful decoys, including the kidnapping of Princess Vanessa; the revolution on Landfill, though premature, was succeeding at last report; Attila was out of his hair; he had obtained his freedom and a weapon, and if he ever found the control room he would be able to re-direct the ship to his power base on Landfill.

Zinn strode off to find the control room, avoiding guards whenever possible and dicing them whenever not.

In his meanderings Dr. Zinn came upon a door marked with a large red X. "Ahh, this must be the place," he assumed (quite incorrectly as it turned out). In reality it was a store room for anything the Cerians found they couldn't classify, so it held almost everything. The red X was short for Xtra.

What Dr. Zinn found upon entering almost made him drop his weapon in excitement. There before him stood a Simultaneous Nervous Readjustor a Comoport programmable calculator, and an MDC power generator. Other small invaluable items were scattered about.

Dr. Zinn felt the professionalism in him rising, his petty ambitions fading away, and a surge of childlike wonder. Here right in front of him were all the component parts of his Subliminal Reeducator, and then some! The Cerians were nowhere in sight as Zinn gathered the last small items for his machine from the storeroom.

Meanwhile Doris had finally given up on getting any information out of Carson and had left him to shower and take a nap. After she had safely gone, Carson breathed a sigh of relief. If she hadn't given up soon his male ego would have been in jeopardy. Readjusting his clothing, he slipped from the room that Doris in her fatigue had failed to lock.

The great Carson was not long daunted by the question of what to do next. He closed his eyes and wondered where he would hide if he were a control room on a Cerian ship. Trotting off in what turned out to be the right direction, he soon found Vanessa and Mischer trying to gain control of the ship.

Carson tried a bluff. "Cerian Infernal Guidance and Observation Robot, this is your captain speaking. Where are we and where are we going?

"Login please."

"Gosh darn it! I wish I had IGOR at my disposal, this one belongs in the Dispos-All!"

"Master? I am here, Master."

"IGOR! Where are you?"

"Master, I have attached myself to the hull and am in complete

control. We are heading for Landfill, because Doctor Zinn has instigated a revolution there. We must stop that. Then we must stop the Cerians, capture Dr. Zinn, and return Vanessa to her father. I am also getting information on a Sergeant Sargent whom I believe is being held someplace; we might want to rescue him, too, master."

"Gee, what'll we do after lunch? Speaking of Doctor Zinn, where is he?"

Doctor Zinn's voice boomed throughout the ship as if in answer.

"Cerians! Listen to me! I, Doctor Malachi Zinn, have just finished my second Subliminal Reeducator. With this, I can rule the universe. Even more astonishing, I can make you, Cerians, as intelligent as you are handsome. All I ask for in return is your help in defeating Earth and the capture of Princess Vanessa and Cougar Carson. Bring them to the room with the red X on the door!"

Alas for Vanessa and Carson! The promise of an IQ over sixty was too much for the Cerians to resist. They left their monthly lunch and charged into the control room before Carson could do more than warn IGOR. They roughly grabbed the pair and began dragging them through the corridors.

"No! Stop!" shouted Vanessa. "Doctor Zinn's lying! Don't believe him!"

Carson frantically gibbered in agreement.

But to no avail. Within moments they were all in front of Dr. Zinn's machine, and Carson was strapped to a couch, helpless before the approaching electrodes.

"You're not going to hurt him, are you?" worried Doris.

"Of course not, my dear," chuckled Zinn. "I'm merely going to optimize his neural networks, effecting a total rearrangement of his psycho-physiological patterns, and making a complete overhaul of his ethical-moral response mechanisms."

"Now that's a crock of Kerysmite!" Carson blurted out.

Kerysmite? The Cerians were momentarily confused. Vanessa saw that their chance had arrived, and moreover that Carson was about to start gibbering again. She jabbed the nearest Cerian with her elbow; surprised, he tripped over Carson, knocking the couch over. At that moment IGOR turned off all the lights on the ship. As the Cerians panicked in the dark, Vanessa managed to free Carson. They stood aside while the Cerians fled from the room, almost trampling Dr. Zinn in their haste.

When IGOR turned the lights back on, Zinn was practically in shock. As Vanessa righted the couch, Carson tossed Zinn onto it, strapped him in, and attached the electrodes. Then he twirled the dials randomly and threw the lever.

When the Reeducator stopped flashing, everyone was completely silent for a moment. Then Zinn began mumbling, "Look at all the terrible things I've done...I've been so bad...I'll have to do something to make up...something wonderful..." His eyes were glazed and unfocused.

"How about a cure for the common cold?" suggested Carson.

"Common cold...mmhmmmm..."

"Well, Vanessa, I think we can safely leave Dr. Zinn here with the Cerians...he'll fit in well. Let's grab a shuttle and get out of here before the Cerians figure out what's going on."

Minutes later, from within a tiny shuttlecraft, Carson inquired, "IGOR, is it possible that we could get you inside here with us?"

"Yes, Master. Just set a tractor beam on me, and I'll let go of the Cerian ship when you're ready."

A few short hours later, IGOR had redesigned the power source, and Carson and Vanessa were dining by butane torchlight as the little ship sped on toward Landfill at twice the speed of the Cerian fleet. They were eating anchovy and tunafish pizza, which turned out to be Vanessa's favorite too.



CHAPTER EIGHT

IGOR had a problem. He had, in the process of tying into the rather mediocre Cerian navigational equipment on board the tiny craft, discovered something perturbing -- something his master should be told about. But Carson was whispering to Vanessa, and had for several minutes been inching closer to her. IGOR didn't want to break in at the wrong time. The last time he interrupted his master, Carson had pulled out half of IGOR's hypertronic circuits and replaced them backwards. The very memory of it made IGOR dizzy.

But IGOR's discovery was important. He took the risk.

"Master?"

"Yes, IGOR?" replied Carson, sounding annoyed.

"Master, something is wrong. The star we are approaching appears to be of spectral type G5 -- but Landfill's primary is catalogued as type G7. Master, Landfill's sun is brighter than it should be!"

"So what? They probably put in a new set of batteries. Don't worry about it. And don't bother me, either." Carson picked up another slice of pizza and edged closer to Vanessa.

"By the way, IGOR, he added, "how are we going to stop the revolution when we get to Landfill?"

IGOR was silent for a millisecond, then said, "I don't know, Master."

Carson dropped the pizza in his lap. "You WHAT?? I thought you had a plan!"

"I thought you had a plan, Master."

"Oh. I see..."

"Do you have a plan for what to do when the Cerians detect us and open fire, Master?"

Carson laughed. "Don't worry, IGOR! The Cerians are so dumb, we'll be half way across the galaxy before they see us."

At that very moment the Cerians were aiming a Nucleonic Resonator at Carson's shuttlecraft. They were not quite as stupid as some people thought.

On Cerium, Sergeant Sargent, disguised as an Army nurse, was heading for the detention area where his men were being held. After checking to make sure there were no Cerians around, he began unlocking the cells with a set of keys he had stolen the night before. As each of his half-starved men came out into the corridor, Sargent gave him a doughnut from the supply he had brought with him.

Sargent worked as fast as he could. He was not very happy about his disguise: his men kept making comments about it, and besides, the skirt was much too tight.

The Imperial Viceroy Sir Winston "Lucky" Camel-filters stood next to the Hypertronic Field Decommulator and wondered if he was doing the right thing. He had finally managed to locate an extension cord and thus was able to plug the device in: all he had to do now was throw the large Bakelite switch at the back and let the device do its work. But what would he accomplish? Had his effort been a waste of time?

Probably, sighed Sir Winston. But there was nothing else he could do. The rebels were winning. One by one the government's defenses had crumbled, and even Tareyton had defected to the other side. Soon the guerrillas would smoke Sir Winston out, and it would be all over. The Decommulator was his last desperate chance.

He reached for the switch...

"IGOR!" shouted Carson as he clung to the control panel of the shuttlecraft. "Can't we do something? We'll be cut to pieces!"

"I'm sorry, Master, the computer replied. We're far enough away from the fleet to avoid being diced immediately. The resonators work slowly at this range. But we'll be disintegrated before we can

outrun them completely, Master. And we have nothing on this vessel that will serve as a weapon -- unless we can find a lethal use for bobby pins.

"I'm out of bobby pins anyway," Vanessa muttered.

Carson cursed as the craft shook. The main viewing screen was focussed on the Cerian fleet, directly behind them. Every one of the battleships was firing, and Carson knew it couldn't last long.

Suddenly Carson was drifting in midair. A slice of pepperoni pizza drifted lazily by.

"Master, our gravity simulator has been shorted out," reported IGOR.

Vanessa floated to Carson's side. Hey, Cougar, she said, "what's happening now?"

"We're losing the battle, kid," replied Carson gently. He pulled her closer to him. "I guess this is the end..."

"Oh, Cougar, the Princess whispered, putting her arms around him.

"Master?" said IGOR timidly.

"WHAT??" shouted Carson. "What do you want now, you worthless pile of reject transistors?"

"Master, look at the viewing screens!"

Carson looked. Aside from a few distant stars, the screens showed emptiness. The Cerian fleet, as well as the stars and planets that had been dead ahead only moments before, had vanished!

It was not until twenty-five years later that a young physicist named Hieronymous Heller published the first satisfactory explanation of what had happened. Involved in Heller's explanation was a discovery of such importance that he was ultimately awarded the Nobel Prize.

The chain of events began when Sir Winston Camel-filters turned on the Decommutator. As Sir Winston had suspected, the device was designed to play havoc with enemy electronics: specifically, it generated random signals in spaceship control circuits. The weapon was obsolete, since shielding circuits had been developed and were used on all spacecraft -- all but Cerian spacecraft.

Sir Winston's old device had reached out across space to scramble the controls of the Cerian fleet. In all of the ships, the gravity simulators were suddenly switched to maximum power -- and since the Cerians preferred to overbuild something rather than figure out how much it would have to do, their gravity simulators behaved rather impressively on maximum. They generated fields of about ten to the millionth power gravities.

This was where Heller's work came in. When this immense gravitational field was switched on, it created a hitherto unknown effect -- an inverse hyperbolic gravity wave. The wave affected every object

in the Universe in direct proportion to the object's own gravitational field and in inverse proportion to its distance from the wave's source.

In particular, the Cerian fleet possessed little gravity of its own, but was itself the source of the wave. Space was disrupted in the vicinity of the fleet, and the ships vanished from the universe.

The star toward which the fleet had been heading, and likewise its family of planets, was moderately distant from the wave's source, but had reasonably large gravitational fields. So star and planets also disappeared.

And finally, the quasar/black holes, which by now were all in or near the Milky Way Galaxy, were very distant from the fleet but had enormous gravitational fields. To the bewilderment of Horace van derHoot, each and every black hole in the galaxy vanished.

Carson and his ship escaped destruction. He was twice lucky; first, the gravity simulator aboard his spacecraft had already failed, so it was not affected by Sir Winston's device. Second, the ship was small enough and far enough away from the Cerian fleet to be relatively unmolested by the gravity wave.

Carson didn't know any of this, of course. All he knew was what he saw (or didn't see) in the viewscreens.

'Holy moley, IGOR! The Landfill system is gone!' he muttered.

'Master, excuse me,' said IGOR, 'but that wasn't the Landfill system.'

'What?' replied Carson, stunned. 'What do you mean?'

'Master, apparently the navigational equipment the Cerians have -- or had, anyway -- was built in typical Cerian fashion: very badly. I tried to get the fleet on a course to Landfill, but, as I suspected when I saw how bright that star was, we were somewhat off course. Master, the star and planets that just disappeared were those of the Cerian system.'

'IGOR, I'll never insult your transistors again,' Carson solemnly replied.

Twenty minutes later, IGOR detected three objects moving away from the spot where Cerium had once been. Since Carson was rather busy, IGOR took action on his own to attempt to establish contact. The objects turned out to be the Milhaus, the Agnew, and the Ford, under the command of Sergeant Sargent.

'Shall I arrange for a rendezvous, Master?' IGOR wanted to know.

Carson thought for a moment. "No," he decided, "just give them our report to be relayed to Headquarters. We'll proceed to Earth on our own."

'Master?' the computer asked. "The troop carriers can travel at twice our speed. This shuttlecraft won't get us to Earth in anything less than three weeks!"

I know," smiled Cougar, thinking about Vanessa.

It was another half hour later when the call came. It was General Frumble again, but this time he was scowling so little that Carson could tell the General was in a good mood.

"Yes, General?" said Carson.

"Hello, Carson. Say, there must be something wrong with your video. My screen is blank.

"I guess it must have been burnt out in the battle," replied Cougar, glancing away from Vanessa at the shirt he had stuffed in the video pickup. "I'll have to fix that, sometime..."

"Is that why you took so long to answer?" the General asked. "Busy with repairs?"

"I guess you could say that, sir."

"Well, anyhow, congratulations on your latest successful mission. The Emperor is mighty glad to hear his little girl is safe. Say, could you put Vanessa on? I think her father would like to speak to her."

'Well...ah, she's in bed right now, sir...'

"Oh, I see. Yes, I can imagine she'd be tired after an ordeal like that. Well, anyhow, congratulations."

"Thank you, sir."

"Now. About your next assignment."

"My what?"

"Sergeant Sargent has been promoted to Colonel. His orders are to lead his men to Landfill, where they will place themselves at the disposal of Viceroy Camel-filters to stop the revolution. You are ordered to rendezvous with the Agnew at 2330 -- that's in three hours -- and you will proceed to Landfill. Vanessa will be returned to Earth on one of the Agnew's scoutcraft."

But --

"On Landfill, you will pick up your new patrol craft, plus some other equipment. You know, weaponry, that sort of thing. After installing IGOR in the new ship -- oh, by the way, tell IGOR I said congratulations, will you? Tell him I'm giving him a medal and a new chrome-plated mounting bracket."

"I'm sure he'll appreciate that, sir."

"Now, where was I? Oh, yes. After installing IGOR, you will continue on to the planet Skatole."

"To where?"

"Skatole has been smuggling armaments to the rebels on Landfill, notably laser components, which they've been hiding inside hollowed-out books. Your orders are to find the producers of these laser books, and destroy their operation!"

"I --"

"And I don't think it's necessary to remind you, Carson, about the Skatole Plague. I hear there are some mighty pretty girls on Skatole, but remember -- you are not to engage in any intimate contact with anyone. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir." Carson replied hopelessly.

"Any questions?"

"Yes, sir. Are you serious?"

"Good luck, Carson. The General signed off. For the next two minutes, Carson cursed fluently in six different languages. That made him feel a little better.

Three hours, he said to himself. Oh, well, it'll be better than nothing...

It was.

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In this second week of January 1977, three of the ten fiction best-sellers listed in the New York Times Book Review are fringe science-fiction: SLAPSTICK by Kurt Vonnegut Jr, RAISE THE TITANIC by Clive Cussler, and THE CRASH OF '79 by Paul Erdman. Progress? SF infiltrating the mainstream?

I don't think so. SF ideas are beginning to seep in, but the tone of SF is missing. The characters, the treatment, the underlying assumptions are still solidly conventional. This is the case with a number of recent novels: SF at first glance, conventional at a second look. A few of them are nonetheless worth reading, and two are definite gems. The majority are, alas, rehashed action adventure. George Flynn says I gave away too much of the plot of EATERS OF THE DEAD in my last column. With these books, it would be easy. If I told you what happened in the first chapter, you could outline the rest of the book from there, cliches all the way. Still, I will try to keep the plots a bit better hidden this time. How do I read so many books? Skimming. Do I buy them? No, that's what libraries and bookstores are for.

* * *

***Clive Cussler, RAISE THE TITANIC! (Viking, 1976)

The title gives you the basic plot: deep-sea salvage on a big scale. The idea is more interesting than the story. My advice is, skip the fiction and read Willard Bascom's DEEP WATER, ANCIENT SHIPS (Doubleday, 1976), which is a non-fiction description of how you go about raising a vessel sunk in a mile of water. Bascom was a prime contractor for the Mohole Project, who had a deep-water drilling rig ready to operate in three miles of ocean. Cost overruns killed Mohole, and Bascom's marine engineering firm turned instead to studies of beach erosion.

Bascom still dreamed of the deeps. He watched the progress of shallow water marine archaeology and did some calculations. The

Mediterranean and Black Seas, from 1000 BC to 1000 AD: how many wooden ships sailed, how many sank in deep water (over 500 meters deep), how many were still down there? Figure a third of a million vessels at sea in two millenia. Insurance records suggest that 10% sank far out at sea. In deep water it's cold on the bottom; there may be very little oxygen, and layers of mud seal off the hull from boring worms. There are 30,000 hulls down there, says Bascom. They're intact and untouched.

Roman trade ships laden with marbles and bronzes from Greece... courier vessels with sealed jars of manuscripts...galleys from lost Ebla and Carthage. Bascom has the designs for his salvage ship; now he needs money. Imagine a survey ship trailing a side-looking sonar, looking for mounds that stand out above the abyssal plain. Contact! - lower a pod with TV cameras and grasping arms. If it looks good, station the ship in place and lower the heavy gear to the bottom.

The hull is a mile down, too deep for divers, but remote-control grapplers work fine. Settle a dry-dock frame around the hull, fill the buoyancy tanks with air...and the treasure vault of the deep is open to us. Between treasure searches, says Bascom, the ship can hunt crashed airplanes and lost submarines. I wish him luck in his project. May he find a Greek computer and the loot of Governor Verres, lost at sea on its way to Rome.

Deep-water salvage is a fascinating topic. Cussler uses it in his novel as the backdrop for a dreary tale of spies and storms and Marvel Comics physics. Not even the excitement of raising the old liner can save this one.

The plot? -- A rare element, byzantium, will generate a force field under the proper vibrations. The US Army wants lots of it to test the Sicilian Project, a full-size force dome over America. Russian ICBMs will just bounce off. But who has the byzantium? The only known large deposit was dug out of Novaya Zemlya in 1912 by a team of Colorado hard-rock miners, who put it in packing cases on the TITANIC. The Byzantium is still down there in the sunken TITANIC, and the US wants the stuff real bad. For 500 million dollars the CIA will raise the TITANIC under some pretext or another. Heading the project is stern-jawed troubleshooter Dirk Pitt, who has the usual problems: storms, Russian assassins, soft-bodied lady scientists with marital difficulties. --- The TITANIC is raised. Hurricane Amanda smashes through the area and TITANIC is adrift with a prize crew on board. Russian marines clamber on board from a nearby sub. The storm grows worse. Somehow the lady scientist ends up naked in the wardroom with a sadistic Russian captain. Here comes Dirk Pitt out of the shadows...

Read Bascom instead.

* * *

***Paul E. Erdman, THE CRASH OF '79 (Simon & Shuster, 1976)

Within the last year, HARPRR'S and NATIONAL REVIEW both carried essays on the "big stick" solution to the energy crisis: send U.S. troops to occupy the Middle East oil fields. STRATEGY & TACTICS, a wargame zine, gave its readers "Oil War", a scenario for many-sided fighting in the Persian Gulf states. Paul Erdman, known for his novels

of international financial double-dealing, contributed a piece to NEW YORK Magazine about the Shah or Iran taking over the Gulf oil fields with his new modern army, and then raising prices beyond endurance.

Yes, it does seem to be a popular topic. Erdman has expanded his NEW YORK story to a full-length novel: the Shah grabs the oil, and Western Europe collapses, followed by most of the world, hence the "crash" of the title.

As you'd expect in an Erdman book, the financial background is intricate and convincing. Remember THE BILLION DOLLAR SURE THING and THE SILVER BEARS. The Hero is Bill Hitchcock, portfolio manager for a Saudi investment fund. The villain, by default, is the Shah of Iran. He is more than somewhat demented, with his great wall maps showing the Empire of Darius and Cyrus, and his desert full of American tanks and planes. One day the Shah says, "Why not?" and invades Kuwait, Iraq, and most of the Gulf coast. Nobody is able to stop his armies.

Nobody? The Americans are too far away, and have no nearby friendly base to stage from. The Russians see more profit in letting the Shah drive the West bankrupt. The Arabs of course run guerilla raids from the desert (remember where Lawrence of Arabia used to operate?) but it isn't enough. And then, and then... Suddenly the Shah doesn't have the oil, and neither does anyone else, because the well-heads have been nuked. The oil that isn't burning is too badly contaminated with radiation to be usable. Half the world's oil reserves: gone. Technological civilization can't adjust that fast. Too many factories close down. It's back to the good old pastoral farm for western society.

Erdman sees the world as an interconnected system, so when it breaks down, it breaks down all over. This is, I suppose, the ecological view as permuted through the financier's prism. Energy flow, money flow, credit flow... it's the same. All you apocalypse fans should find this fun reading. By the way, I don't really believe the U.S. could take and hold the Saudi oilfields. Distance, sabotage, and home resistance would be too much to beat.

* * *

***Leonard Harris, THE MASADA PLAN (Crown, 1976)

James Mills, THE SEVENTH POWER (Dutton, 1976)

I lump these two together - two disaster-averted novels, two suspense chase novels in which the big question is "Will the hidden A-bomb go off in New York City and kill half a million people?" Both are well enough written, but I have a feeling the market is getting saturated. At least the stakes are high enough so that the writer can generate some legitimate suspense.

As with Cussler's book, the background threatens to take interest away from the story. Midget atom bombs, in one case home-made - is it possible? Read John McPhee's THE CURVE OF BINDING ENERGY. McPhee can make almost anything interesting, but here he had a topic worth attention in its own right. In an extended interview with Ted Taylor, nuclear physicist and bomb designer, we affix solid details to a recent nightmare: the uncontrolled spread of atom bombs. Everyone can have a bomb. The plutonium storage sites have laughably weak security; the

information to calculate critical mass and critical shape has been on the open market for years. Taylor figures we may have to get used to one or two A-bombs a year going off in U.S. cities, as terrorists and extortionists try to enforce their ideas. They won't be very good A-bombs - dirty, low efficiency, sub-nominal yields - but with fission explosions you have a lot of leeway.

We approach that feared day when, as Tom Lehrer sings, "Alabama gets the Bomb". Meanwhile, Harris and Mills have these two books. Harris introduces his nightmare through the international scene. It is 1979, and the Arab armies have rolled across the border into Israel, this time for blood. The U.S. has turned away ("even-handed"), nobody else will help Israel. Zahal cannot hold, the tanks can't stop the Arabs and the Air Force is destroyed. The delegates to the U.N. are already reminiscing about how stubborn Israel was when it still existed.

No joke - the Zionist state has maybe 48 hours before Egyptian and Syrian columns meet at Jerusalem. Nobody outside gives a damn. The 'Masada complex' sets in. Dov Shalzar, Israeli ambassador to the UN, is trying to deliver a final message to the US Secretary of State - "Help us or you go down with us." Israel has its own Domsday Machine, the suicide-with-a-big-bang device. Since the Israelis don't have the excess H-bombs of America or Russia, they have settled on a cut-rate substitute: suitcase bombs in selected cities.

There is a time limit of course. Egyptian armies are still closing on Tel Aviv, and the fuses are being armed on those sleeper bombs in New York and Washington. Kate Colby, newswoman, watches as the Secretary of State becomes convinced those crazy suicidal Jews will really do it. Then comes the round of calls to convert the Russians, the Arabs, and (hardest of all) the skeptical President of the United States. Would they bomb their own allies? Do they care at this stage who is an ally any more? Do the bombs really exist? (Do they?)

*

Mills has a simpler story, a more purely police/chase story. A kid named Bobby French is the seventh nuclear power on Earth. He has a crude but workable tactical atom bomb and he is making ransom demands. Captain Ransom of the New York Police has the job of catching Bobby's gang and preventing the 20-kiloton ending.

The background is Ted Taylor formula: stolen plutonium, bright physics student, grudge against capitalist America. There can be no open trial, of course. People must not learn how easy bombs are to make. And while the chase runs through New York, down in D.C. another group is planning to park a car near the Library of Congress during a House session with a tactical nuke in the trunk (fireball radius 400 yards)...

***Morris West, THE NAVIGATOR (Morrow, 1976)

Had enough bombs and disasters? Long for a good old-fashioned Lost Race story set in exotic South Pacific lands? Well, this book by Morris West is not quite what you were looking for, I'm afraid. It starts well, but...

Gunnar Thorkild is a half-Polynesian, half-Norseman, with the sea in his blood. He teaches at the University of Hawaii, and he believes that the legendary Island of the Navigators exists in truth. Only skilled steersmen using the old ways can find the Island; Gunnar's own Polynesian grandfather paddled out there to die. Gunnar's colleagues treat him somewhat as the other reindeer treated poor Rudolph: they laugh at him and try to get him fired from his job. Gunnar has only one choice: he will charter a boat and himself sail to the Island of the Navigators.

A rich Dane supplies a yacht, Frigate Bird, and a large mixed crew, one third female it seems. This menage heads out into the Pacific and in a few days they run into the Island of the Navigators...literally run into it. The reef tears out the keel of Frigate Bird and she sinks. Gunnar leads the dripping survivors ashore. Nobody else is there. The island is all theirs.

This is on page 150 of a 400 page book, and is probably the right time to set the book down and walk away. Yes, it's SWISS FAMILY THORKILD for the next 250 pages, as the castaways build a new society free from the bonds of conventional civilization. 'Heard this before?' Fringe SF? It's a survival story of sorts. What's your definition of "fringe"?

* * *

Change of pace for a minute. Here are a few "quickie" reviews of books that are even more debatably SF than most of the above. I do not include Fuentes' TERRA NOSTRA or Amis' THE ALTERATION in this list; they are real SF and deserve extended comment, which I hope to get to in a future issue.

---Douglas Jones, THE COURT-MARTIAL OF GEORGE ARMSTRONG CUSTER ::: This one is worth reading as a historical novel. SF by courtesy: a uchronia in which Custer survives the Sioux at Greasy Grass Meadow. Of course he'd stand court martial for losing his whole command. But would the army convict a popular hero? A new way to say something about Custer 100 years later.

---Stefan Themerson, PROFESSOR MMAA'S LECTURE (Overlook, 1975) ::: Life in a termite nest, seen by intellectual termites. Some sidelong shots at humans, but mostly about termites. Reminds me of W.M. Wheeler's 1920s essays on the social insects. An alien viewpoint.

---Anne Rice, INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE ::: Young man joins parallel vampire society on fringes of humanity in 1795, hangs around biting people for next 150 years. Not much new to say on traditional fantasy theme.

---Marge Piercy, WOMAN ON THE EDGE OF TIME ::: Chicana trapped in 1960s snake pit mental hospital goes on psychic journeys to escape. (Remind you of Jack London's STAR ROVER? Doris Lessing?) Visits Utopian community hundred years or so into future. Well written but not very convincing, alas.

---John Wingate, BELOW THE HORIZON (St Martins, 1974) ::: I missed this one when it first came out. Good sea story with trace but critical SF elements. Time is early 1980's; life on British trawlers during Third Cod War with the Icelanders, the first of the serious Food Wars. Background: Newfoundland and North Sea are fished out, empty -- North Sea thick with oil rigs -- English like Japanese totally

depend on fisheries for protein. Iceland has fished out near-coast waters, threatens to sink foreign trawlers poaching within 50-mile limit. Cold seas are risky enough; Iceland gunboats (backed by Russians) cut trawler nets and harass English boats. Some trip soon a trawler gets sunk, a gunboat gets rammed, or both. Hunger causes tight tempers. Minor-key novel of the coming wars, convincing in detail. Wingate worked a month on a British trawler in 1973 (the Second Cod War) when Royal Navy corvettes convoyed the fishing boats and several incidents came very close to a shooting war in the chilly North Atlantic.

* * *

***Ira Levin, THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL (Random House, 1976)

In a recent review, Algis Budrys admonished us in SF to look with respect on such as Ira Levin. He can take tired old SF ideas and do with them what no SF writer has been able to do - sell them as mainstream novels and score big. That deserves some respect, I guess, for perception of judgment on what the market will bear, if nothing else.

But oh Lord, why does Levin have to take such weary old plots, and treat them with such banality? It is possible to write well and still have a best-seller; look at John Gardner. Levin...ROSEMARY'S BABY worked over possession. THIS PERFECT DAY worked over the egalitarian Utopia. THE STEPFORD WIVES was a ridiculous try at suburban Gothic horror. Suspending disbelief is hard when the writer drops a new logical flaw on every page. Okay, so the engineer husbands all kill their wives and replace them with Barbie-doll life size androids. Nobody notices the change. Stepford is so isolated no family ever gets transferred, no man ever gets fired...the simulacrum of a suburban bedroom community with no reality. Believability never has a chance to introduce itself.

In BOYS, Levin uses the same plot concept as JOSHUA, SON OF NONE: preserve and grow a clone baby from a political leader. Raise the baby in exactly the same environment as the original, and in thirty years you have a duplicate of the lost leader. In JOSHUA the clone was of John Kennedy; in BOYS the clone is Adolph Hitler. (Sorry, George; did I give the plot away again?)

A cabal of ex-SS men watches over fifty-six Hitler clones in fifty-six foster homes - Aryan, of course - around the world: stern civil-servant fathers, doting mothers, art lessons, all like the original. Hitler's father died when the boy was entering his teens. So the SS goes around killing the foster fathers. Any little detail to make sure the Fourth Reich rises on schedule. The murders catch the attention of an anti-Nazi squad. Slowly the plot is unveiled. Finale: the chief anti-Nazi and the chief Nazi (Dr Mengele) meet in a suburban living room. In the house also is a 14-year-old Adolf II who controls a pack of truly terrifying Doberman attack dogs. Levin writes this scene well, in any case. Oh, the kid is obnoxious and a near psychopath - Hitler all the way. The dogs are a lot more scary than anything in STEPFORD or ROSEMARY'S BABY. The fringe of madness creates most of the effect, I think: Dobermans are crazy to begin with, just waiting the kid's signal. And the kid - who knows what will set him off? And Dr Mengele, hiding a revolver, is a fanatical Nazi, nuts by definition... You can't reason with any of them. You can't predict any of them.

PB LOOKS AT BOOKCASES

by DAVID STEVER

There is a problem that, while not unique to Science Fiction fans, has an effect felt more acutely by them than by most Americans. In a nation supposedly literate to a large degree, the U.S. population reads something like 2.5 books a year average. SF fandom, in the last LOCUS poll, spent an average of \$500 a year for hardcovers, paperbacks, new and used books; and remember, my children, that's an average. Ask Sheila about how the D'Ammassa family keeps some small publishers in business! Those who look down at the \$500 dollar figure are the people whom I want to address, those who realize what a bitch it is to simply store their books, let alone have them on a shelf, reachable for casual inspection. Those are the people who are nodding their heads sadly. Those who are surrounded by stacks of books at this very moment.

Those who live with parents or relatives can look forward only to moving as any kind of relief for the problem. If some of the ideas in book storage and display are of use to them, it will be only accidental; my real audience is the collector with the problem of collection outreaching shelf space. The scams that I know of (I've used them), like removing certain subcategories to other locations; the schemes to build bookcases that only very rarely get built, and never keep you ahead of your burgeoning books.

In most cases, the collector finds that his collection has spread from library, through bedroom, into living rooms. How many of us have entertained, or been entertained in a living room tastefully decorated in early Ace Doubles? But one day, all the walls are taken up by bookcases, boards and cinder blocks, plastic milk cartons, and every other device, and the mind runs short of clever ideas. Before you begin thinking of larger living quarters, or additions to the house, I submit that there are more ways of displaying books than you've thought of up till now.

If your rooms are large enough, or if you share an apartment, and a certain amount of privacy is wanted, there is the room divider. The divider can be made up of a huge bookcase, or it can be constructed from smaller cases, or the previously mentioned milk cartons (late 20th century man's contribution to the storage problem, can be stacked for like effect. The cartons are good for the odd sized books that don't fit a normal sized shelf, and the rare large sized carton -- one and a half times the size of the normal 12 x 12 carton -- can be used for record albums). If, however, dividing your room in this manner turns a normal living room into a re-creation of the Spanish National Museum, then you must find other solutions. If they seem "unique", one must remember that if you had thought of them to begin with, you wouldn't be in the predicament that you're in now.

Now everybody has at least one clock. If not an alarm to wake you so that you may earn money for books, then surely one so that you can tell what time INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS is coming on Channel 9. Now by taking a simple electric clock and using a little

shop work, you can create a grandfather clock of interesting design. Remove the glass from the front of the clock and make a clockface about a foot across. Make it fancy - spiffy numbers and such, and by using something like thin foil make two hands to go with it. Make a wooden case for the electric clock to sit in, so that it will be in the middle. The clock will be at the top, unless you want to make it even stranger, and under it will be a narrow cabinet divided into shelves of whatever size you want. Remove the old hands, place the clock behind the false face, replace them, and put the new hands over them. To really carry out the effect, it should have a glass door in front, and if you've been framing the art you've been buying at conventions, then you've had enough experience to be the amateur glazer. Besides, the clock should also have a glass face. You now have a spiffy clock and approximately 4-5 feet of shelves, if you store paperbacks, therein.

If one has one's landlord's approval to put many small holes in the wall, or if you own the walls yourself, the standards and shelf brackets sold in many department stores can offer a certain amount of flexibility, until you run out of wall. When you do run out of wall, here's what you can do.

Desks and bureaus can usually be found in the collector's home, and one can build a very neat bookcase over them, using a light frame braced against the back of the desk (use screws! One day you'll have to move and everything must go out the same door it went in). The frame should be of something like 2 x 4's, and screw the standards into them; hang the shelves off the standards in normal fashion. This plan will net you about 12 to 15 feet of space. Shelves can also be put on the sides of desks and bureaus, but the yield here can certainly be no more than three feet of space per side per piece of furniture.

I have considered the idea of hanging shelves off a door, but if one is going to add that much additional weight on a normal hinge, I wouldn't want to be around when the door rips out of the frame. A Murphy Bed type of arrangement might work, but books under the bed would be subject to undue stress, due to the fact that they would sit on their fronts, thusly ruining the binding. And there is the matter of dust. We are left with the bookcase in the headboard, which is a quite old idea.

After ranging far afield, there is a twist on the normal bookcase, the "portable" bookcase. Picture two bookcases, hinged on a common side, so that they may swing together face to face and be latched closed. I was first exposed to this idea by Terry McCutchen. Terry's system was two seven foot tall cases with a piano hinge, and under each case, four heavy duty wheels. The cases should be of soft pine or heavy plywood, so that they can be banged around without damage (more on this later). They should be constructed with screws and not nails. Unlike these mammoth things, my own cases were only three feet tall, are more easily moved about, and can be stacked if need be. They close with window latch closures and can be moved by two people rather than a crew of professionals.

The only problem greater than book storage to the collector must be the problem of moving the collection when moving day comes. Having moved four times in the last three years, I've found the portable bookcases mentioned above to be very nice, but I have also

discovered a bit of information that anyone moving a large number of standard sized paperbacks will find good to know. The paper bags that one gets from any supermarket are as wide as a paperback is tall. I have found that one bag will fit about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet of paperbacks very nicely, and that this tightly packed bundle can be sealed with tape and labeled, making reconstruction of your library much easier. Using any of the above ideas and plans, one could conceivably double the number of shelf-feet of space you have for your books, and perhaps put you on to other things that I haven't even touched on. Good Luck!

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Book cases can be either bought or made. When they are bought, you are stuck with the placement of shelves in most cases; when you make them, they are as you want them to be.

Standards and brackets Sold in most department stores, the slotted standard is attached to the wall, with screws, and the shelf bracket, in 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 inch widths fit into the slots. You can buy shelves ready made, but it is much cheaper to buy a sheet of plywood and have it cut into strips of proper width. $\frac{3}{8}$ is a good thickness for the shelf, with standards 12-18 inches apart, and getting the wood cut when you buy it will cost 10¢ to 25¢ per cut.

Cinder block shelving In this case, cinder blocks are used for spacing, and thicker shelves are used, so that the blocks are 2 to 3 feet apart. For this you'd want $\frac{3}{4}$ inch plywood, and you can scrounge the wood or buy pine boards or plywood. While the blocks do weigh quite a bit, there is no danger of the floor collapsing under the strain; you can put in just as many of these as you wish. I'm not thrilled with this type because of the weight involved when moving day comes around; the books are heavy enough!

Milk cartons These have made a hit in the cities and suburbs where they can be found or "acquired". Some of the cartons mention that uses other than what they were built for can be a felony, but like all laws, that is predicated on their seeing you walk away from the A&P with six of them. I don't advise you to break laws, but for strange sized books and magazines they are ideal. (I think you can buy these, sometimes from the same company that supplies the A&P..sgd) They can be stacked against walls, or used as room dividers if you are so inclined. The wooden ones are almost gone now, replaced in turn by the heavy wire ones, and now the plastic. They are just about 12 by 12 inches and ten inches deep. They are $\frac{1}{4}$ inch too short to store records in, but they do make larger containers, $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the size of the normal ones, and they can be used for records or two rows of paperbacks.

Posters and artwork Along the same lines, bread and bakery goods have begun showing up in large plastic trays, approximately 2 by 3 feet, and some 3 inches deep. They look pretty good for posters, to be stored flat, But I haven't heard any reports yet on them.

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LETTERS



HARRY WARNER JR.
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

This is another splendid PROPER BOSKONIAN, one that makes me regret various remarks I've dropped in the past few months about the decline in quality of fanzine material other than artwork. You prove that first-rate written material can be evoked if you try hard enough or know the right people or have an ancient manuscript with highly specialized spells for compulsion purposes.

Maybe Mark Keller could someday rework his article for professional publication. It deserves a larger audience. In fact, he covers the most probable possibilities on this theme so comprehensively that it's hard to make any comments without wandering far afield. I could express my doubt that Darwinian evolution is more than part of the answer to the question of how living creatures become the way they are, and I could ask why women live on the average as long as men although men normally retain their ability to do their part in the reproduction process longer than women. By the logic of evolution there's no reason why humans or any other complex organism should live on after they can no longer reproduce their species. And I could speculate on possible situations which aren't exactly related to Mark's topic, like a race of humanoids whose women are many times larger than men, permitting the fetus to grow until it's full size at time of birth if it's male, able to defend itself and care for itself almost at once, while the female baby is born the same size as male babies and then continues to grow to maturity. There's also the fact that the intelligent men, moronic women society which Mark writes about isn't much wilder than the differences between the male and female in some insect species here on earth. But he's imposed a considerable handicap on anyone who wants to stay strictly on the subject matter in a loc. One other reaction: I kept thinking how fine a TV film could be made from the Porthos situation which he summarizes. Such a movie wouldn't involve inordinate expenses for special effects and it would prove to everyone that science fiction isn't necessarily about overpopulation or post H-bombing life or nasty bems.

I'm not sure if I favor Jim Hudson's proposal to change the art Hugo rules. It would be more consistent with the method of choosing recipients for literary Hugos and it might lessen the urge to vote for the artists that are best liked personally. But there's a serious difficulty involved in the proposed change. A prolific artist who turns out several dozen covers or interior illustrations in a year and is reasonably consistent in quality will be at a disadvantage, compared to an artist who does equally good work but has only two or three illustrations published within the year of eligibility. The voters who prefer the former's art will tend to spread their vote

over the many eligible items, and those who like the latter will automatically give more votes to fewer illustrations. The situation would be even more exaggerated if the change involved fan art Hugo voting, too. There must be three hundred or so Rotsler illustrations in fanzines each year. How could he ever compete with less generous fan artists, unless his admirers got together and conspired to vote for just one Rotsler illustration chosen more or less at random? One other possible problem: think how much prestige would attach to the paintings and drawings which won the Hugos, and how high a price the artists could get for them from individuals who would vie for the right to own a Hugo-winning illustration. This would be fine, financially, for a few artists. But it might have a radical effect on the whole art field, driving up the price on all art offerings. It's already very difficult for anyone except the best-heeled fans to collect original art.

Mike Blake's fanzine reviews are excellent. But I hope he doesn't suffer the awful remorse that I feel when I complete each fanzine review column for Riverside Quarterly. Like Mike, I concentrate on just a few fanzines, out of the huge stacks that arrive between instalments of the column, and each time I imagine how all the unmentioned fanzine editors must feel to find themselves totally ignored.

ATTACK FROM THE THIRD DIMENSION has some amusing moments. I'm tempted to suggest that some judicious cutting might increase its overall impact. But if all the people you credit with creating the story wrote sections of it, such knifing might cause one or two authors' work to end up on the cutting room floor.

The illustrations are splendid, and I didn't mind a bit the lack of lots of fillos. I've always considered them something like nuts in cookies: pleasant additions if they're present but no reflection on the enjoyment of the product if they're omitted. I don't see how Sue Anderson can count and sort every page of PB before it's collated, unless you are so efficient up there that you run it through the sixty-cylinder mimeograph after the blank pages have been stapled together. Come to think of it, I wonder if any fanzine publisher has ever tried to rig up a balance delicate enough to detect mistakes in collating. Collating mistakes almost always involve a sheet that is omitted or a sheet which appears twice in a copy so most improperly collated copies weigh more or less than one that is done correctly. Maybe a simple seesaw arrangement with a copy of known accuracy on one end could be utilized to test each newly collated copy; one person working it could probably keep up with the production of newly collated copies which others are accomplishing.

The letter section was very well chosen. Poul Anderson's remarks about how much of the author can be read into his fiction should be kept in print and sent to every fan who decides to write an article about the fiction of any author. Just think how many hundreds of gallons of ink would have been conserved, if Heinlein had written some such statement about his own fiction, long ago.

((While running of a fanzine, one accumulates these stacks of mimeoed pages. Before they are collated, they have to be sorted to eliminate, as far as possible, blank sheets, wrinkled or smeared sheets, etc. At the same time they must be counted, so that I'll know whether any page is short, and can run more copies of it before the stencils get thrown out. That's what Sue does.)))

DAVID STEVER
168 Boston Post Rd. #1
Marlborough, Mass. 01752

As a small time Known Space freak, Mark's comment of Kzinti being bred makes even more sense than Mark knows. Norman Spinrad once gave Larry Niven a way of bringing all of Known Space "Down in Flames" which was Larry's title for an article published in Tom Reamy's TRUMPET some years back. In it, In it, the Kzinti turn out to be Slavers bred into less intelligent beings, and when the truth is found out, they join the humans in an all-out war with the Slavers, who faked the entire Slaver war, as I remember the article. In a case like this, that females are unintelligent makes about as much sense as anything else the Slavers might have tried.

Mark mentions the Vance story THE DRAGON MASTERS, but doesn't tell us anything about it; humans were bred as nonsentient slaves, but by the natives, and as a reaction to the humans, who have taken native slaves, and bred some dozen or more breeds of war slaves, dealing death by means of tooth and claw, and with names like 'Striding Murderer'. Anderson, my other favorite author, had a race in the novel ENSIGN FLANDRY, whose females, instead of lactating, bled at the nipple, and the infant was weaned on whole blood. Flandry surmises that because of the huge blood supply that the female must need, that intelligence came easier to them than the more timid, but perhaps just as intelligent males.

"Queen Bee", the Garrett ASF story sounds like one of the stories that Campbell hoped to stir controversy with, much like "The Cold Equations", and "The Care and Breeding of Pigs", in which you had the idea of the survivors of the human race breeding as widely as possible, to strengthen the gene pool, including a brother and a sister (shocking!)

One thing I'd consider, on both of Mark's colony planets is a few high level bomb bursts, scouring the planet clean of life, if a cure can not be found. Hell, on Porthos, even if a cure was found, I'd clean the planet, after curing the human population. But then I'm a cold hearted bastard (I keep telling the other people in Minneapa that, but they still get grossed out from time to time.) I proposed a similar solution to the Motie problem, in NOTE IN GOD'S EYE. Excellent article, once again.

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AL SIROIS
550 Dixwell
New Haven, CT 06511

Mark keller is really doing some fine fanwriting, isn't he? I am already to the point where I hope to see his name in tocs. He always has a fresh slant, and is imaginative in his prose. Is he going to write one or two of three of the stories he has scenario-ized in the article? I could've done with several more pages. ((Very likely.)))

My only complaint is to that effect, tho: do me fiction or article, Mark, but the mixture of the two is a bit much. Either one or the other is just fine, understand; I saw good-to-excellent sf there, at least plotwise (have never read any fiction by you) and

is no doubt, especially after reading your dismembering of Poul Anderson's FIRE TIME, that you are a first-class sf-article-writer. But if you see fit to give that much of a well constructed story away to someone like me (and I am still a SFWAn, by the skin of my teeth, and I could swipe that and produce a story in a week or two), I can't really see the point. Why don't you write the damn thing? It seems that most of the work is already done. And if you have characterization hassles, for god's sake I will characterize for you and we can collaborate. You really have a salable product there, you know...

Jim Hudson's proposal in re art Hugos is a reasonable one, and seems to be more fair than what we have now. For instance, I think that Rick Sternbach deserved that Hugo this past year, not Kelly Freas. Sure, we know that Rick will get his before much longer, but the point is, he deserved it now! (Then?) Rick had some damn fine work out in 1975, much more meticulous than anything I saw by Kelly in that time. For instance, the "Building the Mote in God's Eye" cover Rick did for Galaxy, or the Bicentennial Analog cover (of which I am fortunate enough to own a rough). It doesn't seem unrealistic to me to say that if the art Hugo ballot were set up like the fiction Hugo ballot, Rick would have his mantelpiece graced with a phallic bit of statuary right now. (He has two ducks in his downstairs bathroom; did you know that?)

Of course, I have a vested interest in this matter, being an aspiring sf artist myself. I would like to be able to win a Hugo in one particular art category (say black and white) and have a painter win the "Best Color" Hugo. I can't paint well, and if the art Hugos stay as they are, I may very well never win one, tho my black and white work is reasonably good and improving. Imagine if there was a "best writer" award instead of all the breakdown awards. A lot of fine writers would be ripped off. That's what's happening (albeit to a lesser extent) with the art Hugos nowadays. And the situation may well be aggravated by the incipient proliferation of sf magazines! The market, friends, it better than ever, which means more artwork in addition to more fiction (and fact).

Mike Blake's fanzine review column is good reading, too, and I particularly liked Mark's cartoon for it. Mark is not a great artist, but he uses what he has to good advantage. If he keeps it up he just might get to be a sought-after fanartist! Yet another facet to his interesting character. Mike is a good writer too (New England fandom has some good writers in it, you know? And most of them are in MESFA or in RISFA! How come?) and his piece is a smooth read. He has chosen a very representative sampling of zines, even if he did take a potshot at Fred's well-known non-zine, ANOMALY. Well, Real Soon Now...

George is right about the lighting on the backcover of PB 14. I never realized that I blew it! Guess I just wasn't thinking. Would you believe a triple sun?

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GEORGE FLYNN
27 Sowamsett Ave.
Warren RI 02885

I'm dubious about Jim Judson's proposal on the art Hugos. There are several things wrong with the idea of awards for individual pieces

of artwork. The problem is especially severe for book covers. I won't buy a book of low quality because it has an attractive cover, nor will I buy a reissue of a book I already have (and a number of the most impressive covers recently have been on reissues: Sternbach's Niven series comes to mind, and quite a few by Michael Whelen and Darrell Sweet.) As just indicated, I can remember covers I don't happen to own (though in several of the cases cited what I really remember is the original painting); but I wouldn't attempt to nominate without actually comparing the possibilities. A work of fiction leaves a much more detailed trace in the memory than a single piece of artwork, at least with a relatively non-visual mind such as mine. And the latter point applies to classes of artwork. I usually have a frustrating time trying to vote on the artwork in a convention art show, where it's all available for direct comparison; it would be much worse choosing among the hundreds of covers and interiors published in a year. And I have the feeling that tastes on art are even more varied than on fiction, making a heavy scatter likely. There's also the problem that covers of hardbound books won't stand much chance; usually the contents of the book eventually appear in paperback and get widely read; but who'll get to see the hardbound dust jacket? And then you'd have an acute version of what sometimes happens in the fiction awards: the more outstanding works a given person has in a year, the less chance any one has of making it. No, I think such a system would keep many of the flaws of the present one, and introduce quite a few new ones. It won't work.

((Really, the only sane thing to do with the Hugos is to abolish them; I've felt this way for years. I like awards given by a defined group with some claim to expertise in the endeavor being judged. SFWA and the FAAN participants have established their own awards for writing and fanzine activity respectively; if the new artists association can establish awards of its own we can all be happy as we watch the Hugos fade away into obscurity.)))

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CHRIS TUCKER
23 Reynolds St.
N. Kingston, RI 02852

Mark Keller's article was a well thought out piece of extrapolative reasoning. The only thing that I can think of that might minimize the Porthos Plague would be to administer male hormones to the females before and during puberty to weaken the attack of the virus. True, it would affect the child and slow down the maturation process. But it might increase the numbers of girls who would survive the fever with most or all of their faculties intact. The ones who were mildly affected could be of great help in the mother houses, taking some of the load of the unaffected women...and more important, they would not be a burden on the society. Someone who can take care of themselves and others without supervision can relieve the people who would be supervisors to do more important work. Needless to say the Cardigan Plague could be handled the same way.

Now as to the people who remain in orbit and adopt an "I don't give a damn what happens to you planet-bound oafs" attitude, it should be remembered that the orbiters need the colonists more than the settlers need the orbiters. In the first few years converting the transport ships into long term orbiting habitats, the orbiters will need the ground support that the colonists can provide. "The planet

sends up protein and metals". The orbiters are not going to set up an orbiting barnyard and farm to supply them with food when they can get it from the people downstairs. So, if the orbiters refuse to help with the research to cure the plague or to develop a vaccine, the colonists stop shipping up food and supplies. In other words, "Help us or starve!"

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RICHARD S HOLMES
28 Sever St.
Worcester, Mass. 01609

I was impressed by Keller's article on non-sentient sexes; obviously a lot of careful thought went into his scenarios on Porthos and Cardigan, and I don't think I should attempt to comment on them. I hope it's needless to say that said scenarios don't apply directly to the question that prompted the article, regarding the plausibility of non-sentient female kzin. In the case of the kzin we have a non-human race in an empire around its home planet - at least, it's usually assumed that Kzin was not originally a colony of a long-forgotten home world. Furthermore, I think we have to assume that all kzin females are non-sentient, and that they are so from birth. It's hard to see how such a situation could come out of Darwinian evolution; plague seems more likely. Perhaps some or all of the genes that result in sentience in a kzin reside on the X and Y chromosomes; perhaps long ago some sort of virus thingum (((scientific precision! I love it!))) infected the kzin and altered these genes in egg and sperm cells; perhaps as a result any kzin born with two X's (female) would not be sentient, whereas one born with an X and a Y would be. If enough females were infected in a short enough time, then succeeding generations of females would also be non-sentient.

In any case, the question of who rears the kzin young is critical. I don't think the situation is as impossible as it might seem at first glance, however. Certainly a non-sentient female couldn't do it; nor would I expect Speaker-To-Animals to do it (unless we postulate that a male kzin is psychologically incapable of mauling someone who smells like a member of his family, or something hokey like that). But remember that not all male Kzinti are like Speaker. Remember Telepath, from "The Soft weapon"? Could he raise the kids? Here we run into an opposite problem: The occasional urge to strangle that a parent feels toward his children is probably only slightly stronger than the occasional urge an adolescent has to strangle his parents. I see Telepath lasting about ten minutes with a "teenage" kzin. But perhaps there are other kzinti, different from both Speaker and Telepath, literally crazy enough to like to raise the young, and physically able to deal with them.

Another possibility comes to my mind, one that might possibly arise by evolutionary means. Perhaps male kzinti are also non-sentient until adolescence. Until that age they could be raised by the females; after becoming sentient they could be educated by the males.

Or maybe, shortly after birth, the young lock themselves inside Skinner boxes and stay there until they can fend for themselves.

Mike Blake's fanzine column was very good - I'd just recently been thinking about the diversity one finds in fanzines, and I'm glad to know that at least one other person thinks they're categorizable. I'm unfamiliar with RUNE, but from the description I think I ought to look into it.

BRENDAN DUBOIS
283 Dover Point Rd.
Dover, NH 03820

Mark M. Keller's article was very good, and very well thought out, and written. His article reminds me of a story that Richard Peck had in the November '75 issue of AMAZING. It was called "Heel!" and told the story of how the Chinese had developed a bacteriological weapon that would kill off 20% of the females and 99.9% of the males. The vast majority of the males left were also sterile, so we had a situation where there were only several thousand males who were potent in the US. What happened then was that each male was forced to give sperm at sperm banks, because "servicing the females" was inefficient.

Mike Blake's fanzine review column is fine, but suffers from an ailment that most fanzine columns seem to have for me. All of the fanzines that he has mentioned have been either sent away for, or are in my collection. In other words, Mike's column isn't any help for me, because I've already heard of those fanzines. I hope that in the future, he can find some fanzines that I haven't heard of yet.

Don D'Amassa is his usually literary and interesting self in those two book reviews. Where does he find the time for all his logs, articles, book reviews and whatnot? Tell us, Sheila, is there truth to the rumor that Don has cloned himself?

((ask Al Sirois.)))

[illegible]

We also heard from Jim Hudson, John L Grey, Erwin S. (Filthy Pierre) Strauss, Don Wood with some poems I hope to publish next issue, and Stan Woolston. The rest of you are not Doing Your Part.

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