
1. Wading In The Old Wave

Although NONE BUT MAN is a craftsmanlike yarn that will repay the time invested with entertainment, I feel that as the years go by there is decreasing reason to regard its author, Gordon Dickson, as more than the uncomplicated storyteller he is.

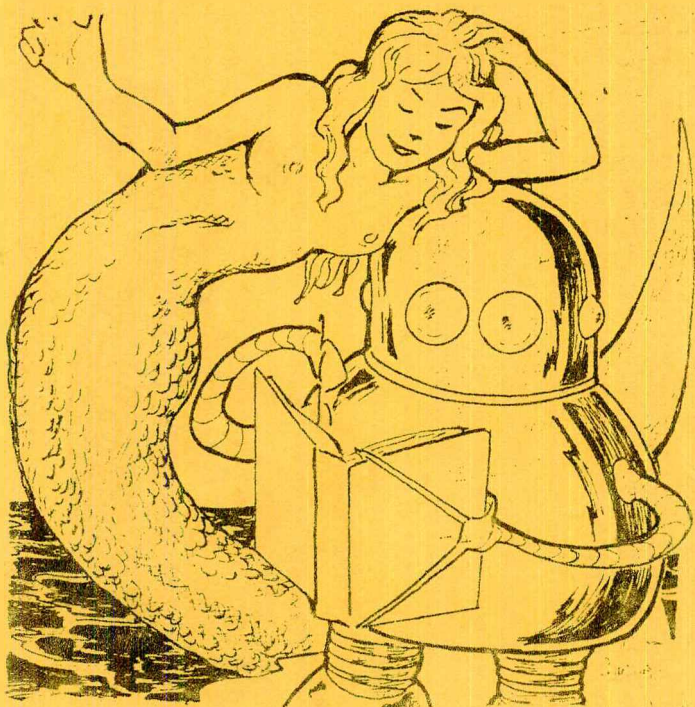
Cully When, spaceship hijacking hero of a series of short stories in the late Sixties, reappears in NONE BUT MAN (1969/77 DAW #266) under arrest on Earth -- lured there after a series of offstage events begun when the Frontier Worlds of the Pleiades won their rebellion against the home system. Paranoia, in Dickson's term, runs rampant through the home system's billions who somehow desperately fear takeover by the Frontier Worlds, while they also nervously confront an alien claim to the Frontier. The Moldaug, somnolent on the matter for 40 years, have laid claim to the Pleiades. Dumped in a top security ocean prison, When promptly comes under the care of the only man in the human race with extensive knowledge of the language and culture of the Moldaug, Will Jamieson, and Doak Walker, a human time bomb waiting for the right spot in the plot to go off. Exploiting Jamieson's unique awareness of Moldaug culture and mythology, When launches small-scale terrorist operations inside Moldaug space -- hitting key spots one is skeptical to find in existence.

In the hands of Christopher Anvil this would be a comedy plot, it's so dependent on coincidence, narrow psychologies and a more than willing suspension of disbelief. In Dickson's case the work is quite serious, and dogmatic, with only his skillful employment of concrete detail sustaining a sense of plausibility. Somewhat hazy on the big points, Dickson finely threshes out the technical detail. Somehow I prefer Anvil's results in works like STRANGERS TO PARADISE.



THE SPEED OF DARK 12

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Among those large points are axioms about the Moldaug culture which I find unconvincing. Supposedly the two cultures' conflict over humanity's concept of Rightness (correct or responsible action) and the Moldaug's code of Respectability (perhaps a mixture of personal honor and pressure to behave acceptably in the eyes of one's people whether or not it is a utilitarian action). I came away from NONE BUT MAN in doubt that a culture could run a high technology empire without the emphasis being on correct action. Alien or not, the Moldaug must cope with the same physical universe. The

culture postulated by Dickson doesn't seem competitive. Especially with the very convenient (to When) inheritance laws among them where lack of a corpse prevents a smooth transition between generations. Cully's kidnap stratagem wouldn't mean very much in the human race -- certainly any culture reliant on spacefaring technology must have adapted to the idea of catastrophe and missing persons. When one has been 'spoiled' by the realistic aliens of Niven, one is unlikely to accept the excuse "Well, that's cause they're aliens" for plot shortcuts that don't stand up to analysis. There are a lot of cultures on earth that elevate tribal status above efficiency, including some big countries, but the ones that became important nations -- let us say Japan is one -- made achievement and Western-style productivity a means to retaining that status, instead of opposing the two ends.

The fate of Senior Member Amos Braight, revealed early in the book if you add the right facts together, sums up my feelings about Dickson's alleged expertise on military and political matters. Braight is caricatured as a mental case highly influential in the lives of billions, and we are supposed to believe that everyone else is not only unaware of it, but too intimidated by Braight's popularity to disagree with him.

Overall, a good suit of clothes for the emperor.

2. Clothes Counter of the Third Kind

The income of a brassiere invoice typist and order checker allows for little more than browsing through the likes of a David Orgell catalog. I found one my boss had brought into the office; on the back cover were two prime items, both turned out of the shops of Peter Carl Faberge, jeweler to the czars. The first was an agate, black-and-white bulldog with a gold and diamond collar. This four-inch figure could be yours for \$25,000. The second item was a Faberge Easter Egg, actually an enameled ostrich egg in an intricate gold, jeweled

stand, the sort famed as an Easter gift from Czar Nikolas to Queen Victoria. The Orgell price: \$100,000. (The money aside, I wouldn't want the responsibility of preserving such an object!)

To get your blood pressure back down, take a turn through the Lalique crystal display. Lalique is a famous maker of crystal sculpture -- among other uses the rich have had for it was as hood ornaments on expensive autos of the 10s and 20s. Orgell's cheapest offering was a 3½ inch owl for \$46. I liked a crystal toad on the same page, but the \$125 fee dampened my enthusiasm.

For some reason I like to read through catalogs, and many fanzines, backwards. The explanation probably is structural: the most demanding, time-consuming items are at the front, while the material in the back can be conveniently nibbled at. So as I paged backwards through Orgell's catalog I came to an enamel, sterling silver and vermeil chess set, 21" in size with blue and gold squares, and a tiny post-and-chain railing around the edge of the board -- as if in Alice where the pieces could fall over the side. \$12,000 anyone?

Many items were silver service pieces from the Georgian and Victorian eras. From George III's setting, a small cruet with cobalt bottles and silver bottle name-tags seemed just the thing to dispense vinegar and ketchup, provided you had \$1500 to indulge such fancies. Victorian silversmith John Hunt was represented with two equestrian figurines, beautifully detailed, 15½" high, half a dozen for \$100,000.

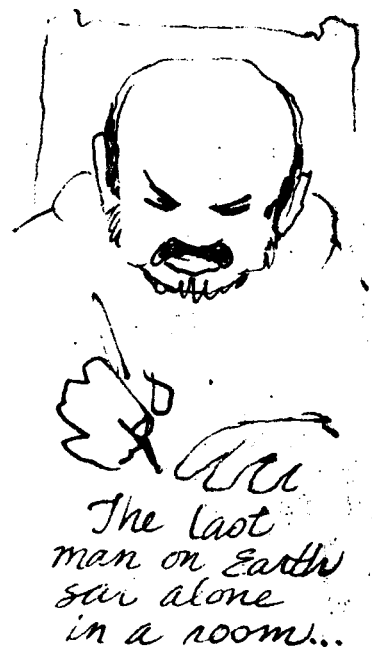
On the inside front page were some odds and ends of contemporary crystal racehorse sculpture, fine pieces, available for spare change from \$4500 to \$7500. The cover photo itself concerned a Peter Carl Faberge sterling silver horse, 18" tall and "18 wide/long, price upon request. Considering what prices were named in the booklet, it staggers the imagination as to what this may cost.

Now where did I put the Sears catalog?

3. Monday Night Meatball

Once in awhile closet sports fans come into the light in fandom -- and here I am. Just wanted to warn the rest of you so you can hurry on to the egoscanning if the topic repelled you.

The harmful effect of Monday Night Football on participating teams' records has been argued more this year than anytime I can remember. Coaches, when they comment, seem to agree that the scheduling of a game on Monday night costs them too much valuable time to prepare for the following week's opponent. One has only five, rather than six days to study film and practice a game plan, and possibly less -- I doubt a team practices the Tuesday after they appear on tv.



I pulled the pro football log out of the paper this week and went to work analyzing the situation. Because the season hasn't been completed, all these statistics concern only games played through Dec 11. That includes a dozen Monday night games, 18 teams, 24 examples of week-after results. The first thing I found is two thirds of the time the teams on Monday night lost the following Sunday. (8-16). But I wanted to make sure I wasn't being simplistic about it, and broke the survey down to see whether playing at home was easier on a team than having to travel. Monday night participants who played the following Sunday at home (12) won only 3 games, while those who had to play on foreign turf the next week won 5; no great shakes either way. Within those categories, three teams played the Monday game at home, and the following game at home -- two out of three lost. The strange thing is that teams who played Monday away and the next Sunday away won three out of the four games in question. That so surprised me I broke it down team by team to see what happened.

The teams involved: Minnesota, Oakland and Washington, who won, and New England, who lost. Their respective opponents were Atlanta, Cleveland, Philadelphia and the New York Jets. In hindsight, one would have picked all four to win, and New England lost a shootout in New York 30-27 (ironically, the identical score as when Cleveland beat them in overtime on Monday night). I can only suppose that the NFL scheduling office worked this all out beforehand, and chose only the strongest teams for away and away assignments -- two Super Bowl Teams, and two other playoff teams from 1976, against three poor 1976-record teams, and one, Cleveland, that was better-than-average.

Finally I wore out my fingers on a hand calculator to determine average performances. One study showed that on Monday Night Football teams played to the spotlight -- in twelve games (twenty-four team-cases) thirteen teams scored more, and 13 allowed more points, than their average performances in their other games; eleven scored less, or played better defense. The results of the week after, compared to average performances in all games played, indicated that they scored below-average 15 to 9, and gave up more points than usual 13 to 11. How devastating Monday night seems to have been can be pointed out, first by stats -- 4 times both participants went out and lost the following week. Then some graphic examples; Monday LA beat Minn. 35-3, but in New Orleans Sunday, lost. Two teams struggling to make the playoffs played on Monday: on Sunday Miami fell to New England and Baltimore was upset by Detroit.

Quite evidently the lost day takes its toll, and only the strongest teams keep winning. For the rest, the home field advantage is no help at all. What to do about it? It depends on whether you like Monday Night football itself. Its concentration on the better clubs acts as a handicap, or levelling device -- ten clubs didn't appear on Monday Night, and only Denver among them will make the playoffs. At least the stiffes are left mostly unmolested to work out their destinies unimpeded by lost practice and Monday travel. Since football is in existence to entertain, the popularity of Monday night's game probably far outweighs the problems it poses.

4. Actual Mailing Comments on FAPA (Can You Believe It?)

THE FANTASY AMATEUR: I hope that the notation indicating my imminent loss of membership was cancelled out by the treasury report which indicated my dues payment. I doubt it, but one can always hope.

LESTER BOUTILLIER: You have described in a nutshell the beauty of the FAPA system of membership saving. Not only does it inflict agony and pennance upon the person trying to salvage his membership, in some cases the petition we receive from that member is the only contact we have all year from him. Those who think that no extensions of membership should be permitted are pleased by the excruciating inconvenience, while those who think that they should be easier to get at least have one chance a year to hear from that member. What's more, the signing and returning of membership-saving petitions is in some cases more activity than some members would normally indulge in. You should not be so quick to criticize a system that compels activity! Nor in some instances one that lets a less experienced fan have the occasional thrill of receiving a card from a legendary Fapan previously thought to have faded from mortal ken. // At this time FAPA is experiencing a real throbbing of activity; there are a couple dozen members who actually publish or participate in apac outside FAPA. But it is not always easy to cope with this tendency for members to exert themselves. In the first place, one now sometimes receive petitions to save membership circulated on behalf of a delinquent member, rather than by that member himself. Boo hiss. That way they don't do anything... Then when we had almost helped Pelz talk himself into accepting the voters' mandate, and break up the ticket, Glicksohn phoned with a late vote and Pelz decided it wasn't worthwhile. (Not that receiving a call from Glicksohn is normally a debilitating experience.) // Can't understand why Pour-nelle left the Suncon business meeting after hearing that Amazing and Fantastic might wind up nominated for fanzine -- he was instrumental in the SFWA's decision to that effect not so long ago. // Haven't you ever tasted smogberries?

HARRY WARNER: Your comment on the SF Book Club offerings that turn up at local garage sales "with a mendacious DAMAGED on the flyleaf" parallels things here at the brassiere warehouse. Returned merchandize considered hopelessly defective, or below standards for resale, is disposed of through Goodwill and a nunnery. It also makes its way into the world in paper bags of employees in the Returns department who seem to have established a cottage industry in the stuff.

MEADE FRIERSON: Occam's Razor has been a disservice to the creative mind. Otherwise everyone would realize that the Speed of Dark can be measured by finding out how long it takes darkness to back up and make way for photons. // You mean that if some villain accidentally put my name on some Ballantine books they'd run me out of fandom? Or do you mean, in saying "hate to lose" you'd then find me too easy to misplace?

PATRICK HAYDEN: Very attractive zine, particularly for one done in ditto. What is the point, though, of all that reprint stuff?//And beware -- publishing lists of one's own fanzines is the second-to-last resort of the incompetent! (Contrary to legend, violence is not the last resort of the incompetent, but rather, publishing one's own linos.)

TERRY CARR: This conreport indirectly suggests that I've lost at Russian Roulette -- all those worldcons I went to, wondering "Where is Terry Carr? Did anyone see Terry Carr? Why didn't Terry Carr come?" and the first one I skip is the one you attend.

TERRY HUGHES: To footnote your comment on Rich Mann, he is working for Arthur Young and company.

MIKE GLICKSOHN: Jayzus Kryst, bloke... Mike Glicksohn running a dittoed one-shot through FAPA? I wouldn't have credited it before, but now I must believe the rumor Paczolt is spreading around that you have secretly given up drinking.

Now I seem to have slogged to the bottom of the pile. Whether the result seems worth the effort, I thought I owed it to the members to put out some kind of mcs. Now that FAPA has broken away from its traditional image as graveyard for the ancients by accumulating so many active genzine fans on its roster, there is actually a give-and-take to have got-and-took. The very ancients themselves are joining in with mcs of their own. Just a couple years ago, if Harry Warner didn't mc my zine I had to go back to the previous mailing and make sure I had one in...

There are also quite a few genziners coming up on the waitlist

If there's anyone in FAPA who doesn't double over and feel ill at mimeo stencils costing \$30 a hundred, I recommend Gestetner's new (or soon-to-be-available, whichever) white stencils. These require no pliofilm, no backing sheet, can be typed on a typewriter with the ribbon engaged. Corrections are still made with corflu. The quality of repro is, if anything, slightly better than with wax stencils. Anyone interested to see a specimen of fanac using white stencils should get FILE 770 #2 and look at the first page of the FAAn Awards rundown.

FILE 770 (4/\$1.50) is my response to KARASS' announcement that it will soon suspend publication, and encouragement by Linda Bushyager. The first issue has already been circulated to 220 fans (including most of the FAPAns I thought likely to be interested). Anyone I overlooked is welcome to a sample issue provided they write to me directly. The second issue should be out when you read this, featuring (1) FAAn nominating and DUFF ballots, (2) a commentary on fanpublishing in 1977, (3) a report on the Fanzine Activity Achievement Awards, including a list of past winners, and a full list of all people and zines receiving nominations for the '77 Best Editor and Best Issue categories, (3) a brief commentary by Aljo Svoboda on his recent political activity and jail term, (4) convention listings and any CoAs received, (5) Ben Indick announces gafiation, (6) artwork and electrostenciled photos, (7) color work, (8) responses to reportage in the first issue by New Orleans fans, (9) a loc or two, (10) more than a dozen items of hard news -- I may have more by print time. Gee, I may have to buy bigger staples. In outline, its policy will be slightly different from past newszines of its kind by using bulk mail (except at Hugo time), by publishing opinions which conflict with the editor's, in fact soliciting some of them in the form of columnists, and running bits of data which aren't news but illuminate the condition of fandom. Providers of news and other useful matter will be reciprocated with free issues, similar to the policy of other extant newszines.