



THE ZED

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SAPS 56

String Repaired

You never can tell when you might want a bit of string repaired. It might make all the difference when you must make your escape in a hand-stitched blue serge zeppelin.

I have here a whole collection of interlineations from the Goon Show, but it wouldn't be right to string them out (even if I had material to string them on), since the Goon Show is one long series of interlineations anyway: Silence when you speak to me! ... One penny? Let's live! ... Why is that a fake bullet-hole? - He was murdered by a fake bullet. - What a foul way to die! ... You mean people don't want their unders taken any more? ... My eyes aren't what they used to be. They used to be my ears. ... It's hell over there. Only last week, an old lady fell off her electric stilts. ... Meanwhile, aboard one of Her Majesty's gas stoves in a Sussex forest--- ... Get into this cannon. (Sound of firing) Consider yourself fired. ... Hold this missing boa constrictor. ... And now, an impression of a horsehair statue of a bus conductor listening to the Ray Ellington Quartet. (The quartet plays its regular musical interlude.)

I am a mathematician, sir. I never permit myself to think.

I was eating a kraken, lotus, and tomato sandwich the other day when I was beset with a problem of cosmic importance. No, I'm lying; nothing ever happened to me while eating a kraken, lotus, and tomato sandwich, except that tomato juice runs down my wrists. It happened when Poul and I were just sitting around and talking.

The problem is this: Is salmon better broiled, or in aspic with mayonnaise? What if there was only one salmon steak left on Earth: how would you cook it?

"Think," I said, "of the last salmon steak on Earth."

"There would be a knock at the door," said Poul.

"Good God!" I cried, aghast. "What a time for company to show up!"

In the face of all that, is it really necessary to explain that this is Karen Anderson speaking?

I AM PUTTING MY ROOTS DOWN

And so, I hope, are the things I've been planting. Such as the pretty little bushes with glossy leaves that are almost too big for them --- the bushes are only about eight inches tall. I bought five of them at 33¢ each, reasonable enough even if several of them died, I thought. But I chose the healthiest-looking and most generally likely looking of the lot, especially choosing those with the most buds. As I write, the patio is the sweeter for four gardenia blossoms.

I'm on the patio for two reasons. In the first place, the house is what my family describes as stinking hot. We've been having real summer for some time now. A few cool days are succeeded by days when the temperature is already 80 by nine in the morning, and in the afternoon perhaps 110, dry as an oven. The ginger by the kitchen door is suddenly four feet high; the Mexican dahlia is erupting (but it has a good twelve feet to go before Thanksgiving); the plums are beginning to ripen, and the fig tree's appearance needs a more discreet placement of fig leaves. Beyond the limits of sprinklers, Tammuz is dead, and Coeurl comes home from mousing expeditions with his black fur tufted with tenaciously prickled ryegrass seeds. The hills are brown. (But Tammuz will return again.)

The other reason I'm on the patio is that my desk is full of the clutter I picked up from all the other flat surfaces in the living room yesterday.

It's fairly cool out here at the moment; temperature 76, a slight movement of air, the sun gone. The sky is faintly flushed over the western horizon where the hills turn lavender. Ered Luin: those western hills are never brown like the ones to the east. We are far enough from them that their liveoak-green is always tinged with blue, and in morrowdim they are almost the color of lapis-lazuli. At evendim they pass through all possible shades of amethyst; they are like alexandrite, their proper color may be either green or purple.

The cliff swallows dart and soar. Their home is under the long, narrow porch (but its owners doubtless call it a deck) of the house above us on the ridge. From there, in the evening, I hear the call that (muezzin-like) establishes the hour: Here Duke! Here Duchess! Here Duke here Duchess! Here Duchess! And (having taken one final sniff at the poplar by the corner of the lots) the pair of boxers trot back to thier kennel below the swallows' nests.

I had thought the bougainvillia was giving up the fight to grow by the post where I uprooted a too-tall bush, so I added some moonflower seeds. Two sprouts came up. The other day I decided that only one was a moonflower (a vine related to morning-

glory), and the other was from a seed of the castor bean we took out after the New Year frosts. That left us with only one chance -- slightly snail-eaten, at that -- of having moonflowers on the post, but I'm relieved to see that the bougainvillia is growing more leaves. I wish the moonflower would hurry up, though. The spot is rather bare.

The situation is a rather pretty one. I seem to remember describing it before, but I don't think in SAPS, so I'll go ahead. The small picture window in the living room looks onto the patio, which is about ten feet wide. The hillside goes up rather steeply, so there's a sort of seat that's really part of a board wall four feet high. Just opposite the window, it's only three feet high between two of the posts that support the fiberglass roof. This frames a space about 4' x 10', behind which there's a miniature garden that runs up the hill for about ten feet. The post on the right is where the bougainvillia is; on the left, there's a pine that grows altogether too fast considering that it mustn't exceed four feet in height. I keep pinching its buds and the like. Right down in front, trailing over the seat, are two prostrate junipers. A little left of center, behind one of the junipers, is a three-level recirculating fountain run by a little electric pump. There's a small floodlight pointing down at it from the upper left corner. To the right of the fountain is a dwarf camellia with curving branches. Behind, supported by a board retaining wall, is a weeping juniper about three feet tall, which shows no signs of being in a hurry to grow, thank Phthallo. The picture is completed by canasta-de-oro, honeysuckle, and two kinds of ice-plant.

I thought it was still light out, but found I couldn't make out what I was writing, so fetched the Trouble Light and hung it in the ivy overhead. It's more useful than the relatively immobile flood light which is, after all, intended to shine on the fountain. In unplugging the one and plugging the other, I must have touched the rosemary; I can smell it on my hands as I type.

No wonder I needed light; it's nine o'clock! Even if day-before-yesterday was the longest day of the year (and I went up to the Bevatron and danced widdershins around it that night).

Not really dancing, nor all the way around it; but I did go widdershins around the Bevatron, actually and literally. So did Jack Vance. We were really looking at the 709, being shown it by a man who works there, but the Bevatron was just across the road, so . . .

The most wonderful part of it, though, was when we went into the main control room with Phthallo-knows-how-many oscilloscopes giving continuous reports on what the monster was doing, plus enough assorted lights make even John Campbell happy. Off in one corner was a padlocked plywood door with a sheet of paper taped to it. There was something to the effect that "we are trying (again) to improve our instruments, and hope we'll be through by Friday". You can imagine the sense of wonder I felt when I read

the scrawled signature: "E. Segre".

Somehow, nothing I'd ever read or seen -- including the swimmingpool reactor at Livermore, where I saw my first "live" radiation-trefoil -- made the whole atomic-power scene quite so real and immediate, something that people are doing, as seeing Emilio Segre's signature on that sheet of paper. It's like the time we got a letter from Poul's brother, with a South Pole postmark: the South Pole suddenly took on a much realer existence for me.

It is almost as dark as it is going to get tonight. The west is still a little pale, but the half-moon in the translucent blue-gray sky shone brilliantly around my shadow as I walked around the house just now. There are not many stars. I think the heat has made the air a little hazy.

I PULL UP SOME ROOTS.

My fall from tenth to seventeenth place in the Pillar Poll shocked me. Evidently, SAPS has changed more than I realized, and I suppose I've changed too. I had thought that SAPS and I liked and even understood each other; that my FAPA membership was secondary. But I find I rate far higher in FAPA than I do in SAPS.

I thought, on that bitter day (which also saw a story of mine rejected by F&SF), that I should drop out of SAPS; I even went so far as to consider leaving fandom and devoting my time to trying to write professionally, without wasting energy and imagination on fan writing. But I thought how much it meant in my life . . .

Obviously, I'm staying in fandom, even in SAPS. But I'll never give SAPS the kind of effort, any more, that it took to put out the last Zed: the one with starry tissue paper and gold medallions and the script of Alice in TWLand. Hardly anybody wants it. Instead, I'll do just about what you see in this Zed -- mere chatter to keep up my membership. From now on, most of my publishing energy will be concentrated in VORPAL GLASS, which I publish for the GGFS; ALIF (my FAPAzine) will come next, and then the Zed: for old sakes' sake.

In the interest of completeness, I'll mention that the story rejected by F&SF has now been sold to Fantastic, and that F&SF has bought a set of haiku. They were haiku that I had intended to put in the Zed.

Speaking of haiku . . . In my bathing suit

I move the icy sprinkler:

Still "Fair and Warmer."

Another haiku, also prompted by the moment:

New quire of stencils:
So clean they smell, before I
Open the corfluo.

WE'RE REALLY GOING TO HAVE A CONVENTION

So I told Honey, the day she phoned to ask me if I'd gotten very far at hand-lettering the captions of the Westercon program booklet, and I was able to tell her that Ed Brandt had run off all but the cover on his multilith the day before. We're just now in that period when all the things we've talked about getting around to are suddenly done: the Hugo-shaped candles have arrived, the program booklet is finished, 105 local newspapers and radio stations have been sent a mimeo'd release (which has paid off in a story in the book column of the giant Oakland Trib, plus promises of on-the-spot coverage with pictures, and a small radio station will plug the con for a solid week), the actual program was long ago worked out and won't need any more thought until someone breaks a leg, precedence of speakers and seating at the speakers' table is settled, the auction material --- gobs of it --- on hand, and so on down to the question of who is going to sit there and sell banquet tickets. (A girl from Honey's office has been talked into it.) We actually have a convention ready to roll. And it doesn't even start until a week from tomorrow morning!

PLAYING WITH THE BIG BOYS

I glanced at the black-and-white chips that showed I was five dollars in debt, then at the stack of chips Tony Boucher had just matched the pot with to buy a three. There was nearly eight dollars in the pot now. I considered the nine I had showing and the three (free, because it didn't show) that I had in the hole, plus the other cards in front of me.

"Raise you a dime," I said. Very little of that eight dollars was mine; someone else had had to buy a three already.

The betting went round, while Mick McComas and Honey Wood complained to each other about their bad cards. Eventually there was a call.

"What do you have five of?" said Tony.

"Spades," I said, and fitted my wild cards into a straight flush. Tony sighed over his four aces and I raked in the pot.

Well, sir, there I was . . .

The evening continued; Reg Bretnor, although he was our host for the night, went to bed with his flu-or-something, and Helen brought out a midnight snack; Mick went home to Tony's, where he was staying during his move from Orinda to Berkeley; we finally played ourselves out.

I finished five cents ahead.

ONE LAST PAGE

... order to leave the back of the cover blank, as, I prefer to do.

It is now eleven o'clock, and surely as dark as this night will be; but the sky is hardly darker than before, and though my shadow was sharp as I walked around the house just now, it was not intense enough to blot out the oilstains on the driveway. There are no more stars than there were.

Curiously, it is much warmer on the other side of the house; I would have thought that the sheltered patio, where the last light shines, would hold the warmth much longer. We had supper on the front porch because the patio was too warm. Now it is reversed.

When I went into the kitchen just now for some leftover chicken and salami salad and a fresh beer, I saw that Topsy had arranged herself in a striking pose even for such a habitual poseur (or do I mean poseuse?). She was displaying her rich silver-gray and white blue-point-Siamese coloring against a turquoise tablecloth, beside a bowl of nectarines.

She thinks very highly of our new rug. It's a sort of stencil blue, particularly the color of a stencil with about 100 watts of light behind it, and sets her off magnificently. She sits on it far more than she did on the sewn-together straw mats (tatami) we had before. The new rug is softer than the tatami, of course, but there are softer things yet: sofa, padded chairs, etc. But the effect on the rug is so much more striking. I'm not sure about other cats, but Topsy certainly has perfectly good color vision. Either that, or she's a telepath.

IN WESTERN LANDS

Samwise Gamgee's song has always seemed specially appropriate here; in this western land, we have finches in the ivy and a birch (if no beeches) in the front yard. I sang it to Astrid tonight when she went to bed; and she interrupted me to ask if I had made it up. She wondered about the finches.

"No, it's in the book about Sauron," I said. She likes the Ores' Marching Song and knows a good deal about Sauron from it. I finished the song.

"He could say 'farewell' to the stars when it's daytime," she said.

"The stars don't go away in the daytime. You just can't see them. The song means that even if the Shadow keeps him from seeing the stars, he will still think of them."

Astrid considered this for a moment.

"That's really true, too," she said.