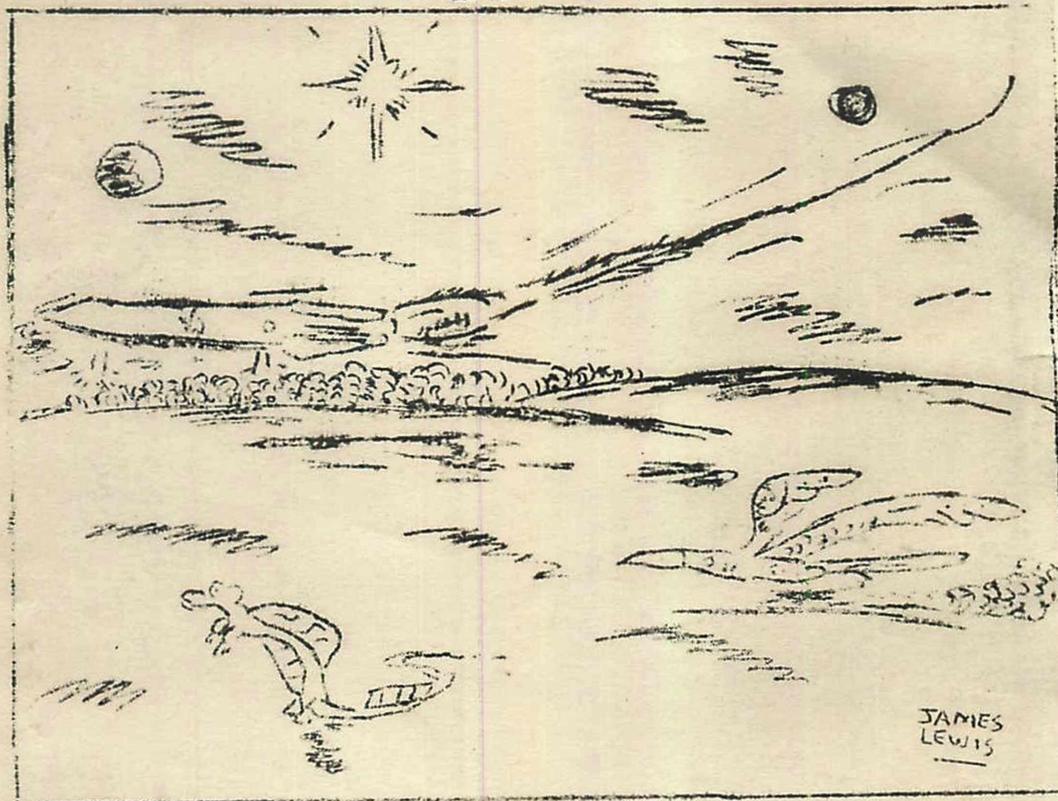


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## EDITORIAL

With this issue we join the other members of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association. This is a goal of almost every fan publisher, and provides an appreciative audience for the members. Also, with this issue we print a fine short story by an author new to these pages...Charles L. Morris, of 111 Providence St., Gaffney, South Carolina. Charles has shown to us a fine style, with beautiful description. We'll have more of his work in later issues. Todd Conwell's poem is also worth notice. Coming in the near future is a good serial by August Argyll, "On a Silver Platter". You'll like it. Give a look at the Special Feature we have on Page Four--it should arouse some comment among SF fans. Next issue we'll have two good stories and our regular departments comin' at you. See you then.

# INCIDENT AT MIDNIGHT

HE THOUGHT THAT HE HAD BEEN RESCUED...

A SHORT STORY BY CHARLES MORRIS

It was darkness that brought fear, not the alone-ness. The alone-ness was there, of course; he could feel it...but the darkness was worse. It pressed down on him like a dead weight, choking. It was thick, like London fog. He thought, crazily, "Well, if I get hungry, all I need do is gulp it down. Or if I should get hungry maybe I can drink it. Wonder how it tastes? Wonder if it tastes like thick syrup, or black coffee? Or if it is tasteless?"

He looked up into the darkness and cursed. He was not angry, only afraid. First he cursed the darkness because it was fear incarnate; he cursed himself for his cowardice. He cursed everything and everyone, and finally his store of vituperatives was exhausted and he stopped to catch his breath. That surprised him, too, because by all that was logical, he should not have a breath. Not now. Not inside....

This was crazy, crazy, CRAZY!

To make sure, he reached out one hand and felt around, overhead and to each side. Silk. Cool, smooth silk. He chuckled, then laughed gleefully. What a joke! What a wonderful joke! Buried alive! Premature interment. He laughed louder, louder. The laughter inside the box, under six feet of heavy soil, roared like thunder in his head, and he stopped. He thought of a story by Edgar Allan Poe and found himself envying the hero, who, on awakening, had found the whole thing to be a dream. What a lucky chap! This was no dream. Most definitely not! This was reality, grim and horrible. Abruptly, the humor of the situation was gone and the darkness and fear were back, bringing with them claustrophobia more terrible than the darkness. He fought.

Silently he fought, threshing and clawing

against the enclosing sides of the box. The silk lining was in shreds, his fingernails torn, blood trickling down his arms. For long minutes he fought, until presently his panic subsided and he lay back, exhausted. A little of his common sense reasserted itself and he felt shamed by his actions. Useless. Useless and cowardly...

He was numb all over now. Numb with the sheer hopelessness of his plight. Why had he always told his family never to allow his body to be embalmed? Silly request. The embalming would have prevented all this mental anguish. Lying there staring into the darkness, he wondered how long it would be before madness came. Or would his air give out first? He hoped that it would.

He must have dozed for a moment, for when awareness came again, he was listening with every fibre of his being, listening for recurrence of the sound that had awakened him.

There! A scrabbling and a scratching and the boom! of metal on wood. His heart gave a great leap, then settled down to a steady thud that sounded like African drums inside the coffin.

Boom! Boom! Boom! They knew! Someone had discovered the error! He was saved!

The air was almost gone.

"Hurry", he prayed. "Oh, God, please hurry!" The coffin gave a convulsive jerk, then began to move upward. He laughed and cried, all at the same time, and tears coursed down his cheeks in rivulets. He tasted salt.

"Thank God! Oh, thank God!" The coffin halted, thudded down on solid ground. The lid flew back...

The things stood there, moonlight glinting on yellow fangs, slavering. They gloated. He screamed once, horrible, before they . . .

Is what?

SPECIAL FEATURE: SCIENTIST PROVES OLD STF THEMES  
by the Editors

In the 1930's, a favorite plot of STF authors was the "race of underground animals" idea. Last month, Professor Vassili Tobranoff revealed to the scientific world his discovery of a new form of animal life living under the frozen sod of Siberia.

When questioned by reporters, Professor Tobranoff revealed that the animals had been discovered by miners and reported to the local commissar. The Professor then lead a party of Russian geologists to the site.

These "things", the Professor said, "were huge mindless masses of flesh, often a hundred yards in length. Their flesh has an unusual resistance to pressure, the source of which is yet to be determined. The animals absorb oxygen through their skin from the earth, it appears, though nothing definite has been established."

They have no apparent facilities for seeing and hearing; they live at a depth of four to seven hundred feet. None were found at a lower or higher level. Professor Tobranoff succeeded in securing a section of one of the beasts, and it was brought to the surface for examination. When chemically analyzed it was found to contain relatively huge amounts of concentrated protein, fats and carbohydrate.

Professor Tobranoff mentioned that larger shafts were being dug for better inspection of the animals; he will have further news at a later date.

We believe that this is a truly amazing discovery, and bears out the theories of many science-fiction authors and fans.

(for further reference, see "Deeley's Ecological Monthly", September, 1949, Volume 21 No. 9).R.S.G.S.D.

The Next Spaceship will be on sale January 15, 1950.  
---Watch for it!---

# SOAPBOX

## SPACESHIP'S READERS SPEAK

203 Robin Street,  
Dunkirk, New York

Dear Bob:

....Some comments on the Sept. issue of SPACESHIP: "John Brown's Cellar" is the best you've printed yet. The poem was pretty good. Soapbox is fine but there should be more to it. "Saul's Spot" and "Random Notes" were average..

Yours truly,  
David English

\* \* \* \*

111 Providence St.,  
Gaffney, S. Carolina

Dear Bob and Saul:

I liked SPACESHIP very much. The format is just right and the stories show plenty of promise. Of course, the 'zine will improve with time, but for beginners you two got the "ship" off to a flying start. Keep up the good work!

Sciencercely,  
Charles L. Morris

\* \* \* \*

Than's for your kind comments, both of you. We're trying to make our articles unique in content (witness our Special Feature) and the stories are definitely superior to those of earlier months. We'd like to extend Soapbox to several pages--we receive quite a few more letters than are published--but space limitations intervene. Incidentally, we publish the full addresses of our Soapboxers so that some of our other readers may find new correspondents. To find our score of regular writers interesting fans---By the way, we need some good science articles, up to 1,000 words. Send them to Saul Diskin, 621 Crown Street, Brooklyn 13, N.Y. Our Soapbox address is Robert Silverberg, 760 Montgomery Street, Brooklyn 15....See you in January.

# SAUL'S SPOT

by Saul Diskin

## "VERMIN OF THE SKIES": THE ASTEROIDS

Asteroids are the name given to small planets or planetoids between the orbits of Jupiter and Mars, by Herschel, the astronomer. About five hundred have been found so far.

The name "Vermín of the Skies" was first coined by an American astronomer. These spurious members of the heavens were well named as they left streaks on photographic plates, shielding other important observations.

Professor Giuseppe Piazza, a monk, is accredited with the discovery of the first asteroid. It happened on New Year's Eve, 1801. The professor thought he had discovered a comet minus its tail. Karl Friedrich Gauss, a young mathematician, who did the calculation of the orbit, realized that this was a great discovery.

In 1830 M. Hencke, an amateur astronomer of Driesen, found an asteroid after 15 years of arduous toil. Now asteroids are turned up in the time of an hour. Sharp images are produced on the photographic plate of a camera attached to the telescope. When the planetoid moves during the hour-long exposure a small but definite line appears on the plate. They are sought out in this manner.

The finding of the first dozen brought world-wide fame and recognition. Astronomers all over the world heard of the next fifty discoveries; the location of the next two hundred was news. After that it was routine.

In years to come--many years to come--these Vermin may make themselves useful to man by providing fueling stops in space travel between Jupiter and Mars..... S.D.

Coming in the next issue: "Bays of Madness", by G. L. Morris. Also, "Behold the Man" by Solwyn Roberts.

# DOUBLE CHOICE

JONES'S IMAGINATION CREATED A WORLD OF TERROR

A SCIENCE STORY BY ROBERT SILVERBERG

The old professor smiled proudly as he drew back the curtain on the bizarre machine and showed it to his young assistant. "This is a probability scope", he explained. "It has little value for discovering things, but it can be used in psychiatric treatment. I attune it to your mind; you do the rest. You simply think of something which might have happened instead of the actual occurrence. Then, all of the things you see are produced by your own subconscious emotions and imagination. The only purposes of this machine are to make the creations of your mind visible and real to you, and to establish a telepathic contact between our minds so that I may record your thoughts. Now, before I throw the switch, what subject will you follow?"

"I think I will see what would have happened had not Premier Krossosky died in the middle of the Russo-American peace talks last year. Of course, Krossosky's lenient successor enabled us to settle the disputes amicably".

"That is a very good choice of subject. When I throw the switch, a paratelepathic field will be formed, and a number of paths will be visible to you. Take one, and that will be the only one you may follow. It is impossible to retrace one's steps or to re-create the identical probability fields again".

With that, he stepped into a protective plastic cage and threw the huge switch. Green smoke filled the room, and odd sparks coursed through the wires. Then beams of green light played about the uncomfortable assistant, who felt his clothing tearing and crackling. It seemed as if he were being smothered in a slow pressure cooker. Then, out of the mist, a number of pathways appeared. Gaily, he strode into one, and the mist cleared.

A man was standing at a newsstand, selling copies of just one newspaper. A guard with a red star painted on his helmet stood by. Drawing a dime from his pocket, he bought the unfamiliar-looking paper. The guard snapped, "You have but a day more to spend your American currency. I advise you to have it transformed into kopecks before the deadline." With a shrug, Jones walked away with the paper. Its name: "The New York Pravda"!! First page: final war crimes executions: President Transon, Defense Minister O'doul, General MacCohen. Second page; names of those arrested for not carrying Red Party cards. Third page; World Commissar Korrosstky's speech abolishing religion, and also a table of conversion from dollars to International Rubles. Fourth page: execution of 300 coal-miners for beating and killing a local commissar while on strike. Fifth page; Red Party news. Sixth page; sports; Cincinnati REDS 11, Boston RED Sox 8. St. Louis REDbirds take over first place. Hockey: Detroit RED Kings 6, Providence REDS 3. Basketball, St. John's REDmen 67, Harvard's SCARLET 40. Football, Washington REDskins 30, Los Angeles DON COSSACKS 24. His dream-world was so absurdly comical that he chortled wildly in laughter. Two red-starred-guards hustled toward him and gripped him by the arm. "What do you mean by laughing at the Pravda? And why are you not at your factory? Let me see your identification card. And your union card. And your factory assignment card. And your food ration card. And your conscription card. And..." These commands issued in a rapid staccato from both men. Still laughing, our friend failed to produce either. "You must come to the Police Commissar then," hissed a grim-mouthed guard. Really scared now, his mouth closed with an abrupt "gulp!" as the assistant wondered if these non-existent imaginary beings could really kill him. Since his body was still in his warm, friendly laboratory, but his mind was here, he concluded that any damage to him here would make him a raving imbecile on his return. While he pondered these matters, strange green smoke and green lightning spiralled around the heads of the struggling group, and the visitor disappeared from between the two Reds with an abrupt "Pop"! Sitting on the floor of the lab, with smoke slowly clearing around him, he heard the Professor say, "You were in trouble, Jones,

so I brought you back. I would advise you to destroy that without hesitancy." He pointed to the newspaper still clutched in Jones's hand. Without looking, Jones knew what it was--the Red newspaper--but when he looked, in his hands was a bundle of damp rags.

"I expected it to decompose as soon as you were conscious of it", he explained. "It is impossible to bring anything back with any knowledge of it--one world ceases to exist when one is in another. In your anxiety to return, you forgot entirely about it, but when you brought it to mind it fell apart. It is gone now". Jones stared at his now empty hand as the professor continued. "Now that you are familiar with the technique of crossing probability fields, I will send you on the mission I had planned for you. I shall implant the mission in your subconscious mind by hypnosis; if I tell you, 'Do this and so-forth', you will unconsciously rebel against the order and have an adventure of your own creation.

The professor hypnotised his willing subject and repeated the object of the mission several times. After awakening him, the professor said, "Now that it is firmly implanted in your subconscious, where it will appear when the subconscious takes dominance, I can tell you. You are to investigate what might happen if the earth had the mammals never evolved into the primates and eventually man. I shall send you into two separate fields. Probability-factor A will be that the mammals stayed as they were before the advent of the apes. The second, factor B, will be some creature of your imagination which evolved instead of man. Now, ready, and go!"

The smoke and electricity coursed through the air, and Jones again selected a pathway. Great fern-fronds waved in the steaming, misty air. Huge insects flapped lazily over the weird plants. A thing like a horned antelope bounded out of the wilderness: a knobbed, twisted horn projected from the beast's forehead, supplementing the pair behind its ears. A small, fox-like thing with white stripes leaped up

and was gored on the "antelope's" horn. A great, snore-like bellow thundered from the thicket, and a huge thing lumbered out. Bigger than a full-grown rhino, two blunt horns curved out from its nose, just in front of the beady little red eyes. Head lowered, it strode clumsily past him into a pool of water, seeking relief from the ever-present, biting flies. Jones recognized this as a titanotherium, a formidable skeleton in the professor's little museum. Just as a pink-and-blue horse eleven feet high bore down on Jones, the professor switched him back to reality. Without much hesitation, the prof. said, "The first three animals existed, but are extinct thanks to Man. The horse may yet evolve. Now for factor B!"

The pathways appeared. All were but green walls. After careful consideration, he stepped thru one. The first thing he saw was a 15-foot, red and green elephant bearing down on him. "This is where I came in", thought Jones, as he prepared to call for the professor. "Just a second". He shouted at the top of his lungs, "STOP! This is my dream, and I don't want you to in it." He pointed one forefinger forward, stuck his thumb upward emulating the butt of a gun, and gravely said, "BING!" The elephant shattered into a million pieces and floated off into oblivion.

Suddenly, the earth trembled. He noticed all of the little animals, similar to the ones he had observed on his last probability-travel, scurrying into holes like fairy-tale people hiding from a man-eating tree. Sensing danger, he grabbed a bright red vine and swung across a gaping ravine into a cave. Then the ruling animals of the time made their appearance.

A herd of them, thirty feet high, thundered into view. Hundreds of tentacles, ending in glaring eyes, writhed on their heads. More snakey things extended from all parts of their barrel-like bodies. They gave off varied colors, radiating now red, now blue. The tentacles on the body shot out now and then, and some howling mammal was pulled from its place of refuge and plunged into the beast's great red-rimmed

maw. Four-foot, cilia-like tentacles helped to push the little animal inside the huge body of the ruling beast.

Suddenly, a huge, slimy thing telescoped from one of the herd, and explored the cave in which Jones lay hidden. It groped around and then made a lightning-like grab. Jones felt himself grasped around the waist and lifted aloft. His reasoning power terrified into paralyzation, he mentally screamed "Professor! PROFESSOR!! Get me back, Please!!" as the tentacle drew him nearer to the large, hungry mouth. He could feel the hot churning of the tentacles just inside the great beast, anticipating the juicy meal. Jones continued his frantic plea...

Soon after the professor had sent Jones into factor B, he opened up the cage and took the telepathic control along with him across the room. Before he had taken two steps, he pitched forward, paralyzed. The last sound the dying professor heard was the agonized screaming of Jones, pleading to be returned before the beast swallowed him. Hopelessly, the professor reached for the "return" switch but slumped over dead instead. The screaming could be heard for half a minute in the lab, devoid of life. Then, an excruciating final wail...

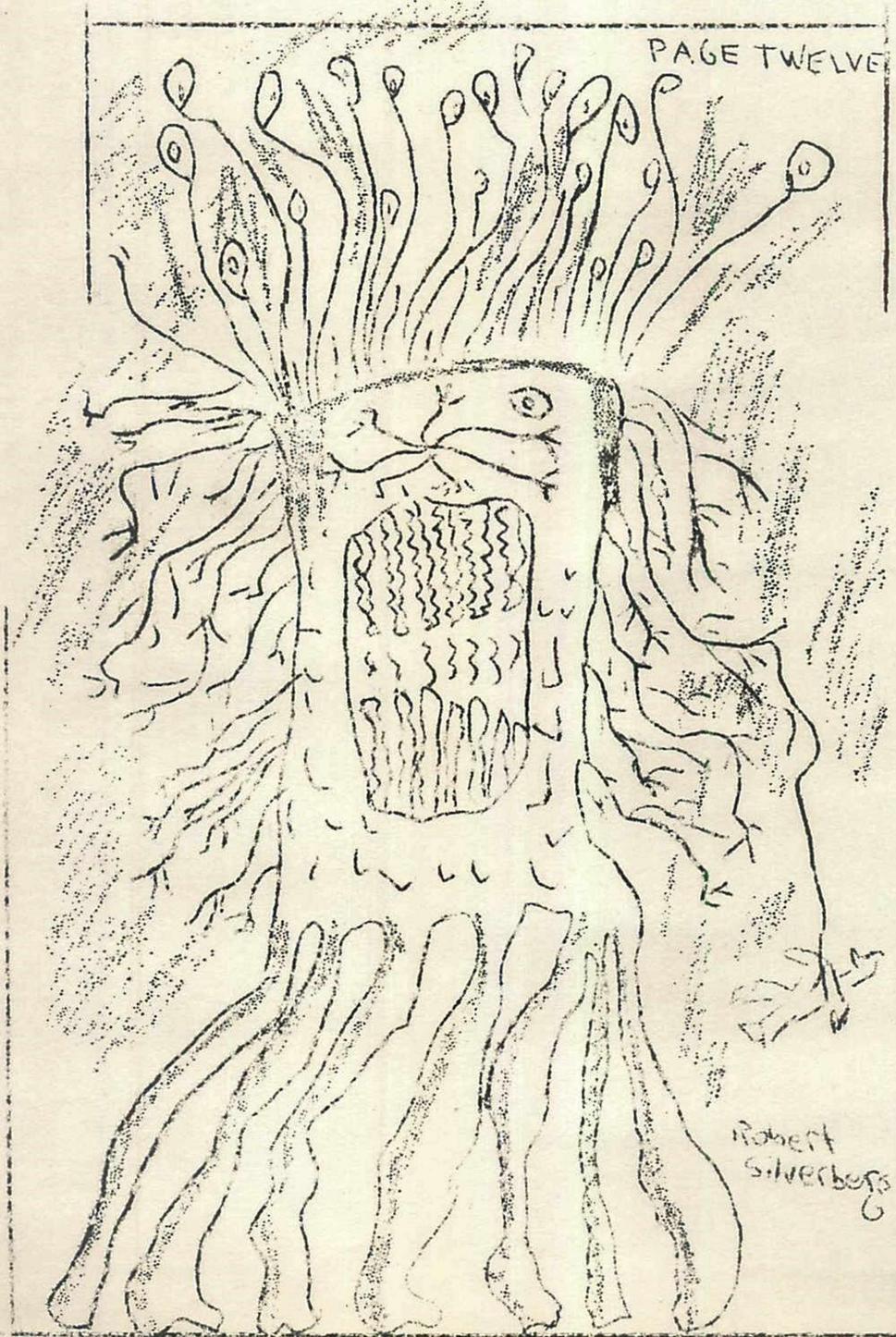
A sound like a giant's swallowing filled the room. Then, silence...

THE END

\* \* \*  
WANTED:

Rog Phillips's the "Despoilers" (in Amazing Stories, issue of October, 1947. Will trade any one of several promags or STF booklets. Write James Lewis, 29-10 Butler St., East Elmhurst, N.Y.

Amazing Stories, issue of September, 1947, and Fantastic Novels, issue of September, 1947. Make reasonable offer to Robert Silverberg, 200 Montgomery Street, Brooklyn 13, New York.



Robert  
Silverberg