

EGOBEO

A Fantasy Satire



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FOREWORD

EGOBOO is strictly fiction - its characters, places and incidents are fictional. It is, admittedly, satire, but satire without the sting of malice or animosity. It is a mirror like one of those you find at amusement places, laughably distorting what they reflect. And as being such a mirror, it is held up for the benefit of a certain element of Fandom; so that that element may see itself as it is seen.

Specifically, it is desired that a particular individual will observe of himself the caricature herein, the picture being drawn from the impression made by sundry of the fellow's writings. Such individual will have only to open his mouth in rebuttal to show that he does. It is the purpose of EGOBOO (insofar as it needs a purpose other than the hours of amusement its preparation already has provided its author and publisher) to point out to this irresponsible character the ridiculous aspect of his contention, that his opinions are of greater value than the accomplished WORKS of any other individual, fan, amateur, or professional!

Continued inside Back Cover

EGOB OO

Or,

THE TIME TRAVELER'S TRAVAIL

A Romantic Fantasy of the Fortieth Century

The Time Traveler stepped into his time machine and slammed the door.

Resolute and grim of purpose, he turned the branistan on the frumistat. Instantly, the walls of his laboratory blurred, wavered, became an encroaching, opalescent mist surcharged with flickering electrical manifestations of the tortus quanta. There was no bodily sensation. He had known there would be none, though the new scene winked on almost simultaneously with vanishment of the old in startling suddenness that was rather like a physical shock.

At first, he thought an immense forest surrounded him. He was conscious of a stalked, branchy mass on every hand, toweringly visible through the quartz vision panels of the machine. The tangle arched and interlaced overhead, became a soaring canopy that hovered with claustrophobic intimacy over the dwarfed time machine.

Then he saw that indeed they were not trees, but skeletal masses of steel, beryllium, copper, strange and un-

known alloys of multihued metals that glittered fantastically in the gloom which was scarcely alleviated by penetrating random shafts of the westering sun.

Near and far in the jungle-like mass, flickering lights blazed, waned, and died. Screaming red, brilliant green, electric blue—everywhere the tube-lights flared in scintillant coruscations of electrically excited gases. Their varicolored glow clashed in an eye-scaring jangle.

"Goodness gravius, Flavius! This is the place," murmured the Time Traveler and stepped out of the machine.

The time machine vanished immediately, but the Time Traveler only smiled. It had not gone far. By a mental beam, he had anchored it in hyperspace, so that it would always be within reach, wherever he might go in the three-dimensional continuum of this world. It needed but a thought to recall the machine at once.

Sound assaulted his ears. All about him in the vast skeleton of the metallic structure, machines hummed and whirred, snickered, crackled, and zapped. The Time Traveler strolled casually to the side of a busy little man performing with an oil-can upon a monstrous machine that snored with a sonorous vibration.

"I say," he spoke politely. "When are we?"

The little man whirled, a fierce expression curling his smooth upper lip. In this world, no man grew whiskers. The Time Traveler was to become accustomed to the sight of men with hairless, rose-petal cheeks.

"Another Throw Up out o' the religious Past!" he snarled, clutching the oil-can to his scraggly bosom.

"I *am* from the Past," the Traveler agreed, "but what

do you mean by 'religious'?"

"Old style, bud!" snapped the little man. "You call your period A. D. for religious reasons. Religion has been pseudoscientifically proved to be a psychopathic aberration in the pre-Fan stage of intellectual development. We are used to Throw Ups. Whenever one of you proto-fen gets deep enough into pseudoscientific principles, you fool around until you get thrown up here, where you're old-fashioned and superfluous—*this is ultimate Fandom!*"

The Time Traveler mused briefly upon fen he had known who had vanished suddenly from fandom.

A goddess-like creature, clad in an air of pensive sweetness (and not much else), drifted by, clutching a pair of wicked-looking ray-guns to her marble bosom.

"*She's a Heroine!*" the little man observed happily.

"I beg your pardon—what did you say?"

"Whaja say—whaja say?" pipingly mimicked the other. Whooshe? Why, a Heroine, of course! That's a Class, bub! And *some* class, too, I'd say!"

"I don't get this," begged the Time Traveler. "You seem to find it not at all unreasonable that I am from the Past. You should also realize, then, that I, like any stranger, have no particularly accurate idea of what your civilization is like. What world *is* this?"

The little man spat carefully.

"This is EGOBOO, prime world of the Pseudoscientific Universe. We represent the zenith of accomplishment of the Pseudoscientific Principle promulgated, advocated, and practiced by the race of Fen. That babe you just remarked ankling past is a Heroine." He looked wistful.

"'Course, nobody dast touch a Heroine 'cept a Hero.'" He sighed, then brightened. "But there's Jills an' Space Floozies for the rest of us! Y'see, the Fen are divided into classes, Heroes, Heroines, Rocketeers, Spacehands, and the like. There's about a million classes, and more are created every year by the Prime Pseudoscientist."

"Who is this Prime Pseudoscientist?"

A beatific expression transfixed the features of the meagre little man.

"The gre-e-a-at gho-hod Vermilionn Swampwaterr XCVI!" he chanted and promptly fell flat on his face in a fit of cerebral ecstasy.

Entirely helpless in the face of this unexpected turn of events, the Time Traveler carefully stepped over the prostrate, twitching fellow and sought a path deeper into the metallic jungle.

He followed a broad lane through the forest of beams and girders, observing with an alive interest the bizarre tangle of machines, machines, and more machines, of which the planet seemed to be entirely composed in this ultimate age of pseudoscience. Every imaginable device was represented, each one functioning without purpose, clicking, buzzing, whirring, and glowing.

Light pleasure cars and heavy haulers whizzed past him on the broad highway, each at an identical, dizzying speed. Fen in the pleasure cars waved gaily at him while passing, and when he gestured with a thumb, they shouted, "No room! No room! Can't stop! Can't stop!" like characters from a scene in Alice in Wonderland.

"Hsssstt!"

The sound pierced sharply through the whirl of racing motors, and the Time Traveler looked quickly around.

"Hey! Look up here!"

The Time Traveler looked up and beheld a fellow in crimson cloak, green tunic, broad-belted yellow pegtops, boots, and an aviation helmet possessing wings and a crest. He was perched on the lower rung of a swaying ladder of ropy metal that seemed to depend from a point above the arching, interlaced roof.

"Are you a Hero?" the Traveler asked mildly.

"Nah!" hissed the apparition. "I'm a Radical spy! I just dress like a Hero to fool the Pseudos—they don't dare lay hand on a Hero, y'know. . . .C'mon up!"

"I can't fly—really!" said the Time Traveler.

In response, the pseudo-Superman swooped to ground level and seized the Traveler around the waist with one powerful arm. The Traveler felt himself leave the ground. There was a rush of wind in his face, a sensation of extreme ascending velocity; then he dangled with the Futureman a foot below the open side door of a hovering air-car.

"In you go!" grunted the fellow, and thrust the Time Traveler upward into the machine, no mean feat for a synthetic Hero to accomplish, and followed agilely after.

For a long moment he stared down at the matted canopy of metal; then with slitted eyes quickly scanned the horizon. Satisfied that the darting shapes he observed were only spaceships departing for and returning from all parts of the Galaxy, he turned to the controls.

"I think we're safe," he muttered, putting the air-car

into motion. "You're lucky I happened to be scanning this sector of EGOBOO with my Fernray Visi-Dissector, Pastman, or them Pseudos would have got you!"

"What makes you think I am from the Past?"

"Your clothes, bud! Nobody but a Fan from the 20th Century, D. A., would wear a rig like that!"

"You mean A. D., don't you?"

"D. A., bud. Dark Ages." The air-car sped with increasing velocity toward the horizon, a blurred streak a hundred feet above the canopy of interlaced metal that appeared to cover the whole of this pseudoscientific world. "You are now in the Third Millenium of the Pseudoscientific Era," he went on, "under the enlightened leadership of Vermillionn Swampwaterr—Verminn XCVI!"

There was an ironic undercurrent to the Futureman's tone that was not lost on the Time Traveler.

"Who are the Radicals?" he asked.

The Futureman scowled apprehensively. "We are an association of Futurefen, Throw Ups from the Past, literary men and women, scientists, doctors, natural philosophers, etc. We live underground in 'The Woods'—where the Pseudos cannot penetrate, because it is guarded by the applications of Real Science, against which the fantastic inventions of Pseudoscience are powerless. How long you been here in EGOBOO, bud?"

"Only a few hours. I left the Past at 1950 A. D."

"Ten years before the uprising of Verminn the First," observed the pilot.

"Who was he?"

"Vermillionn Swampwaterr—'Verminn' for short, y'see.

He founded EGOBOO and the Pseudoscientific Era."

"I recall the name," returned the Time Traveler. "It was considered probably a group synonym for subversive fen—a semantically pseudoscientific plausibility."

"It was after you left," the pilot went on, "that Verminn began to experiment with the Pseudoscientific Principle. Science-fiction, he said, had demonstrably proved itself to be centuries ahead of real science. Scientists, ergo, were outmoded. Verminn's research along lines of the pseudoscientific principle developed the H-bomb in less than two weeks—a problem that had baffled real scientists for years! . . . In 1960, Verminn and both of his friends rose in armed rebellion and issued a Proclamation."

"A proclamation?"

"*The Proclamation*. All fen, it read, were thenceforth to read *only* those science-fiction stories in the s.-f. magazines specifically approved by Verminn. No one should ever again read weird or fantasy stories. Further, the Proclamation went on to say, no fan was to publish any fanzine (we call them fozzines now—it sounds more pseudoscientific) without the express permission of Verminn himself."

"What happened?"

"Revolt, of course. Fandom revolted immediately and in its entirety—a great surprise to Verminn! Displeased, he proclaimed the whole world one State of Fandom; and the world revolted. Verminn's paranoia took the form of a delusion of persecution. Being unable to tolerate this dissidence and evidence of dissatisfaction with his personal prejudices, hatreds, dislikes, spleens, etc., Verminn

whipped out his pseudoscientific H-bomb and practically destroyed the world."

The Time Traveler shuddered.

"And *this* is the outcome! Do none now revolt?"

"Nobody but us Radicals," said the pilot gloomily. "As a consequence of Verminn's H-bomb attack, the editorial staff of *Weird Yarns Magazine* was driven underground, where they continued to publish weirdies for a few fen who preferred the hunted freedom of choosing their own reading material to the outrageous dictates of Verminn, who, of course, justified his course of action with the announcement that he acted 'for the best interests of Fandom'."

"Some such clack as that was a favorite catch-phrase of his in my time," observed the Time Traveler.

"All the advocates of science-fiction as a literary art," the pilot went on, "as well as those who wrote or read fantasy of any kind other than Verminn's particular dish, were hunted down and destroyed in the days following the H-bombing. Samson Seahorse, editor of *Stultifying Science Stories*, Verminn discovered, augmented his meagre editorial income (he was paid in old but uncanceled postage stamps steamed from the return envelopes accompanying accepted mss.—the reason he bought so many)—anyhoo, Seahorse wrote in his spare time and among other things, sold love pulps to the *Boudoir Classics* chain. This so enraged Verminn, he created Seahorse thermidor via the boiled-in-oil method. And so it went."

"But *how* did he discover the science-baffling H-bomb?"

"You are familiar with the A-bomb in your time, and

know that it required a critical mass of U-235 to produce the explosion?"

"Yes, I know that. Go on."

"Applying the principles of pseudoscience, Verminn discovered that a quantity of hydrogen need be brought into proximity with only a *small part* of a critical mess, and it detonated with astounding violence, 1000 times more powerful than the A-bomb! It was easy to extract hydrogen from the air—Verminn himself was the 'critical mess'! The bomb he created was nothing more than a flask of hydrogen with a hair from Verminn's head triggered to penetrate the gas at the crucial moment. Who could withstand him? Of course, Verminn remained bald from the time of the H-bombing; but, as he said, "No sacrifice for the good of Fandom is too great!"

The pilot glanced out the side window.

"Here we are. Hold your hat!"

The air-car dropped with a sickening lurch. The Time Traveler grabbed and hung on. He was momentarily conscious of a wall of green vegetation flashing upward, then the wall became bluish, blurred like the surface of a racing river; and the Time Traveler suspected that they plummeted into the bowels of the earth through some kind of metal-lined tube.

The air-car slowed its descent, feathered to a gentle landing on a smooth, hard surface.

"Welcome to Fantasia!" said the pilot. "The only place in the Universe where science-fiction, weird, and fantasy stories are still written, published, and read!"

"Is that true? How about the Fen of EGOBOO?"

The pilot regarded him pityingly. "They're just *Fen!* They neither write nor read the stuff—they *live* it! In fact, nobody has ever been *permitted* to write anything, except what the ruling Verminn has liked to read. Since no Verminn ever liked anything he read, and since the Verminn line admits its failure at writing fiction; naturally, nothing of the kind has been either written or read in the World of EGOBOO. Hop out, now, and meet the people!"

Myra Futurewoman was the most beautiful creature the Time Traveler had ever seen. Editor of *Weird Yarns Science-Fantasy Magazine* in this extravagant era, her position as Mayoress of Fantasia was tantamount to a queenship over the little band of hardy Radicals.

The Time Traveler's interview took place in the Mayoress' office, far above the gently murmuring city into which the pilot and the official airport greeters had conducted him.

"I used to be a Heroine in the upper world," Myra smiled pensively, "but I tired of the continual pursuit of the Heroes. They *are* such wooden sticks! Moreover, I felt that surely there was a more real purpose in life than wearing a Zapp gun as almost my only garment (*bad* to, you see), and making myself glamorous for annual Cover Girl Day, so I gave up and joined the Radicals."

"I understand," commented the Time Traveler, "that Verminn the First systematically eradicated every protagonist of weird and fantasy literature."

"Of course," agreed Myra, "though some escaped to join the Radicals underground; and others, to be sure, were

destroyed in the H-blasts. Oliver Snardvark, publisher of Baconship Classics, was, on the other hand, captured and made to eat an entire press run of his latest weird opus, hard covers included. 'Since Snardvark has no taste at all,' Verminn commented, 'he can easily swallow his own words without discomfort.' This turned out to be not entirely true.

"Roy Fistfiller, quondam editor of *Emulsifying Stories* and a magazine called *Ultra Planets*, was detected while illegally instructing a kindergarten class in the rudiments of Fistfiller's own brand of pseudoscience. Dick Q. Razorblade, who was present and holding the Great Editor's hat at the time, barely had time to whimper, 'The Deros are coming!' when the H-bomb went off, destroying them both, along with the class of children and seven and a half million other citizens for a hundred miles around. 'I did it for the good of Fandom,' Verminn proclaimed afterwards. 'Why should anybody who would listen to crud like that get a chance to grow up?' When it was pointed out to him that the other seven and a half million citizens had never heard of Fistfiller or of Razorblade's fanciful 'Cabins in the Sky', Verminn merely shrugged and remarked that they probably were only readers of the *Wednesday Morning Journal*, anyway."

"Did he *never* know when to stop?"

"Never!" sighed Myra. "He even attacked the dead! Q. R. Sexcraft, late author of weird stories, he abused by destroying all copies of his works with pseudoscientific Z-rays. 'Cthulhu, my left foot!' the tyrant grumbled as they burned. As for the long-defunct Egrallun Poo, Ver-

minn not only burned his books, but decreed as well that thenceforth theater patrons would have to shift for themselves in the matter of finding seats; and further, he caused the word 'usher' to be struck from the dictionary."

"Didn't Verminn like anybody at all?"

"Well, he *did* demonstrate a predilection for a fan columnist called Bedd Buggs. It turned out, of course, that Buggs was just a synonym for Swampwaterr."

"You meant to say, 'pseudonym'," the Time Traveler interposed gracefully.

"If I did," returned Myra, "it's the first time I ever made *that* mistake!"

"Oh," said the Time Traveler. "Well, tell me—can the Pseudos, or you Fantasiatics, travel in Time?"

A frown furrowed the brow of the alabaster maid.

"The pseudoscientific potentialities of time traveling have not been fully evaluated, owing to certain peculiarities inherent in the Pseudoscientific Principle. Travel into the Past is limited to the beginning of the Pseudoscientific Era. We cannot travel at all into the Future."

The Time Traveler sat bolt upright, then slowly relaxed. A faint smile hovered about his firm mouth.

"Then I *shall* succeed!" he murmured.

"Succeed at what?" queried Myra.

"*At destroying this Universe!*"

Myra stared at him, eyes wide in fascination, as the color ebbed slowly from her cheeks.

"*You are mad!*" she whispered at last. "No one—not even in science-fiction!—has ever *dreamed* of destroying the entire Universe!"

"Henry Kuttner did!" returned the Time Traveler.

"*Saint Henry!*" cried Myra in reverent awe.

"Yes—in *The Time Axis*, Kuttner not only destroyed the Universe, but he rebuilt it into two totally new Universes! I, however, shall not rebuild what I shall destroy!"

For some time, a murmur had been rising from the level of the street below; and now the outcry rose to such volume that the Time Traveler repaired hastily to the window. At that moment, a man stumbled into the room, blood flowing from a nasty wound in his head. His features were drawn and haggard. He gasped as he spoke.

"The Pseudos! They are running amuck all through the city, killing and burning everywhere!"

Myra was on her feet, her great big beautiful eyes wide, violet pools of terror.

"The end we have expected for centuries! How—*how* could they have got past our patrols?"

"*Earth-borer!*" gasped the Fantasiatic, staggering. "They built a monstrous earth-borer and bored through from the other side of the Earth! They came out of the ground in the heart of the city and caught us by surprise!"

"How are we holding?" whispered the beautiful May-oress. "Have we a chance?"

The wounded man drooped. A glazed look had come into his eyes. He shook his head with an effort. "Alas— all is lost! They are even now inside this building!"

And he dropped stone cold dead at the feet of Myra and the Time Traveler.

The Time Traveler's disaster-sharpened senses caught the thudding of heavy space-boots on the stairs and the

spiteful snarl of Zapp guns spitting death and hatred.

"Quickly!" he cried. "There is not a moment to lose! Where in the Universe are the headquarters of Vermillion Swampwater? We must go there at once!"

"Here on EGOBOO," replied Myra, wringing her hands in true Heroine fashion. "But how? The enemy is almost at the door. Not even pseudoscience can save us!"

"But yes!" answered the Time Traveler with assurance. "I have read every science-fiction story ever written, and hence am a master pseudoscientist! Can you torkle?"

"No," returned the maid of EGOBOO.

"No matter. I can torkle sufficiently for the two of us. Give me your hand, and let us torkle directly into the quarters of Vermillion Swampwater. . . .like this—!"

He took her hand as the vanguard of screaming, blood-thirsty minions of pseudoscience burst in; and the two together vanished like a piece of type dropped inadvertently into the wrong box!

"Grab those people!" yelled the Prime Pseudoscientist. "How did they get in here? I won't have it, I say! I know what I like, and one thing I *don't* like is strange people suddenly coming in out of nowhere! It makes me nervous! Woo! Gosh!"

As green-uniformed guardsmen rushed upon the pair, ugly blasters levelled, the Time Traveler quietly raised his hand in an imperious gesture. His kingly features bore a look of supreme majesty that brought the thundering guardsmen to a confused halt.

"Hold!" he murmured in a tone of iron determination.

The Prime Pseudoscientist, a wizened little caricature of a human being, crouched like a spider crab (*Macrocheira kampferi*) behind his desk, claws outspread over a complex arrangement of studs and push-buttons.

"I've got you covered with a Foo Ray!" he yelled. "What are you doing here? *Woo!*"

"At the moment," replied the Time Traveler, idly buffing his nails on his coatsleeve, "nothing." He fixed Vermillion Swampwater XCVI with a glance of scorn. "I carry in my pocket a small flask of hydrogen gas. The ionization property of your Foo Ray will affect the phlogiston and set up a transmissory effect between the physical element of the gas and the pseudoscientific crappistance of your engrammatic personality, retrogressive in the nature of its fulmination; which, heterodyned upon the multimillimetric wavelength of the tortus quanta, will remove me instantaneously to the safety of hyper space. At the same time, you and your odious World of EGOBOO will disintegrate into flinders from the liberated clevis force of the hydrogen atoms now circulating quietly in my coat pocket!"

"Who *are* you?" asked the Prime Pseudoscientist grayly.

"I am a Time Traveler—time machine style."

"I know my pseudoscience!" screeched Verminn XCVI.

"No machine can travel ahead of its time-point of origin!"

"Did you try frumistating the corpiscon with the stupidor at half ablato? . . . Then you turn the branistan on the frumistat, and you swivitakel!"

Verminn XCVI looked his amazement.

"That's *right!* Our pseudoscientists have endeavored for

ages to frumistate the corpiscon! How *do* you do it?"

"Grattle the slives and torkle through the ifflewhich," replied the Time Traveler. "It's as simple as snerling off a crumistan!"

The great ghod Verminn clenched his fists and gave a snort of fiendish glee. "Now that I know how it is done," cried he, "I shall send my minions back to the beginning of Time and start my Pseudoscientific Era from there! *Semper pseudoscientia egobooensis!* As soon as that has been accomplished, *you* will cease to exist, Mr. Time Traveler; for you and your Time will never have been!"

"*Heb-beh!*" snickered the Time Traveler politely.

"What are *you* giggling at?" growled the ninety-sixth generation descendant of the original Swampwaterr. Like his far progenitor, this Verminn could not bear another's amusement in something beyond his own comprehension.

The Time Traveler drew Myra more closely to his side for the comfort her presence gave him.

"What do you know about the first Verminn?" asked he.

"As recorded on the History Tapes," retorted Vermillion Swampwaterr, little eyes blazing, "he founded in 1960, Dark Ages reckoning, the Pseudoscientific Era and the World of EGOBOO!"

"What did he do *before* 1960?"

The Prime Pseudoscientist shook his head.

"I will tell you," spoke the Time Traveler firmly. "Turn on your Intergalactic Instantaneous Visi-Space-o-Phone, so that all the teeming billions of Fen—every last Fan in Fandom!—can hear my words. I am about to tell you the *truth* about your World of EGOBOO!"

"No!" Verminn spoke shortly. "I am the only one of any importance in Fandom. You can speak your piece to me—if you think I will listen."

"Turn it on, I say!" thundered the Time Traveler. "Or I will frerogate the staniscope!"

He felt Myra tremble in the hollow of his arm. The Prime Pseudoscientist paled. Grudgingly, he manipulated a stud. This room was now the focus of attention of billions of worlds circling myriad upon myriad of suns. All in this Universe of Fen responded instantaneously to this visi-call from the great ghod, Vermillion Swampwaterr XCVI! . . . The Time Traveler felt in his brain the enormous psychic pressure of their unified attention—the monotonous *beat, beat, beat* of their eager curiosity, replying to this unheard of call, as every brain in the Universe strained itself to wonder what was going on.

"Is it not correct," intoned the Time Traveler, "that you Fen know nothing at all about Verminn the First prior to his invention of the pseudoscientific H-bomb?"

An all-pervading wave of force gripped and tore at the very fiber of Space, as billions upon quadrupled billions of pseudoscientific heads nodded simultaneously upon their pseudoscientific necks in confirmation.

"You do not know," continued the Time Traveler, and his voice rose to a sonorous pitch and volume, "that Verminn the First was only an imagined reflection of a comic strip Buck Rogers, a perfunctory zealot of a scribe, a fellow who doodled with a typewriter, and who derived an egoboost from the practice of panning kindly, middle-aged ladies more widely read than he, from ribbing high school

youngsters who were more intelligent than he thought permissible, and from backbiting professional editors and publishers, whom he considered less able than himself to pursue their various professions? Exponent of a certain raucous type of yellow journalism exhumed from the musty newsprints of a century before his time, this poor man's bibliocommentator and reviler of editorial aspiration resented the intrusion of new fans into the fandom which he personified as himself. He *thought* he was fandom—and *you*, Verminn XCVI, *are* Fandom in the Fortieth Century!"

"Yes, I *am* Fandom!" spat the Prime Pseudoscientist. "Through the centuries, the race of Verminn has succeeded in stamping out that futile tribe, the fan publishers, and have eradicated the pros. *My* fozzine is the *only* fozzine published today. Every Fan *has* to read it, or he gets zapped! *Hyak-yak-yak-yak!*"

A sigh coursed through the listening Universe and seemed almost to make itself heard in the room. Billions of hurtling suns blazed in the chill depths of Space, pale mauve, green, purple, sapphire, red, and with pearly luminescence. Super-billions of inhabited worlds revolved in their orbits, and the Universe hung breathless on the heels of that transcendental sigh.

"Did you ever hear of the fanzine, *Time-Trap?*" asked the Time Traveler spiritedly.

"*The Lost Codex!*" whispered the Prime Pseudoscientist in complete awe. "*The Great Fozzine of the Ancients!*"

The Time Traveler drew a sheaf of mimeographed paper from his pocket and held it up before the Intergalactic

Instantaneous Visi-Space-o-Phone tele-panel. Every eye in the Universe beheld the holy, arcane vehicle of ancient fan writing.

"*Time-Trap!*" solemnly spoke the Time Traveler. "The instrument on which I swear the pseudoscientific truth of what I am about to tell you!"

Sweat popped out all over Vermilionn Swampwaterr's face. He groaned aloud.

"Go 'way! You're giving me engrams!"

The Time Traveler smiled with bored detachment.

"Engrams—shmengrams—who cares? Try this on your engrams—*you do not even exist!*"

The stars stood still in their courses. Wheeling planets paused a breathless instant in their eternal gyrations. The fabric of Space trembled.

"The reason you cannot travel into the Past before the beginning of your Era," continued the Time Traveler inexorably, "is that you have no Past to travel to! You cannot travel into the Future, because you have no Future! You are merely one of the Wheels of If, and I am going to destroy you, to save the human race from even the remote probability of this highly undesirable end to its aspirations! By destroying the probability, I insure that the reality shall never exist. The truth is that the entire warp and woof of your mighty Pseudoscientific Era is nothing more than a concept, an aberrated mental projection of the puerile mind of Vermilionn Swampwaterr, the First, Last, and *Only* Verminn ever to exist!"

"Lies!" husked the Prime Pseudoscientist. "All lies!"

"On the contrary," retorted the Time Traveler coldly,

"it is simple, pseudoscientific truth! In this issue of *Time-Trap* is bound the promise of your dissolution!"

He paused and continued. "The first Verminn was accustomed to receive free in the mail samples of current fanzines, which he dissected in his writings, excoriated, sneered at, trampled upon, frothed at, and in other ways made of himself a figure of ludicrous and bitter envy. Affairs got to the point where new faneditors refused to send him their 'zines free. Either unable or unwilling to pay for what he thought he should get for nothing, Verminn cunningly conceived a plan! He dug out a moth-eaten back-issue of his own mimeographed mutterings and mailed it to the new faneditor. That fellow, embarrassed, replied then in kind and mailed to Verminn his own effort, only to see it suffer the venting of that creature's monomania. . . . One day, a new faneditor, shortly after his second issue, received an ancient, dilapidated fanzine in the mail. There was no doubt that it was published by Vermillion Swampwaterr, for his name was all over the thing. Moreover, he mentioned himself at least ten times on every page, in the form of the first person perpendicular pronoun. The new editor took a copy of his own 'zine, carefully sprinkled the pages with roach rid, a kralsis of the sensiform, and mailed it to Verminn. When the 'zine arrived, Verminn seized it with greedy little eyes alight. He went through the pages in an oestrus of glee, licking his thumb the better to slip the pliant paper! And then, sir, the roach rid (harmless to man or beast, it said on the box) took effect. *Framistance! Donnerwetter!* Vermillion Swampwaterr abruptly stiffened and quickly fell down. .

. . . extinct! He never lived to found the Pseudoscientific Era. News of his demise is reported in this issue of the fanzine, *Time-Trap!*"

He tossed the mimeographed sheets upon the Prime Pseudoscientist's desk. Verminn XCVI licked his lips.

"It says here," he mumbled suspiciously, "that he died of cause unknown. Where do you get that stuff about the fan editor and the roach rid?"

"I, sir," said the Time Traveler modestly, "am that fan editor. I tired of Verminn's 'git out o' town by sun-down' attitude and his continual gum-beating. The deed baffled scientific crime detectors, because it was consummated along pseudoscientific principles, based on the hypothesis that Vermilionn Swampwaterr was neither man nor beast, but an insect!"

"I don't believe it!" cried Verminn XCVI. "But I *must* believe it—it is so soundly pseudoscientific!"

Belief controlled him. Throughout the vast, star-burdened reaches of the Pseudoscientific Universe, the legionary quadrillions of Fen quivered with the nascent throes of dissolution. Space twisted, warped. Mighty goutts of energy clawed at giant suns, and they flared into a frenzy of incandescence and abruptly winked out in the cold night of Nothingness. The roiling worlds of the Pseudoscientific Universe reeled, staggered, fragmented, and ceased to exist. The Time Traveler felt the floor shudder and heave under his feet.

Far away, there was a sound as of a giant wind, a rushing sibilancy of entropic energy flow.

The Prime Pseudoscientist vainly tried to pull him-

self erect, but the big desk was melting and running under his hands. The green-garbed guardsmen staggered, their faces suddenly become gluey and awry. They were melting like so many wax candles in a fire.

The Time Traveler smiled frostily, held Myra close and did what he had to do to materialize the time machine. He hurled the stumbling girl inside, leaped in after her, and at once frumistanned the branistat, which process nullified the force that had statified him in this macabre era and transported them safely into hyper space. The Time Traveler halted the machine and gazed at the ex-Heroine with admiring eyes.

"You bore up splendidly!" said he. "For a minute, I was afraid. . . ." He shook his head.

The girl was white of face, and her eyes were deep pools of violet that mirrored perplexity and fear.

"Whahoppen?" she cried in the vernacular. "All of a sudden, everything began to blur and spin around me—" She passed a hand across her forehead.

"Very simple, my dear," smiled the Time Traveler. "When every Fan became convinced he did not exist, he simply did not, that is all. The principle of it is a soundly pseudoscientific one!"

Myra frowned. "Since Verminn did not create the world of EGOBOO in real time—how is it that *I* still exist?"

"Because," grinned the Time Traveler, "I got you into hyper space quickly enough. Further, Vermillionn Swampwater still lives in my time sector. You see, I kind of fibbed to the Prime Pseudoscientist and the ultimate Fen. Verminn did *not* ingest roach poison! I am like most fen

of my time, who believe in the maxim: Live and let live. Yet, so long as there is a Swampwaterr type, and petty sycophants to cheer his paranoiac delusions, human beings will be maligned for their beliefs, their position, or their color—and even for an attribute so trivial as taste in reading matter, or how one spends one's money! . . . Still, there is yet room in fandom for all aspects of controversy—for all factions—even for the Swampwaterr, if such a one can be persuaded to mitigate the derisive braying of his own personal opinions to the more prudent level of thoughtful and seemly disquisition, meriting some measure of attention. A hue, cry, and raillery, merely to be different, cannot earn for its instigator other than the full contempt of his audience. Therefore, I would advise a potential Swampwaterr, that a change of behavior is in order; for surely, to fly with intolerance in the face of good will and decent respect for the convictions of others, is to take the suicide route toward social extinction."

"But how did you destroy the Universe?" asked Myra.

"The ultimate Fen," explained the Time Traveler, "believed anything couched in the jargon of pseudoscientific double-talk. Further convinced by that forged copy of *Time-Trap*, they simply believed themselves out of existence. Froth as he may, Verminn will never re-create that particular probability! . . . And now, my dear, will you return to 1950 with me and help me edit my fanzine?"

"Yes, yes!" cried she, eyes shining. "What else?"

The Time Traveler grinned as he considered what else, thinking of orange blossoms. He branistanned the frumivalve, and laboratory walls swam out of the pearly mist

that had theretofore surrounded them. At the same moment, the beautiful Myra grew pale and paler, thinned, wanned, and vanished quite away, still with a look of ethereal joy enhancing her goddess-like beauty.

The Time Traveler shrugged. "I was afraid she would do that," he murmured. "As soon as she passed the time line of the Pseudoscientific Era, she had no existence, as she was only a figment of Vermilion Swampwater's projected future imagination. Well, she probably couldn't cook, anyhow. I don't suppose there are many science-fiction Heroines, other than Oona, who can!"



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Continued from inside Front Cover

Members of the element under discussion have devoted their writings to personalizing against fellow fans whom they know only by name and to violently assailing professional authors, editors, and publishers who they know cannot answer them because of the cheapening thereby of their professional reputations.

The publisher of EGOBOO takes no stand for any individual fan or professional author, editor, or publisher. He does take a stand for some measure of tact and urbanity in the expression of argument and opinion, and for the observance of the precepts of humanity and of American freedom of speech--the latter not to be confused with license.

What fan journalism needs is not censorship, but a searching self-analysis and the use of discrimination in its choice and treatment of material.

As an afterthought, there might be less of this forensic crud cluttering up the mails, if every locuter were obliged to handset his own in six-point type! — THE PUBLISHER.

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