

# WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION '82

Peter Straub  
Joseph Payne Brennan  
Don Maitz  
Charles L. Grant



Don Maitz  
A.F.A.N. TOSEA  
NEW HAVEN, CT.



# 197

# IN DREAMS THERE ARE TRUTHS

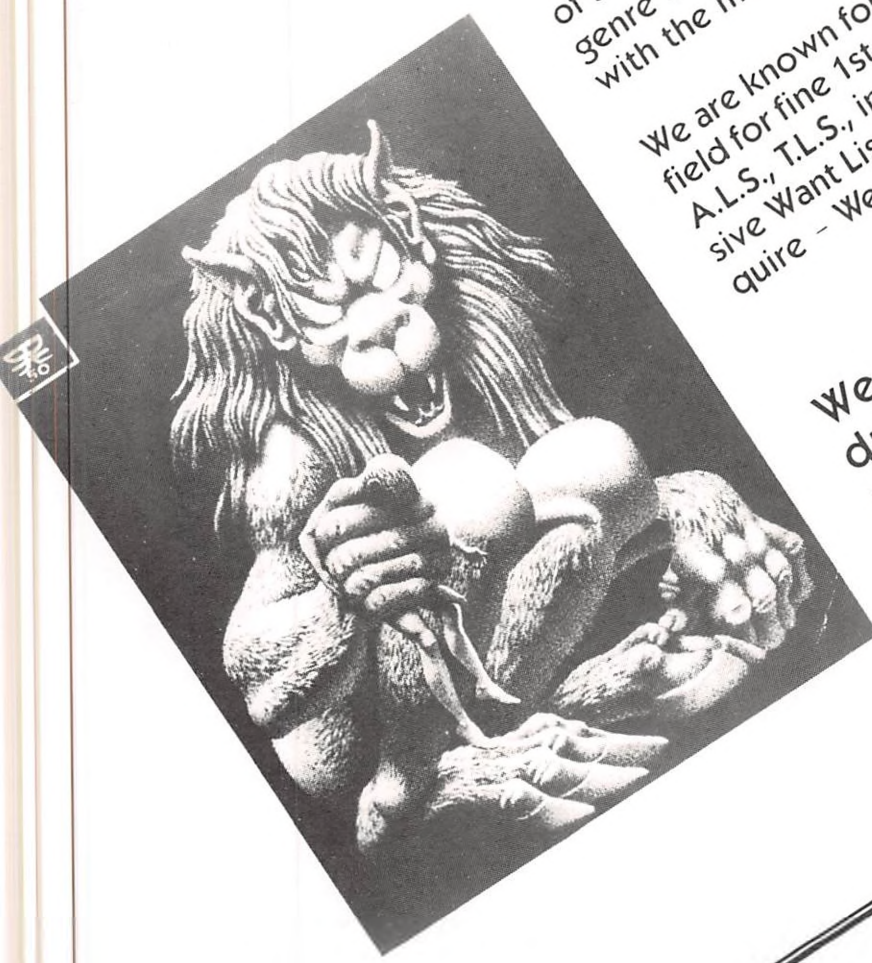
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# WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION '82

October 29 - 31, 1982 Park Plaza Hotel — New Haven, Connecticut

Guests

Peter Straub Joseph Payne Brennan Donald Maitz

*Toastmaster*

Charles L. Grant

*Dedicated to Mark Twain and H. Warner Munn.*



Program book designed and  
edited by Kennedy Poyser.

## CONTENTS

2	World Fantasy Awards	40	The Magic of Don Maitz by Michael Whelan
4	Distinguished Guests	42	Charles L. Grant by Alan Ryan
6	Program	45	Roughing It (Chapter XLII) by Mark Twain
8	Leo on the Loose by Peter Straub	46	My First Literary Venture by Mark Twain
12	Queen of the Dead by Joseph Payne Brennan	47	How the Author Was Sold in Newark by Mark Twain
25	When Love Turned Round and Whispered You're Mine by Charles L. Grant	47	Letter to the Earth by Mark Twain
30	Peter Straub: An Informal Appreciation by Stephen King	50	H. Warner Munn by James E. Munn
36	Joseph Payne Brennan: Quiet Achiever by Donald M. Grant	73	Display of Rare Fantasy Literature by Joseph Payne Brennan
38	My Ghosts of Old New Haven by Joseph Payne Brennan	78	Membership

*Convention Committee: P.O. Box 8262, East Hartford, CT 06108*  
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*Director*; Peter D. Pautz, *Awards Liaison*.

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## World Fantasy Awards



### 1982 Nominations

#### Life Achievement:

Italo Calvino  
L. Sprague de Camp  
Andre Norton  
Jack Vance

#### Best Novel:

*The Claw of the Conciliator*  
by Gene Wolfe (Timescape)  
*Little, Big*  
by John Crowley (Bantam)  
*The Nameless*  
by Ramsey Campbell (Macmillan)  
*The War Hound and the World's Pain*  
by Michael Moorcock (Timescape)  
*The White Hotel*  
by D. M. Thomas (Viking)

#### Best Novella:

*Ealdwood* by C. J. Cherryh (Grant)  
"The Fire When It Comes"  
by Parke Godwin (*F&SF* 5/81)  
"Mythago Wood"  
by Robert Holdstock (*F&SF* 9/81)  
"The River of Night's Dreaming"  
by Karl Edward Wagner  
(*Whispers III*)

#### Best Short Story:

"Coin of the Realm" by Charles L. Grant (*Tales from the Nightside*)  
"The Dark Country" by Dennis Etchison (*Fantasy Tales* Summer '81)  
"Do The Dead Sing?" by Stephen King (*Yankee Magazine* 11/81)  
"Fairy Tale" by Jack Dann (*Berkley Showcase 4*)

#### Best Anthology or Collection:

*Elsewhere* edited by Terri Windling & Mark Allan Arnold (Ace)  
*Fantasy Annual IV* edited by Terry Carr (Timescape)  
*Shadows 4* edited by Charles L. Grant (Doubleday)  
*Tales from the Nightside* edited by Charles L. Grant (Arkham)  
*Whispers III* edited by Stuart David Schiff (Doubleday)

#### Best Artist:

Alicia Austin  
Jill Bauman  
Thomas Canty  
Don Maitz  
Rowena Morrill  
Michael Whelan

#### Special Award (Professional):

Edward L. Ferman (*F&SF*)  
Donald M. Grant (publisher)  
David G. Hartwell (Timescape)  
T.E.D. Klein (*The Twilight Zone*)  
Tim Underwood & Chuck Miller (publishers)

#### Special Award (Non-Professional):

Paul Allen (*Fantasy Newsletter*)  
Robert Collins (*Fantasy Newsletter*)  
W. Paul Ganley (*Weirdbook*)  
Stephen Jones & Dick Sutton (*Fantasy Tales*)  
Ken Keller (*Trumpet*)

**Judges** Pat Cadigan, Virginia Kidd, Theodore Sturgeon, Douglas E. Winter, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro.

### Winners: 1975 - 1981

#### First World Fantasy Awards (1975):

Life Achievement: Robert Bloch  
Best Novel: *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld*  
by Patricia McKillip  
Best Short Fiction: "Pages From A Young Girl's Diary" by Robert Aickman  
Best Artist: Lee Brown Coye  
Special Award Pro: Ian & Betty Ballantine  
Special Award Non-Pro: Stuart David Schiff  
Best Anthology/Collection: *Worse Things Waiting* by Manly Wade Wellman

#### Second World Fantasy Awards (1976):

Life Achievement: Fritz Leiber  
Best Novel: *Bid Time Return*  
by Richard Matheson  
Best Short Fiction: "Belsen Express"  
by Fritz Leiber  
Best Artist: Frank Frazetta  
Special Award Pro: Donald Grant  
Special Award Non-Pro: Carcosa Press  
Best Anthology/Collection: *The Enquiries of Dr. Esterhazy* by Avram Davidson

#### Third World Fantasy Awards (1977):

Life Achievement: Ray Bradbury  
Best Novel: *Doctor Rat*  
by William Kotzwinkle  
Best Short Fiction: "There's A Long, Long Trail A-Winding" by Russell Kirk  
Best Artist: Roger Dean  
Special Award Pro: Alternate World Recordings  
Special Award Non-Pro: Stuart David Schiff  
Best Anthology/Collection: *Frights* edited by Kirby McCauley

#### Fourth World Fantasy Awards (1978):

Life Achievement: Frank Belknap Long  
Best Novel: *Our Lady of Darkness*  
by Fritz Leiber  
Best Short Fiction: "The Chimney"  
by Ramsey Campbell  
Best Artist: Lee Brown Coye  
Special Award Pro: E. F. Bleiler  
Special Award Non-Pro: Robert Weinberg  
Best Anthology/Collection: *Murgunstrumm and Others*  
by Hugh B. Cave  
Special Convention Award: Glenn Lord

#### Fifth World Fantasy Awards (1979):

Life Achievement: Jorge Luis Borges  
Best Novel: *Gloriana*  
by Michael Moorcock  
Best Short Fiction: "Naples"  
by Avram Davidson  
Best Artist: (tie)  
Alicia Austin & Dale Enzenbacher  
Special Award Pro: Edward L. Ferman  
Special Award Non-Pro: Donald H. Tuck  
Best Anthology/Collection: *Shadows*  
edited by Charles L. Grant  
Special Convention Award: Kirby McCauley

#### Sixth World Fantasy Awards (1980):

Life Achievement: Manly Wade Wellman  
Best Novel: *Watchtower*  
by Elizabeth A. Lynn  
Best Short Fiction: (tie)  
"The Woman Who Loved the Moon"  
by Elizabeth A. Lynn; & "Mackintosh Willy"  
by Ramsey Campbell  
Best Anthology/Collection: *Amazons!*  
edited by Jessica Amanda Salmonson  
Best Artist: Don Maitz  
Special Award Pro: Donald M. Grant  
Special Award Non-Pro: Paul Allen  
Special Convention Award: Stephen King

#### Seventh World Fantasy Awards (1981):

Life Achievement: C. L. Moore  
Best Novel: *The Shadow of the Torturer*  
by Gene Wolfe  
Best Short Fiction: "The Ugly Chickens"  
by Howard Waldrop  
Best Anthology/Collection: *Dark Forces*  
edited by Kirby McCauley  
Best Artist: Michael Whelan  
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Special Award Non-Pro: Pat Cadigan & Arnold Fenner  
Special Convention Award: Gahan Wilson



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Cecilia Cosentini  
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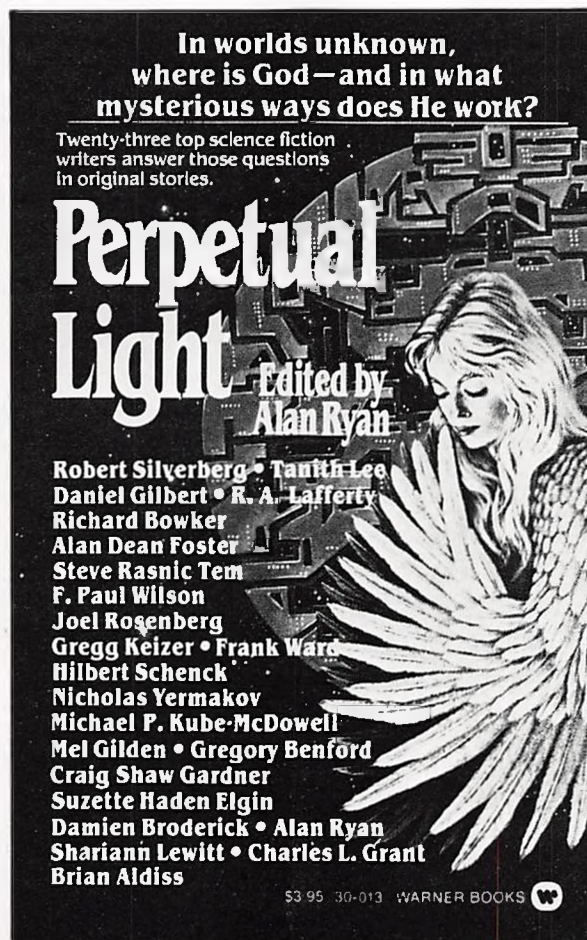
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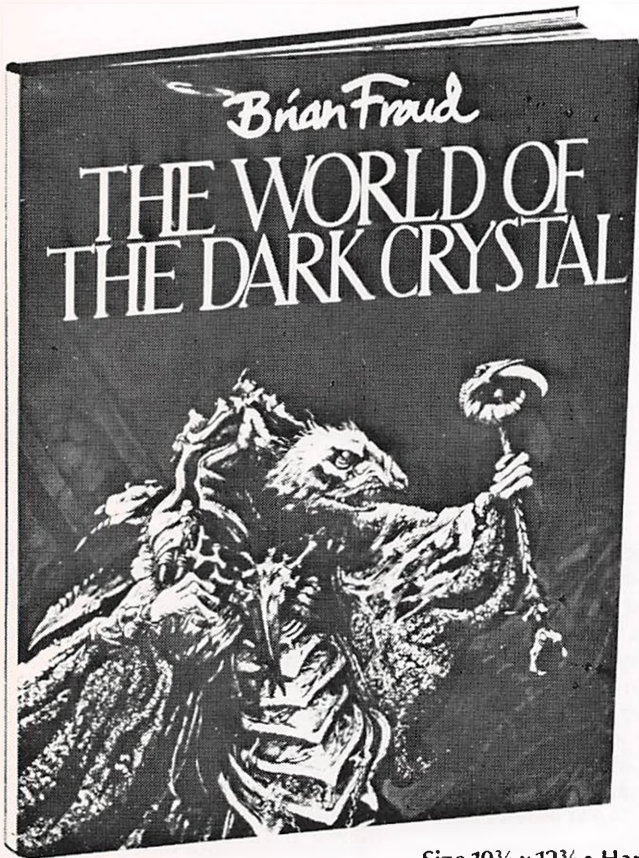
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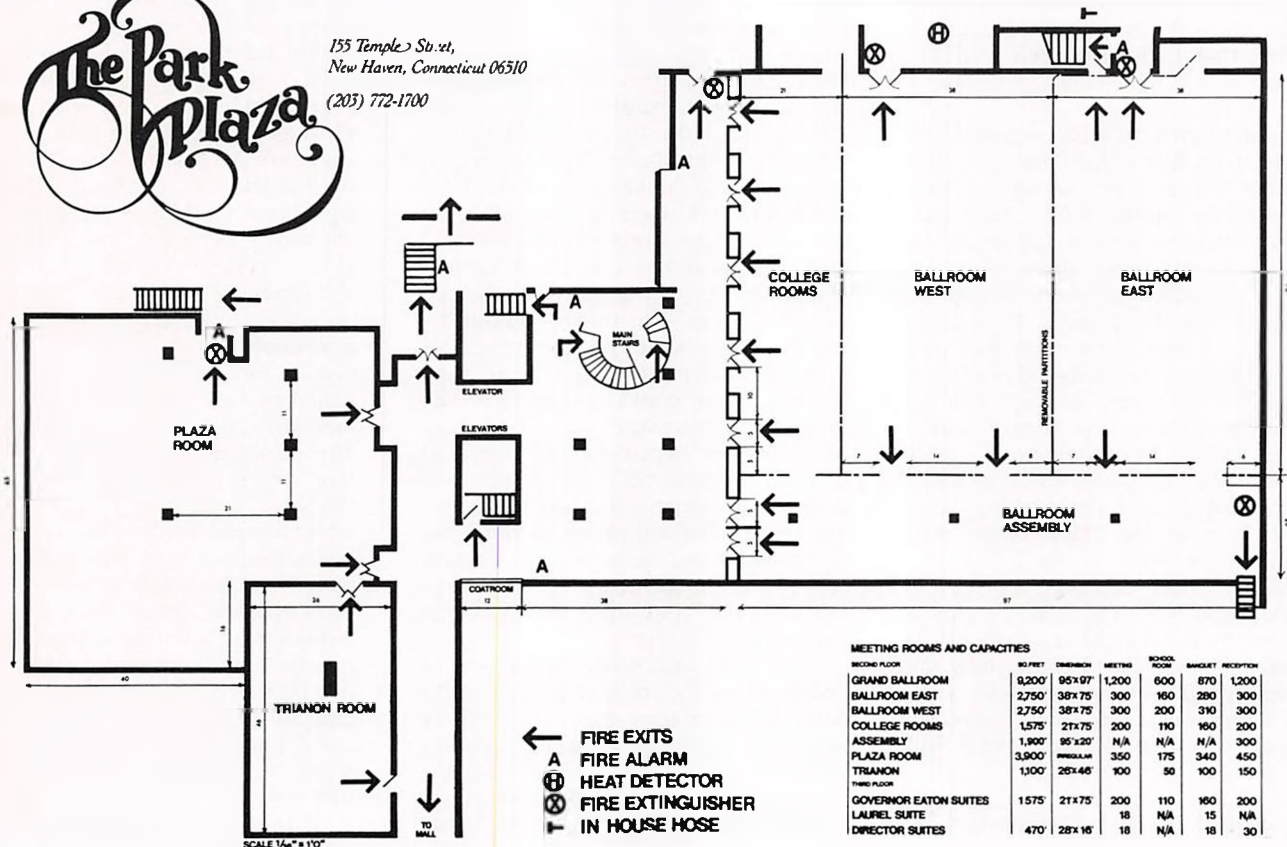
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Just after seven o'clock a man unseasonably dressed in an overcoat and tweed hat ducked out of a porno theater on West 42nd Street in New York. The man looked both ways, and then continued east on the street, going toward the Avenue of the Americas. His hands were thrust deep in the pockets of the overcoat, but a flash of white from beneath a rucked-up sleeve showed that his hands and arms were bandaged, as was his face. When he thought that one of the street's regulars—one of the threatening men who spend all day on 42nd Street—seemed to be paying too much attention to him, he slipped past a teenaged girl with peroxidized hair and tight satin shorts who whispered, "Wanna go out? Wanna go out?", and entered another building that had once been a movie theater.

In most towns or cities, a gentleman bandaged up like Claude Rains in *The Invisible Man* and wearing an overcoat and hat in the middle of June might reasonably attract a sort of following; in most towns and cities, there would be stares and questions, there would be gasps and pointing fingers. This, however, was 42nd Street, and most of those who saw Leo Friedgood in pursuit of sexual satisfaction assumed that he was just another lunatic. A man named Grover Spelvin leaning against a marquee saw Leo dart into the converted theatre and nudged the nodding man next to him, saying, "Hey, Lester, you just missed the Mummy, man."

"Fuh," Lester commented.

Leo, who was now what people in Patchin County would learn to call a "leaker," knew that his foray into the sleaziest neighborhood in New York was dangerous, but had correctly assumed that if he looked weird and

confident, he would be reasonably safe; to look weird and weak would be to invite attack. Of course he was still in danger—anything that split his web of bandages would kill him—and that made him more furtive than he would have been otherwise, but Leo's arrogance was still his best armor. He assumed here especially that if you could pay for what you wanted, it was yours.

But besides all that, he simply could not stay away. Leo Friedgood had always been a voyeur. For the most intense sexual pleasure, Leo had to see or imagine other people making love: when he made love to Stony, he had fantasized about the other men he had encouraged her to meet. The encouragement had been subtle—Leo had never directly spoken to Stony about the other men—but it had been pervasive. After Stony's death, Leo had imagined that his sexual life was dead too. He could still feel the humiliation that Turtle Turk had caused him, and that humiliation seemed the tombstone set upon his sex life. The discovery of the white spots on his body and their slow but inexorable growth should also have contributed to the end of Leo's desire—but oddly, perversely, the more the white spots covered his body, the more obsessively he thought about sex. He could not perform any more, but performance had always been of secondary importance to Leo. Leo had cut himself off from Telpro and General Haugejas—no one at Telpro knew what had happened to him—but in the end it had become impossible for him to cut himself away from his deepest fantasies. And these had led him back to 42nd Street.

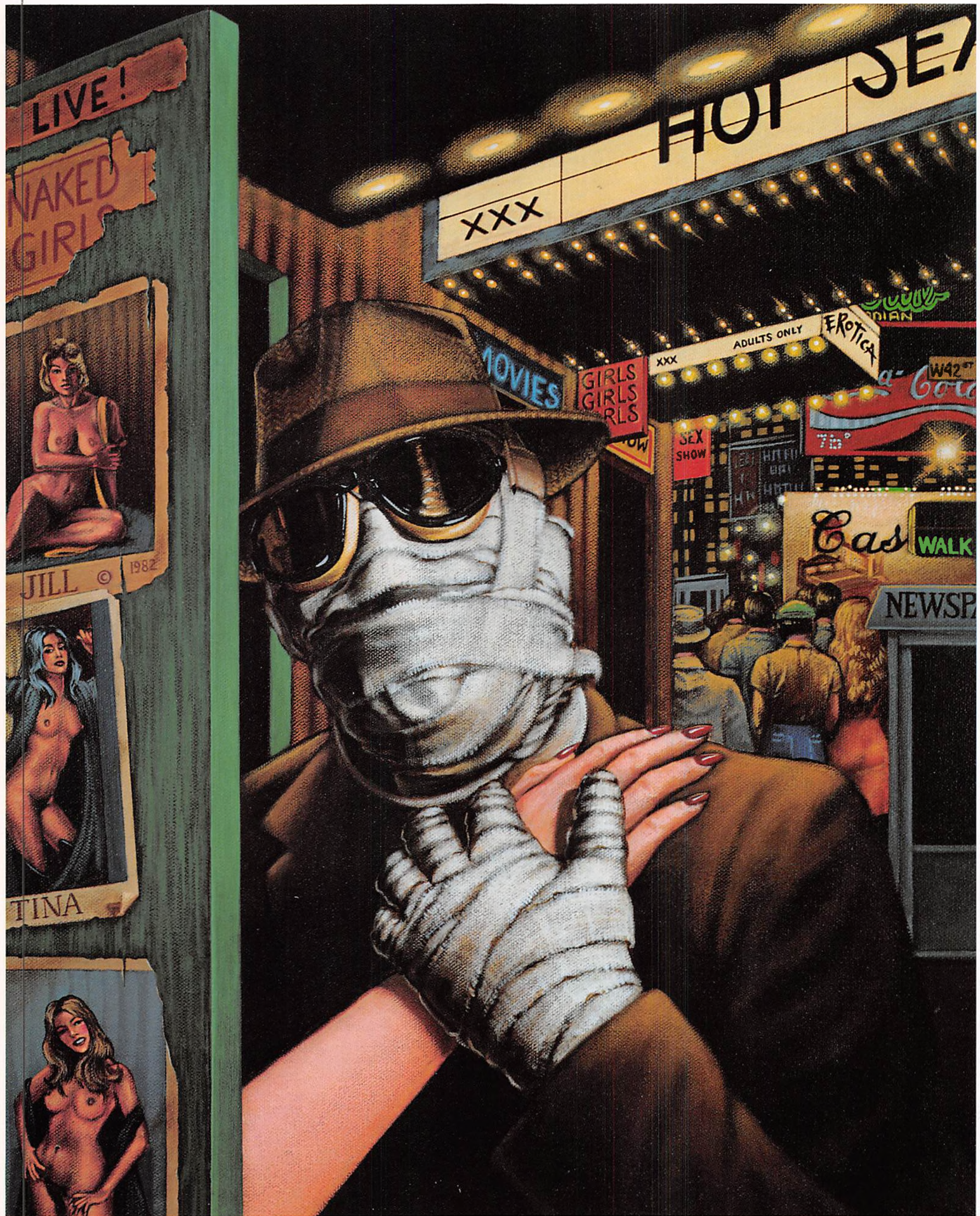
Leo went unnoticed past a row of booths showing reels of pornographic films for a quarter every two-minute segment, shoved a five-dollar bill at a bald man in a cage who did a double-take at Leo's bandages but pushed across five dollars in quarters. Then Leo ducked

into a cubicle and spent a dollar watching four high school girls rape a skinny dark-haired man with a pronounced curve in his penis. Then he left the booth and went to the back of the old theater and beneath an arch reading NAKED LIVE GIRLS 25¢. A row of doors like lockers stood closed in a hemisphere. Leo opened a door above which there was no red light, stepped into blackness, and inserted a quarter into a slot before him. A window in the front of his cubicle was gradually revealed as a black metal plate ascended.

Leo was looking into a round well-lit space with a fake tiger rug on the floor and a ripped plastic-covered sofa at the far right end. Across from him were a series of windows like his, about half of them exposed by the raising of their own metal plates. Visible in these exposed windows were men's faces as vivid as portraits from hell—tinted sizzling red—all turned to the body of the woman dancing to a Bruce Springsteen tape in the middle of the round space. She was a beautiful little Puerto Rican girl, Leo saw when she gyrated around and lifted her bush toward his window, no more than seventeen. A black man in a window across from Leo's grinned crazily and waggled his tongue at the naked girl. The girl looked in Leo's window and did not miss a hitch of her hips after noticing his bandages; her reflective, almost pouting face did not alter in the least. Not a furrow appeared in her sweet forehead, not a trace of interest in her huge quiet eyes. Her right shoulder rolled back, the right hand rose, a small brown breast rolled back too, and a moulded hip revolved and spun the perfect little body around. Leo feasted on her lithe back, earthy bottom, and the graceful backs of her thighs. When the metal plate began to descend over his window, he quickly put another quarter in the slot.

The girl was moving lazily around





JILL BAUMAN  
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"Leo on the Loose"  
by Peter Straub



the circle of windows, bending backwards as if she were trying to limbo beneath a bar. Leo was breathing slowly, half in a trance: he was imagining this girl, obviously a hooker and probably a junkie, beneath a succession of men, twining and untwining, pumping that round little bottom, locking those moulded legs around one man after another. Leo could take this only for the duration of another quarter, and by then the little Puerto Rican teenager was putting on a robe and a tall Dust-Bowl redhead with stretch marks had begun to snap her fingers and move before the windows. Leo pulled his hat further down on his bandages, turned up the collar of his overcoat, and went back out past the rows of booths.

"Sex show, sex show," a black man whispered to him as he left the building and turned west.

Well, that was just what he had in mind, but the real thing, not a hasty facsimile. Leo hurried down the street, now and then hearing a black voice behind him calling out *Mummy, bey Mummy babes*. He was going to a club he knew just up from Seventh Avenue. This "club" was a place he had discovered in 1975, the year the Friedgoods had moved east—it consisted chiefly of two rooms with a pane of one-way glass between them, and it catered to people who shared Leo's tastes.

"Shit, he ain't no Mummy," Lester Bangs said to Grover Spelvin as they watched Leo's form disappear up a stairway next to a theatre showing horror pictures twenty-four hours a day. "That mother's goin up to the Look-Show. Fuh. He ain't no Mummy—ain't no *real* Mummy."

"We'll see him when he drags his dick downstairs, Lester," said Grover, putting his hands in the pockets of his frayed jeans and preparing to wait.

Leo was at the top of the stairs. He opened a door marked EZ STUDIOS, and a black girl with a blond wig smiled at him and said, "Have you been to our club before?"

Leo nodded.

"You get burned?" the girl asked. "I mean, I had a friend, and she got *all* messed up. Wore them bandages for two months straight. Uh, that's thirty-five dollars."

Leo extracted the bills from his coat pocket and counted the money onto the desk.

"Fine," the girl said. She showed him an acre of gleaming pink gum, stood up and led him through a door where

half a dozen middle-aged men, some in jeans and sweatshirts and others in suits, sat on metal chairs in front of a six-foot square window. Rock music was piped in, but all the men seemed to be consciously ignoring it. On the other side of the window was a smaller room where a rumped bed stood on a bare floor. The girl pressed a button in the wall and said, "The performance is beginning, gentlemen. Each performance lasts fifteen minutes. If you stay through to the next performance, a second payment will be collected. If you stay, you must pay."

A young white woman and a large black man padded into the room. They immediately climbed on the bed, and Leo felt disappointed: when he had come here five years before, the couple—both white—had fondled and kissed each other for a long time before getting into bed. The man in the bedroom now seemed bored and angry. He squeezed the girl's ass, rolled her on top of him. She moved up and down on his massive body, pretending to get excited. The girl reached back down between her legs and diddled the man's balls, and for a time he thrust half-heartedly with his pelvis while the girl rode him as she would a bull. The "performance" was so perfunctory and bored that Leo found himself remembering his last telephone conversation with General Haugejas . . . in those five minutes had been much more excitement than the people on the bed were generating. "You've gone far enough with this business," the General had coldly said to him. "Your wife is dead. We're sorry. We've given you all the time off any reasonable man could ask for. But now it's time for you to straighten up, Friedgood. You've become important to everyone at Telpro. I want to see you in my office tomorrow morning."

He had said that that was not possible.

"You come into New York or I'll come to Connecticut," the General said.

"It's still not possible."

"No," the General said. "What isn't possible is for Telpro to let you roam around loose, Mr. Friedgood. This is a question of security. You be in my office at nine o'clock—things are going to hell out there, and we have some decisions to make."

Leo had wondered what the General would say if he showed up: he knew he would be whisked away to some installation within minutes of entering the Telpro building. He would still get paid,

he would be fed well, and then sooner or later some unfortunate accident would happen and Leo Friedgood would be gone.

He had hung up on the General.

The couple on the bed thrashed and slapped their bodies together, but it was all acting. Leo could see from time to time that the man never even obtained an erection—he was too bored and hostile even to take the minimal steps required to conceal his flopping penis.

A few minutes later, the girl pretended an orgasm. She immediately left the bed and went out of the frame of the window, to wait, Leo thought, for the next ringing of the buzzer. After a few seconds the man also left the bed.

Leo was seething—five years before, the act had been real, not feigned. He felt as though his money had been stolen.

A little ratlike man next to him in a pinched felt hat was looking at him oddly—fearfully, because of the bandages, but almost sympathetically too. "I know," this little man said to Leo. "It ain't real no more—they got busted a couple times, and now this stuff is all they do. But if you wanna see the real thing, I can set it up for you. A hundred."

Leo nodded, and the man darted ahead of him down the stairs. When Leo reached the sidewalk, the man was jittering on the sidewalk, a flattened cigarette stuck to his lip. He was in his sixties, a decayed little entrepreneur in his thin plaid shirt and felt hat. "Eighth Avenue," the man said around his cigarette, and began jerkily to move down the street.

"The Mummy is movin'," Grover Spelvin said to Lester Bangs, and they began to amble westward after Leo and the entrepreneur.

"Yeah, but he's movin *with* Cockroach Al," Lester said. "He ain't no Mummy. Cockroach Al gonna take him to that shrimpy little Mona Minnesota and that crazy fucker Dog. I ain't gonna mess with that fucker."

"Mummy goin come out again too," Grover pointed out.

"Come out a poor man," Lester said.

Ahead of them, Cockroach Al led Leo Friedgood across Eighth Avenue and then into the lobby of a great grey pile of bricks called the Hotel Spellman. A clerk deliberately looked away, and Al took Leo up the dark stairs to the third floor. "The money," he said, jittering outside a door.

Leo counted out a hundred dollars from the overcoat pocket and placed the money in the man's shaking hands.



"Okay, okay. I'll knock, we'll both go in, I'll leave, right? This is the real thing. You'll get what you want, Mister. Straight up." The man darted a quick, nervous look at Leo's bandaged face, then knocked twice on the door.

A man with bulging bicep muscles covered with vivid tattoos opened the door. He wore only white cotton underpants, and as he stepped back to let them into the tiny, foul-smelling room, prominent muscles jumped and subsided in his calves and thighs. He was nodding, as if to music only he could hear. The man's blond hair was almost shaven off in places, in others was about an inch long, he had cut it himself without a mirror. "You get paid, Al?" he said in a slow Midwestern voice.

"Sure, Dog," Al said, his head bobbing.

Dog looked Leo over and grinned. "Jeesus H. Christ. Lookit this guy. He's real different."

Leo edged away from Dog and saw a thin drowsy-looking girl staring listlessly and expressionlessly up at him from a rumpled bed. She too was blond, and her thin, frizzy hair folded away from her face, as rumpled as the sheet over her body.

"I'll see ya later," Al said, and backed out of the room.

Dog was still staring at Leo, shaking his head in disbelief, moving around him in wide circles. Leo had begun to get nervous when Dog said, "Can you talk? Can you talk through that stuff?"

"Yes," Leo said. "Please. I paid."

"Okey-doke," Dog said, throwing his hands up—lines of muscle leaped out of his arms. "What you wanna see, especially? Anything special? We'll do anything you like."

"Just get on the bed with the girl," Leo said.

"Sure man, I'll get on the bed with the girl. Anything you say, tourist." Dog pushed the underpants down over his buttocks, and Leo saw that the tattoos ended at the man's waistline. "You sid-down over there, you get the best view," pointing at a chair about four feet from the bed.

Leo finally realised what the apartment's smell reminded him of—chicken soup. He sat on the wooden chair and watched Dog lift the sheet off the passive girl. Dog was already tumescent. The girl's body was childlike except for her large breasts, which spilled sideways off her chest. Dog knelt between the girl's open legs.

Directly before Leo on the bottom

sheet was a brown stain the shape of the state of California.

Leo began to groan as Dog pounded toward his climax: this was real, this was what he had been denied in the club, and as Dog shuddered over the girl's limp body, Leo gasped and trembled.

"Okay, man," Dog said, pulling himself out and sitting up on the bed. "That's what you paid for. Right? You got what you paid for, right?"

Leo nodded, standing up.

"Well, they give us tips, man," Dog said, moving off the bed. The girl was still staring at Leo, and her mouth was open. Dog put himself between the door and Leo. "We sort of appreciate tips, sec."

"Of course," Leo said through the hole in his bandages. He pulled a twenty-dollar bill from his pocket and passed it to Dog.

"You're real different," Dog said. "Hey, you want Mona now? Lotsa these guys do. Another fifty, you can do anything you want with her. Mona'll suck your bandages, man, suck 'em right off." He reached out and gave Leo's chest a hard tap.

Leo groaned, and Dog took a step backward, holding his hand up as if it had been burned. Heavy brutal lines had appeared in his face. "What the fuck are you made of, man?" Dog's entire face had changed, become leaden and suspicious. "Jesus, man." He looked over his shoulder at the girl. "Jesus, Mona, look at this guy's coat. Look at your coat, man."

Leo was breathing hard, experiencing a dreadful loose sensation in his chest. The front of his coat had a large dark spreading stain. "Leave me alone," Leo said frantically. "Don't touch me. Just let me get out of here."

Dog stepped toward him with his face bunched up and his eyes contracted so tightly they seemed to have no pupils at all—Leo threw his hands up. Dog dented his jaw with a short left jab, and then hit Leo hard in the temple with his right fist.

The bandages around Leo's head flew apart. White froth scattered across the room like blown suds. Leo toppled to the floor and the frothy white substance poured out of the wrecked bandages. In ten minutes Leo Friedgood was an arrangement of wet clothes and a damp spaghetti of bandages in a pool of white slime. He had been carrying only cash, which Dog removed from his coat pocket.

Leo Friedgood had just disappeared

completely from the world.

Thirty minutes later, Grover Spelvin and Lester Bangs saw Dog and Mona Minnesota coming down the front steps of the Hotel Spellman. The two men had been leaning on a lamp post across the wide street, and as Dog's thick body sidled around the door, Grover straightened up smartly and punched Lester Bangs in the side. "It's them," he said. "Come on, Mummy." Mona Minnesota slouched out into the hot sun after Dog and trotted after him down the steps. Both Dog and Mona were carrying brown paper bags. The bags looked wet.

Grover and Lester crossed the street against the light and began following Dog and Mona south on Eighth Avenue. "Where's the damn Mummy?" Lester asked. "We been waitin all day, now where the hell is he?"

Dog stuffed his paper bag into a trash container and waited while Mona put her bag in on top of his. Then they continued at a slower pace down the Avenue, looking, as both Grover and Lester instantly recognized, like a young couple out to buy a serious quantity of drugs.

"Shit," said Grover.

"Goddam," said Lester.

"Ain't no more Mummy," Grover said. "Dog done took him out."

The two men approached the waste bin where the two bags sat like ornaments on a hat. Lester Bangs delicately pulled at the lip of Mona's bag and peered in. Then he giggled; when he saw how Grover was looking at him, he let out a great roaring laugh. "Grover," he said, bending over with his laughter, "Dog drowneded the Mummy. He drowneded him in shaving soap. Haw haw!"

Grover Spelvin gloomily hooked a finger into the bag and pulled its opening toward him. He peered in. Then he shook his head. "That ain't shaving soap," he said. "That is the Mummy. Goddam. You know what?" He turned to Lester with something like a sense of wonder on his broad face. "Dog took him out all right, but that dude was the real Mummy. Like in the old movies."

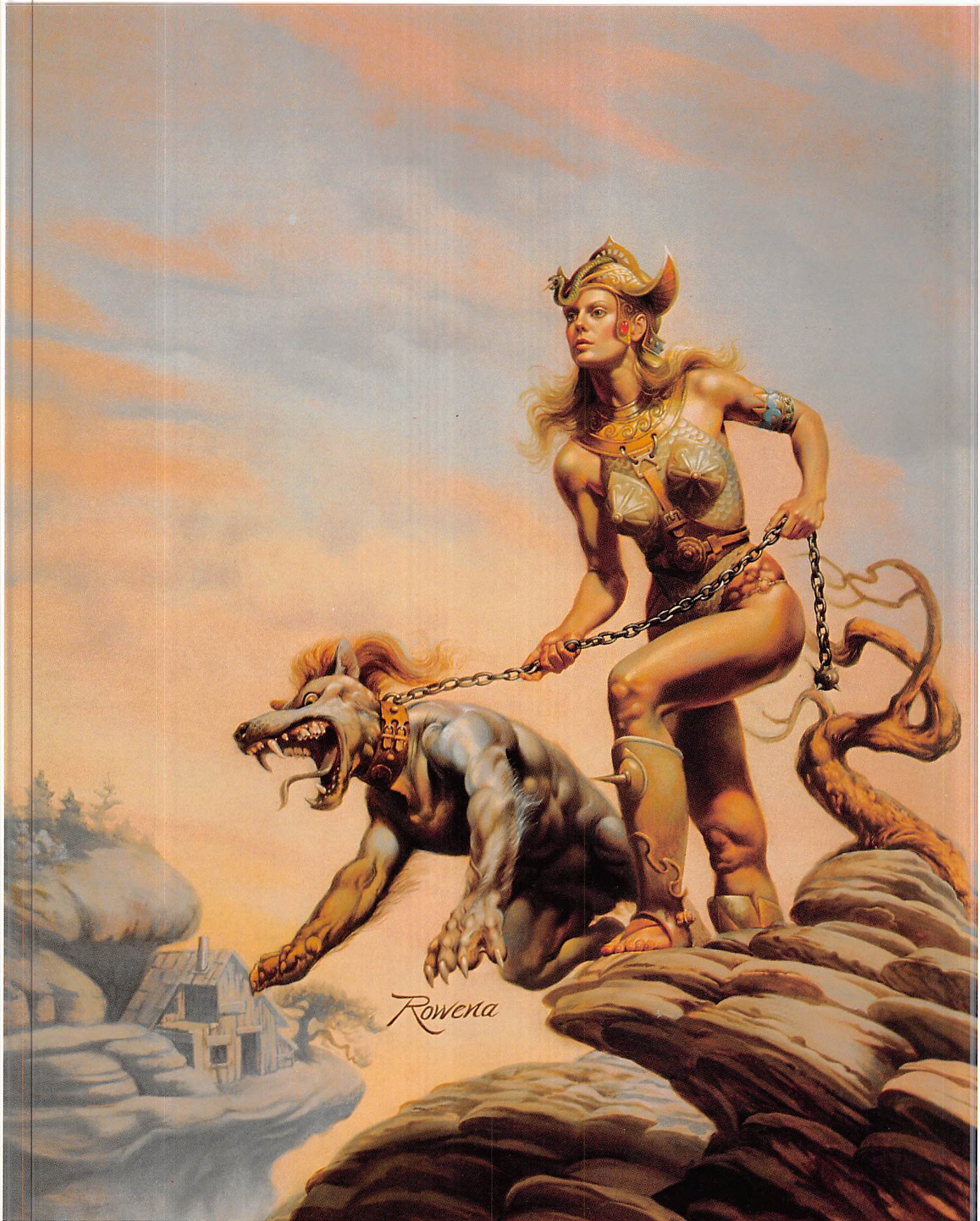
"Fuckin Dog," Lester said, shaking his head.

"Inside those bandages he was all juice," Grover said. "The real Mummy. Goddam."

"The Mummy," Lester said.

"I wonder how much money he had," Grover mused.





Rowena



## Queen of the Dead

by  
*Joseph Payne Brennan*

As he crouched against the side of a sand dune, in the swiftly diminishing light, Azrin the Sorcerer knew that he was dying. He had lived an incredible length of time, so long that he had become a legend. The roving Arab desert wolves spoke of him with awe. To attack him was unthinkable; they avoided him whenever possible. No one had ever molested Azrin the Sorcerer and lived to boast of it.

But even magic has its limits. Azrin had fended off death for seemingly endless decades, but now he knew that his strength was rapidly ebbing away. The vital forces had simply burned themselves out. He was little more than a physical husk, kept alive for years by indomitable will power—plus incantations to unnameable gods.

He knew neither fear nor hope. His chief feeling, in fact, was simple annoyance. He had been on his way to a waterhole, no more than two leagues to the west, when the weakness had overcome him. He had planned to lie down at the tiny oasis and die in peace, with water at hand until the last. Now his strength was spent, his water bag empty, and he was still miles away from his goal.

Over the years he had come across the scattered bones of dozens of desert wanderers who had perished of thirst. He had vowed to himself that he would not die miserably moaning for water. Not that water, at this point, would keep him alive very long. He simply detested the thought of dying with a dry throat.

He smiled wryly to himself. An old man's obsession! After all, what did it matter? It was ironic that he should die so, he told himself. And was not irony one of the most abiding elements in the entire lifetime of a man?

Nevertheless, as the shadows gathered and he settled back against the side of a dune, he kept thinking how pleasant a few drops of water would feel against his burning lips.

It was nearly dark and his sight appeared to be failing, when two apparitions loomed alongside the dune. At

least, at first, he thought they were apparitions—surviving remnants, perhaps, from one of his more recent invocations.

A towering female figure swinging a cutlass, accompanied by some huge hairy creature, advanced toward him. Had they come from the Pit itself to claim him? he wondered.

Both figures stopped a few feet away and stared down at him. Even in the dusk he could see that the female was handsome. There was, moreover, a kind of aura about her, an innate nobility, which he immediately apprehended.

As she stood looking down at him, he saw compassion in her face. Lifting a flask from her shoulder, she shook it, listened, and bent toward him.

He heard the hollow sound as only a few drops of water rattled against the sides of the flask.

Azrin moved his head; his voice resembled the whisper of wind through withering grass. "Good lady, your water is wasted on me. I am dying. Your few drops will take you to the waterhole, two leagues to the west."

She paused, shrugged, removed the cap of the flask and held the vessel to his lips. "A little water will keep you alive. I will carry you to the place you mention."

In spite of himself, Azrin drank the few drops of water greedily. Briefly revived, he sat up and scrutinized the girl closely.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I am Kerza, of the sept O'Braonain. I am an exile from my people." She put her hand on the furry creature's head. "This is Pit, a wolfhound."

She patted the huge dog. "He saved my life," she added.

Azrin smiled at the strange duo. Yes, there was a nobility about them both, he decided. He made a sudden resolve.

"I am Azrin the Sorcerer," he said. "I have had a long life but what remains of it might be measured by seven grains of sand."

Groping in the folds of his worn cloak, he produced something that shimmered and gleamed in the shadows with a light of its own.

"I had intended," he continued, "to cover this with my own final dust. But

now it belongs to you." He held out an enormous ruby which flashed in the night like a living fire.

Kerza gasped as she took it from his hand. "It looks alive!" She shook her head. "No, I cannot accept it. It must have come from the coffers of a great queen! I am the daughter of a renowned chief—but I am an outcast!" Her hand moved to return the jewel.

Azrin pushed her hand away. "It was pried from the crown of Queen Sermempta many centuries ago. A spell was cast upon her. She cannot die until the gem is replaced in her crown. She waits on her throne eight leagues to the west of the watering place. Return the jewel to the crown and you become queen!"

He spoke rapidly, aware that his time had come. "Go, noble lady! You have moistened the dying lips of Azrin and for that you shall be queen!"

As Kerza started to speak, the old man leaned back against the dune and slid sideways to the sands.

Kerza felt her hair bristle as she stared down. The ancient body appeared to disintegrate before her eyes. One moment she saw an old man's wasted cadaver, the next a shrunken mummy, and then nothing remained except an irregular mound of darker dust against the yellow sand of the dune.

While she continued to stare downward, gripped by awe and disbelief, black night descended on the desert. A cold wind sprang up over the empty ridges.

Shivering, she drew her cloak closer about her shoulders, spoke to the huge wolfhound and started toward the west.

She placed the great ruby in the bottom of the scabbard where she sometimes sheathed the formidable cutlass she carried.

The chances were, she reasoned, there never had been any bewitched Queen Sarmempta. She had listened to the maunderings of a dying old man whose strength and wit were spent. But the flashing jewel glimmered like a tiny pool of frozen fire at the bottom of the scabbard.

As the girl and the great dog strode toward the west, a cold moon climbed



over the dunes, flooding the desert with eerie silver light. Later, the massive arch of sky glittered with its myriad of stars.

Kerza found the watering place without difficulty. It was little more than a depression among the dunes, surrounded by straggling blades of grass and a few stunted scrub bushes.

She led Pit to the shallow puddle of water and watched him drink. When he was finished, she satisfied her own thirst and filled her two flasks.

The water was tepid and somewhat brackish, but in the wastes of the desert it was more precious than liquid gold.

As she stretched out to sleep, with one arm around the giant wolfhound, Kerza recalled again the last words of the sorcerer: 'You have moistened the dying lips of Azrin and for that you shall be a queen!'

Well, tomorrow she would decide. 'Eight leagues to the west of the watering place' seemed as good a direction as any other in a desert which appeared to be illimitable.

She awoke, shivering, at dawn. Pit sat on his haunches near the waterhole, regarding her gravely. As soon as she arose, he bounded toward her, tail wagging.

She scratched behind his ears, stood up and gathered her cloak around her shoulders. It was a strange land, she reflected. One could die of heatstroke during the day, or nearly freeze to death at night.

After another long drink of brackish water, girl and dog walked westward across the sands.

Kerza watched the wolfhound anxiously. In spite of his unmatched stamina, he could not go on indefinitely without eating. She herself was beginning to feel lightheaded and listless. A bellyfull of water was not the best thing to break one's fast.

Near mid-day, as the stifling oven heat intensified, she saw ahead an outcropping of rock which cast a small fringe of shade. Calling Pit to her side, she sat down, grateful to escape the direct rays of the sun. She drank sparingly. Pit lapped water from her cupped hand. Already, one of her two flasks was half-empty.

As she rested, Pit made a sudden rush toward the other side of the rock and returned with the limp form of a long-tailed rat-like rodent in his mouth. He laid it at Kerza's feet, tail wagging.

The girl recognized the little creature as a jerboa, a small desert animal the Arabs called a *yarbu*. She praised the

dog and patted his head, but his tail drooped when he saw that she was not going to eat his catch.

Picking up the small carcass, she held it out to the starving wolfhound. He looked at her questioningly.

Only after repeated urgings would the massive dog begin to eat. Even then he ate slowly, watching Kerza with a worried expression because she was not sharing the food. When he was finished, he prowled about the rock, obviously hoping to make another kill, but had no luck.

By mid-afternoon the rock outcropping had faded into the far distance. Nothing was visible save an endless succession of empty sand hills.

As she trudged along, Kerza became more and more convinced that the ancient sorcerer's mind had been wandering. There was no Queen Sarmempta sitting on a throne eight leagues to the west. She would be ensconced in a mighty palace, Kerza reasoned, surrounded by sycophants. As far as she could see, however, there was nothing in sight except an empty expanse of sand. The only movement was caused by occasional dust devils which swirled briefly and then died as the hot winds dropped.

By late afternoon, as she paused to drink and hold water in her cupped hand for Pit, something about the horizon caused her to stand and shield her eyes against the sun.

She could not be sure—it might be a mirage—but she thought she could glimpse an outline of something which could scarcely be caused by rounded sand dunes. Was it a row of buildings, battlements perhaps?

With a word of encouragement to the loyal wolfhound, toiling along without complaint in the oppressive heat, she quickened her pace, with suddenly heightened interest. Was it possible that Azrin had told her the truth after all?

An hour later she had no remaining doubt that some structure, or series of structures, lay ahead. No domes, pinnacles or towers lifted against the sky, but a long, low irregular wall or rampart of some kind began to take shape.

Shadows were gathering among the depressions between the dunes by the time girl warrior and wolfhound reached a broken barrier.

At one time, centuries before perhaps, the tumbled squares of mottled green and black masonry might have formed the base of a great city wall, a towering rampart which kept out the

desert sands and the savage bands which infested them.

Now nothing remained of the wall save a scattered sprawl of tilted slabs, half buried in the wind-driven sands.

Beyond lay further ruins: dim, sand-burdened paths which once might have been stone-paved roads, shapeless heaps which might be the collapsed remains of houses or shops, and occasional massive piles of green-mottled masonry which must have been buildings of state or the former residences of the ruling elite.

Over all, the sand held sway. It had drifted feet deep across the roads. It had settled upon the smaller structures until they resembled random dunes from which a few jagged rocks protruded. It had accumulated about the bigger buildings until they looked like shattered ships of stone, sinking by degrees into a bottomless ocean of sand.

With Pit at her side, Kerza walked warily down one of the sand-laden lanes. Silence pervaded the place. But it was, Kerza concluded, a listening silence, a silence in which sound was not naturally absent, but in which it was deliberately muffled.

If questioned, she could not have explained why she felt so. She sensed it; that was all.

The great wolfhound walked stiff-legged, a barely audible growl rumbling deep in his throat.

As darkness drew in, Kerza decided to rest, in spite of her growing uneasiness. Both she and Pit were bone-weary and half-famished as well.

Choosing the lee of a mound of masonry which offered some protection against the blowing sand and the chill winds of the desert night, she sat down and took from her shoulder the one flask which still held water. After sharing it with Pit, she leaned back against a tilted slab and closed her eyes, burning and inflamed from the constant glare of the sun.

One hand gripped the great curved cutlass; the other rested lightly on Pit, who lay curled close against her.

She slept only at intervals, convinced that lurking, inquisitive figures were slipping ever closer down the nearby darkened lanes.

All through the night she was aware of Pit's subdued but savage growling.

Dawn was no more than a grey smudge in the eastern sky when she sat up suddenly, cutlass lifted. Pit pressed against her protectively, snarling.

As the shadows began to fade, she



saw that she was completely surrounded by at least a score of armed warriors wearing suits of worn and rusted armor, complete with black-visored helmets. Most of them carried long swords. A few held huge maces or big two-edged battle-axes.

One of them stepped forward, addressing her in a tongue which she could comprehend, though she was not sure of its origin. It appeared to be Old Saxon with an admixture of words and phrases borrowed from other tongues.

"You will come with us. Our Queen awaits."

No attempt was made to disarm her, nor to separate her from the snarling wolfhound.

Quieting the dog with a word, she followed the spokesman of the group, while the others fell in alongside and behind.

The half-obliterated path led around piles of rubble and sprawls of scattered black slabs sinking away into the omnipresent sand.

At length the leader stepped through the archway of a ruined iron gate and abruptly halted.

As if it were a signal, the sun at that moment lifted over the distant dunes. Straight ahead, only yards away, stood the remains of an ornate structure which centuries before must have been a stately palace. It was apparent that efforts had been made to preserve the building, but the struggle had long since been lost. Part of the roof had fallen in; the foundation was giving way; ragged cracks fissured the weathered black and green slabs which made up the walls.

Kerza followed the spokesman up worn stone steps into a high open hall. In the growing light which entered through gaping window apertures and a rent in the great roof, the place seemed almost empty. A single flaring torch burned in a bracket affixed to one of the still intact stone columns. A few shreds of torn rugs and some tattered rush mats lay about the cold floor.

What riveted Kerza's attention, however, lay at the far end of the hall.

Sitting upright on a glittering throne, fixed on a dais, a withered mummy thing awaited Kerza. It looked dead, dessicated, sexless. It neither moved nor spoke. An early morning breeze, straying through the broken walls, stirred a few of the white hairs which sprouted from its cadaverous head.

As Kerza advanced, she gasped. A gold crown rested on the mummy's head. In the center of it, where a splen-

did jewel should have gleamed, only a deep conical cavity showed.

In spite of herself, Kerza exclaimed aloud, "Queen Sarmempta!"

The parchment-like face of the mummy moved. A smile which resembled the rictus of the dead broke hideously across the wasted features.

A whisper as from the tomb echoed the drafty hall. "Azrin has sent you! Replace the ruby of death in my crown so that I may rest at last!"

Questions crowded to her lips, but Kerza found herself unable to speak. Mechanically, she reached into the cutlass scabbard and withdrew the great ruby. The blaze and fire of the stone seemed to fill the hall.

Without a word, Kerza walked up the steps of the dais, stooped, and set the jewel into the golden crown's cavity. Instantly, it seemed to lock into place.

A low keening wail arose from the ranks of the warriors.

Queen Sarmempta stood up. For a few seconds at least, a dignity, a kind of majesty, returned to the shrivelled form.

It held up a clawlike hand. "Do not mourn, O warriors! I go to the rest which Azrin so long denied me! You will have a new queen!"

As Kerza watched in disbelief, the shrunken repulsive thing before her seemed to glow with light. The leathery flesh came alive; the features filled out; the dead-white hair turned to flowing gold. Kerza stared into the clear eyes of a young woman.

A roar of excitement, awe and approval came from the warrior ranks.

Queen Sarmempta shook her head sadly. A wistful smile flitted across her suddenly youthful face.

Her hand signalled silence.

"Before I pass," she said, "I wish you to remember me as I once was. As Azrin promised, the return of the ruby returns my youth as well—for heartbeats only before my dissolution and the crowning of your new queen!"

Lifting the crown from her yellow locks, she set it on Kerza's head.

Almost at once another transformation took place. Queen Sarmempta's brief beauty faded and disappeared before Kerza's unbelieving eyes. Within seconds the same withered mummy as before again stood rigidly by her throne. But the dissolution did not stop there.

Dessicated flesh fell away, revealing flaking brown bones. White hair dropped from the shrunken skull; eyes

sank away in their sockets. A mummified skeleton swayed for an instant before the throne and then settled into a sieve-full of dust. Wind from the window aperture scattered it across the dais.

For long minutes absolute silence gripped the great hall.

Suddenly a cry of acclamation arose from the ranks of the surrounding warriors.

"Hail to our new Queen! Hail to the Queen!"

The warrior spokesman who had led Kerza into the hall bowed before her. "I speak for all, Majesty. We give full obeisance. We are your vassals. I am Bruwald, leader of our battle legion." He looked about grimly. "What remains of it."

Kerza accepted the pledge and gave them her name, adding that of Pit, the wolfhound, as if he were of equal importance.

The hall resounded to another roar. "Hail to Queen Kerza!"

Led by Bruwald, and surrounded by a group of bodyguards, Kerza and Pit were conducted into a nearby anteroom where some facilities for bodily comfort and even the amenities had been preserved.

After the famished warrior woman and the gaunt wolfhound had been given food and drink, Bruwald told a strange story.

Over the decades and the centuries, much had been forgotten, but the gist of the tale was that long ago, so long that none living could now remember hearing details even at second hand, great legions had set out from the Saxon north to conquer the Arab hordes. The desert wolves had been decimated in a great battle nearby. Instead of returning to their homes in the snowy north, the conquerors, using captive and slave labor, had erected a magnificent city near the battle site. Their king, Morcar, by further conquests and by exacting tribute from caravans, had become wealthy and powerful. None of the scattered Arab armies dared rise against him. In his old age he had taken to wife the captured daughter of an Egyptian king, Homentai II.

Queen Sarmempta was the last representative of this royal line. Enraged at what he considered a royal reproof, if not insult, Azrin, the ancient court sorcerer, had put a curse upon the queen by secretly prying from her crown the ruby which was symbolic of leadership. By the terms of the occult



16  
pact which Azrin must have made with the powers of darkness, Queen Sarmempta could not die until the ruby was replaced. Whoever replaced the jewel in the crown became, in turn, the new ruler.

Bruwald frowned. "Azrin was the most powerful magician who ever lived. Men vowed he was deathless. He was present, it is said, when Morcar fought the first great battle."

Glancing about the vast gloomy hall, he shivered in spite of himself. "Who knows? He may be living still!"

Kerza shook her head. "He is dead. I watched him fall away to dust before my eyes, even as Queen Sarmempta." Briefly, she explained how she had obtained the ruby.

Bruwald listened uneasily. "Let us hope Azrin's dust will be scattered by the winds to the farthest ends of the earth!"

Kerza was silent for a moment. Presently she spoke. "Why does your city lie in ruins? Where are the great legions of yore? I see only a few score warriors with worn weapons and damaged armor."

"Our legions," Bruwald explained, "have been fighting off Arab attacks for endless years. There had been no time, nor strength, nor opportunity, to keep the city in repair. It has fallen into ruins and the sand is reclaiming it."

"The Arab attacks have been fierce and unending?"

Bruwald nodded. "Fierce enough and never-ending. Even now we think they may be massing for a final attack which could overwhelm us!"

He peered warily into the far darkened corners of the hall. "And that is not all. We must be on constant guard against the burrow-men."

"The burrow-men?" Kerza asked.

"When the first great legions came from the north," Bruwald told her, "they brought their own servants and slaves. Porters, horse holders, cooks, hewers and menders. They helped build our city, which we called Ostrove. They were short, dark men captured from the far western islands. After Ostrove began to thrive, discipline relaxed. Some of the dark men deserted—to be butchered by the Arabs in many cases—but others hid in secret places in the city. Gradually, as buildings fell into disrepair, they dug down into the ruins and somehow survived by pillage and thievery at night. Now the whole of Ostrove, or what remains of it, is undermined by their filthy warrens. Their burrows extend for

miles in every direction. Some of them we dug out and killed, though they fought like cornered badgers. But now we must conserve the remnant of our strength for the final Arab onslaught, which I believe is imminent. At night we post guards to keep off the burrow-men, but we no longer can spare warriors to search them out in their underground lairs."

He glanced about with a desolate expression. "Only warriors remain. Constant attacks, privation and inadequate shelter have combined to finish off our women and issue. We are a dying remnant."

He smiled bitterly. "At least," he added, "we have reason to believe the burrow-men are no better off!"

Shortly afterward, Bruwald departed, leaving bodyguards to watch over the new queen.

Kerza lay back on a couch, with Pit at her feet, but she could not relax. For many hours she remained in deep thought, pondering the things which Bruwald had told her.

At length she requested one of the guards to summon the Saxon leader.

Nearly an hour passed before Bruwald appeared, dust clinging in the worry lines which creased his face.

He apologized for the delay. "I was at the far end of the city. One must move warily these days!"

Kerza nodded understandingly. "I can well believe that."

She hesitated, patting the massive wolfhound which lay by her side. "I have been thinking of all you told me, Bruwald. These burrow-men—do they have a leader?"

Bruwald's eyes narrowed. "Yes, a leader of sorts. A fat toad who hides under the earth and is seldom seen. He decides where they will issue forth and what they will steal. His name is Prang."



Kerza stood up. "Take me to him!"  
Bruwald stared at her. "We—that is—they are enemies, Majesty! We do not consort with them! We do not even know where Prang conceals his paint-daubed caracass!"

"Can any of your men converse in the language of the burrow-men?"

Bruwald nodded grudgingly. "A few of our men have mastered some of the words—enough for understanding I expect."

"Good. Bring one interpreter then, one guide who knows an entrance underground, and return to me."

The color drained from Bruwald's face. "I will do as your Majesty commands, but it is certain death! Your crown will mean nothing in those vile badger holes! You will never emerge again!"

Kerza waved him off. "Hurry, Bruwald!"

As he bowed and turned, she called after him. "And Bruwald—bring me a good two-edged axe. If I am cornered, at least those burrows will brim with blood before I go down!"

Bruwald returned a few minutes later with two black-visored warriors. He handed Kerza a huge two-edged battle-axe. This was no rusty weapon but one obviously cherished. The twin finely-honed blades glittered.

"I will of course accompany your Majesty?"

Kerza shook her head. "No, Bruwald. You will remain here in command of the legion. If I fail to return, Ostrove will be little worse off. If you should perish in the burrows, the legion will be leaderless."

Bruwald appeared on the point of protest. Reluctantly, however, he inclined his head.

Harbold, the warrior who was to act as guide, led the way out of the neglected hall, followed by Kerza and Pit, and Brell, the interpreter.

After a lengthy and seemingly interminable trek through the sand-littered lanes of the shattered city, Harbold paused before a collapsed pile of jumbled black masonry.

He surveyed it with obvious misgiving. "A fortnight ago one of our guards saw burrow-men emerging from this place. The next day we found the entrance to a tunnel hidden under these slabs. I think I know the way."

"You did not enter the tunnel?"  
Kerza asked as they approached the ruins.



Harbold shook his head. "We cannot spare the men, your Majesty. If the Arab wolves ever depart, we may make an effort to root out the burrow rats."

He led the way under a tilted slab toward a dark labyrinth. "But I think the wolves are waiting to attack."

Kerza followed him around massive fallen squares of building stone which soon shut out the few remaining glimmers of daylight. Pit padded at her side. Brell, sword in hand, crept along warily in the rear.

The tortuous route slanted downward. A reek of wet earth mingled with some other unfamiliar pungent odor stung Kerza's nostrils. A warning growl rumbled deep in Pit's throat.

Harbold stopped suddenly and held up his hand. Before them lay the pitch-black entrance to some kind of underground passage. In contrast, the gray darkness through which they had crept seemed almost light.

Harbold turned and Kerza heard a faint whisper of sound as lifted his long sword from its sheath.

"Death may lie ahead, Majesty." The comment was half question.

Kerza frowned impatiently. "I will lead the way, Harbold. Let Brell be close at hand. Guard well our rear."

Harbold obediently stepped aside as Kerza entered the tunnel. She advanced cautiously, Pit on her right, Brell on her left. Harbold, sword in hand, walked behind.

The tunnel, like the route already taken, twisted downward. The darkness intensified. Kerza experienced the illusion that it was tangible, something that had to be pushed aside, something that closed in again. The damp, fetid air seemed filled with growing menace.

Abruptly, a torch flared ahead. It was little more than a small glowing stick, but it appeared bright in the midst of such tomb-like darkness.

By its dim light a dozen or more near-naked, paint-daubed figures were revealed. They were armed with daggers, spears and short bows with metal-tipped arrows strung and ready. They were swarthy, undersized men, just over five feet in height.

They remained motionless, watchful. They seemed to be waiting. Kerza heard almost imperceptible sounds some yards behind her and surmised that another force of bandy-legged little men had entered the tunnel from some unnoticed subterranean side passage. She was cut off.

A word silenced Pit's savage growling. She turned to Brell. "Tell them I am Kerza, Queen of Ostrove, and that I desire to speak to Prang."

Brell addressed the painted men in a strange language. A few of the words seemed oddly familiar to Kerza, but she could not identify their source.

The burrow-men listened intently. Brell's translation appeared to arouse in them a mixture of amusement, astonishment and anger.

As Kerza and the two warriors waited, the underground lurkers muttered among themselves. There seemed to be a division of opinion.

Brell turned toward Kerza, whispering. "Some are for killing us at once; others want to summon Prang!"

After a tense interlude, during which it looked as if the decision could go either way, one of the painted men stepped forward, addressing Brell briefly.

Finished, he turned and disappeared into the darkness.

Brell translated. "He says he will return with Prang, who will enjoy our death throes."

Tension mounted as the minutes dragged on. At length, Harbold, shifting uneasily, addressed Kerza.

"If we turned suddenly and attacked those in our rear, we might yet cut our way out."

Kerza shook her head. "That is our last resort when all else has failed. We wait for Prang!"

The painted men were beginning to murmur restlessly among themselves when Prang finally appeared.

Even in the half-darkness he was an arresting figure. He was taller and straighter-limbed than most of the others, with long, loose black hair and alert, angry black eyes which looked as if they could see through shadows. Twin bands of blue paint extended from his swarthy cheek bones to the middle of his chin. He held a short, two-edged sword; the hilt of a jeweled dagger sparkled in a leather sheath at his waist. His costume consisted of an abbreviated tunic cut from some kind of animal skin. A heavy silver bractlet in the form of a coiled snake encircled his upper right arm.

Brell addressed him.

For long minutes he remained silent, scowling at Kerza. At length the scowl faded and a flicker of amusement showed in his black eyes. He spoke to Brell briefly.

Brell turned, frowning. "He says he



will spare you to become his queen, but we others must die!"

Kerza frowned in turn. "Tell him there is no time for foolish talk. The Arabs are even now gathering to take Ostrove. Once they have vanquished the legion, they will enter the burrows and exterminate Prang's warriors. The only hope of the painted men is to join with us in an attempt to break the Arab attack!"

Brell translated.

Prang listened carefully. The amusement faded from his gaze; a thoughtful expression stole over his stern features.

Before he could reply, Kerza turned to Brell again. "Tell him that, long ago, my people, the Celts, fought with his own against the Vikings. Ask him if he remembers tales of the great battle at Burnmoor Bridge."

Brell translated and again the Pictish leader listened attentively. Finally he nodded and replied.

"He remembers the Celts and stories about the big fight at Burnmoor, but he says you are probably trying to trick him—to draw his forces into the open and then pounce on them. He wants proof that the Arabs are massing."

Kerza pondered her reply. She realized that Prang's suspicions were understandable, under the circumstances, in fact, inevitable. The remnant of Bruwald's legion had been skirmishing with the burrow-men for as long as either side could remember.

"Tell him," Kerza answered at last, "that if he will come with us, we will show him proof enough. He has my own word that no harm will befall him."

Brell stared at her with astonishment and dismay. As he translated, he took a firmer grip on his sword. It was known that Prang had a quick temper and often acted on sudden impulse.

Surprisingly, Kerza's proposal did not infuriate him. He turned to confer with his own men. Perhaps the very boldness and challenge of the proposal appealed to him.

After an earnest discussion with several of his men, he spoke to Brell.

Looking puzzled, Brell translated for Kerza. "He says he will accompany you with two of his best men, but that you



18  
must leave the great dog as hostage. If he fails to return, the dog will be skinned alive and left to die slowly in agony."

Instinctively, Kerza reached out and drew the wolfhound closer to her side. She saw Prang watching her narrowly. She understood at once that he had swiftly recognized the close bond between girl and dog. He was willing to gamble his life on the strength of it.

Kerza hesitated. It was an anguished decision. When Prang saw tears in her eyes, he knew that he would be safe.

She turned to Brell. "Tell him that I must have his word that Pit will be well treated, given food and water, and brought out as soon as he and his men return."

Prang agreed to the terms, nodding his head vigorously.

One of the burrow-men produced a short leather thong which he handed to Kerza. As she fixed it around the wolfhound's neck, she stroked his rough coat and murmured soothing words. The huge dog licked her hand,

seeming to understand. As he was led away into the depths of the burrow, he turned to look at her with mournful, questioning eyes.

Biting her lip, Kerza turned to Harbold. "Hurry on ahead as fast as you can! Spread word that if anyone lifts hand against Prang or either of his men, he will die by my own blade!"

Nodding, Harbold started back toward the tunnel entrance as fast as the encompassing darkness permitted. Kerza and Brell, with Prang and his two lieutenants, followed.

When the little group finally emerged into daylight, a half-dozen black-visored warriors, armed and alert, stood just outside the shattered structure which concealed the tunnel entrance.

One of them stepped forward, addressing Kerza. "We are posted here as guards, Majesty, while Harbold spreads your warning throughout Ostrove!"

While Prang and his underlings blinked and shielded their eyes against

the unaccustomed glare of the sunlight, Kerza conducted them to the ruins of Queen Sarmempta's palace. Here they were installed in a room with roof and walls still standing and given full-time guards. Brell remained on hand as translator.

Bruwald and his black-visored legionnaires regarded them in surly silence but no hand was raised against them.

In the times which followed, Prang was escorted throughout Ostrove both by day and night. Hidden in one of the tumbled tower ruins, or crouching by moonlight in the shadow of one of the outermost ruined rampart walls, he saw for himself clear evidence that the Arab hordes were gathering their forces for a crushing attack.

At Queen Sarmempta's desolate palace rooms, Kerza, Bruwald, Prang and his two chieftains, and several experienced veterans of Bruwald's legion, discussed strategy.

*Continued on page 62.*

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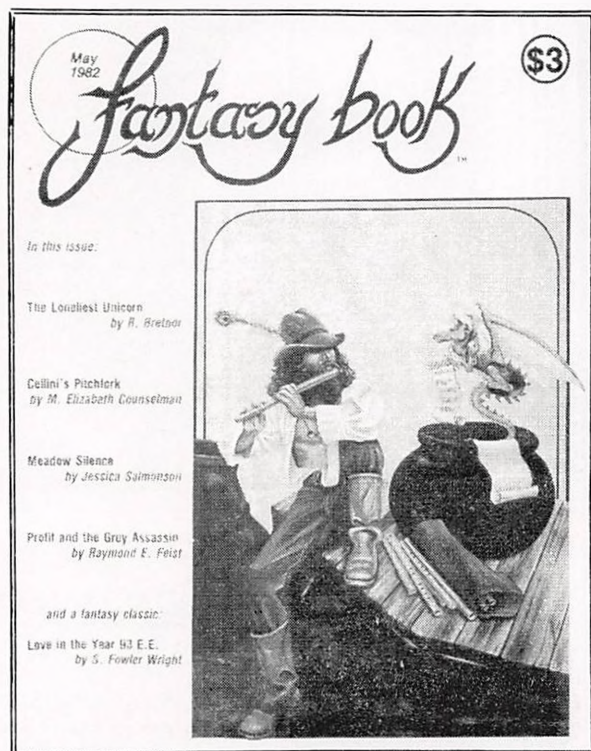
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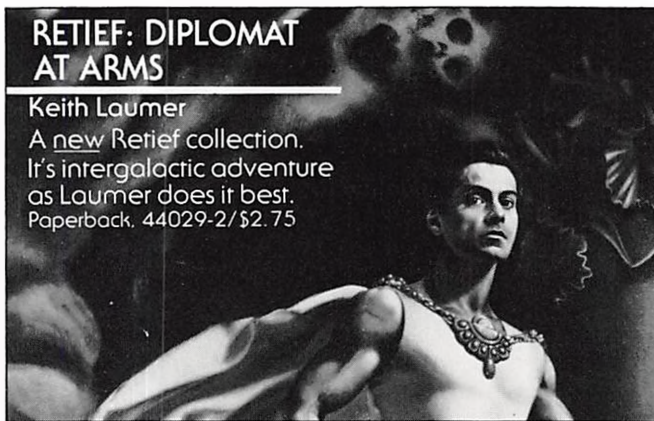


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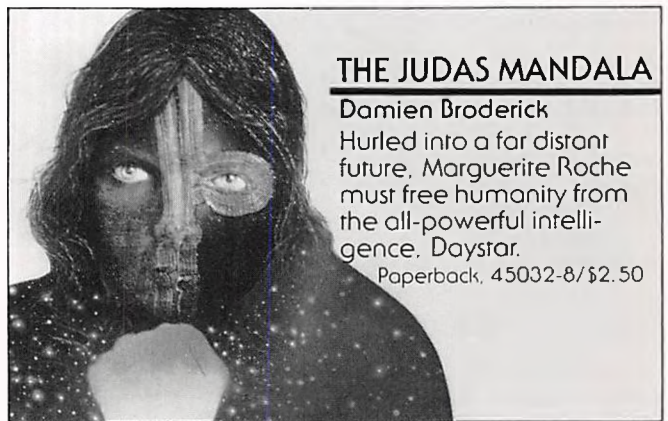


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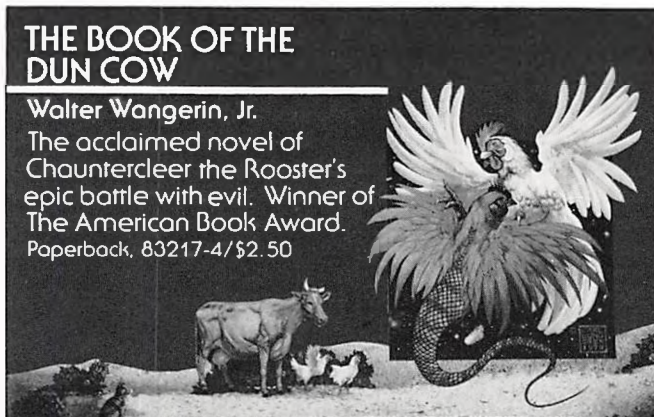


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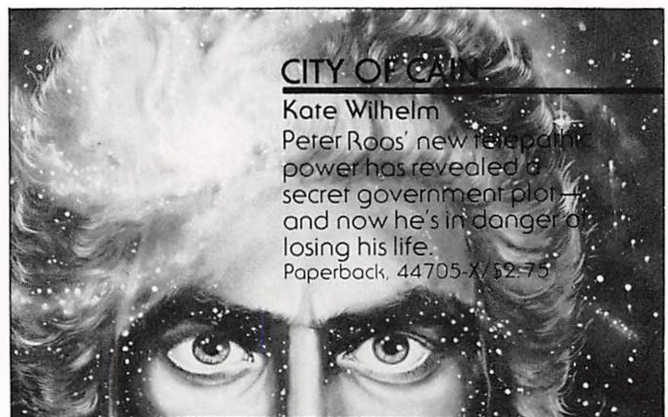


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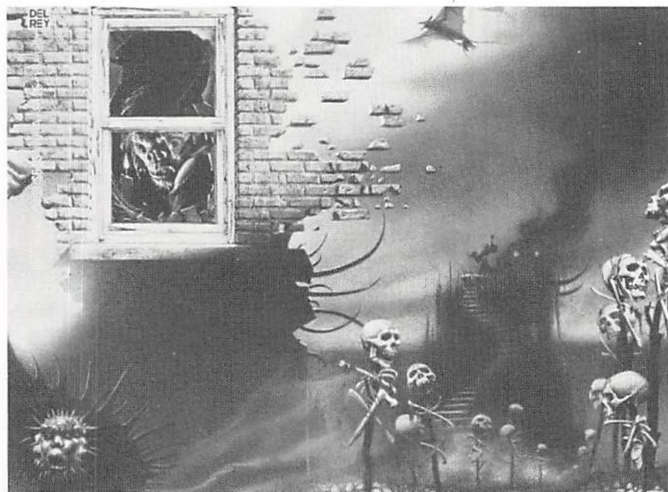




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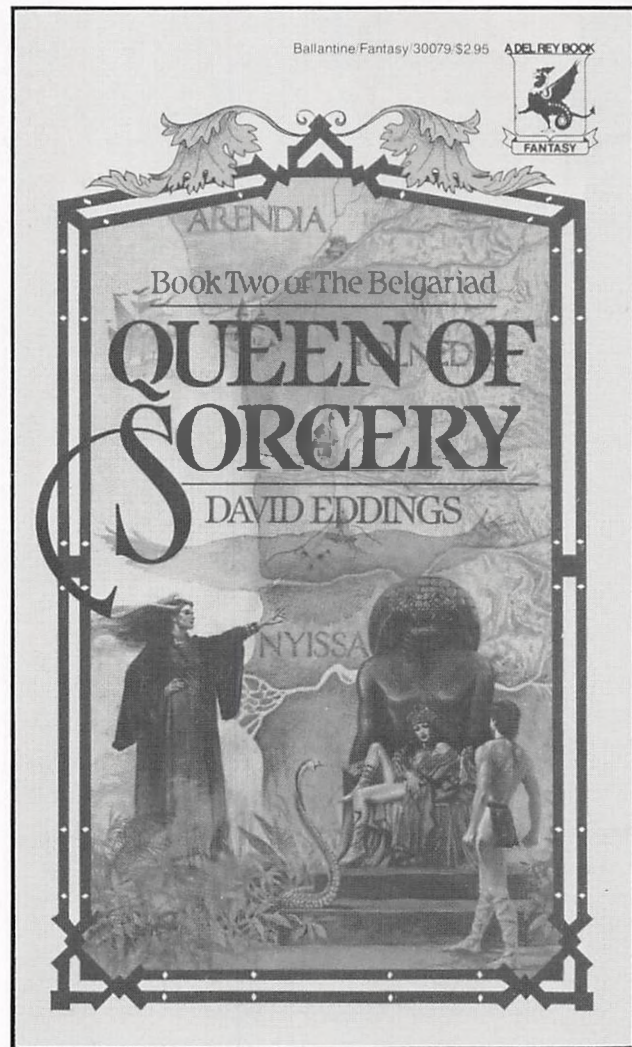
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## When Love Turned Round and Whispered You're Mine

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by  
Charles L. Grant

25

Rain soft and hard in a season misplaced: the dead grey of winter before the first snow, the knife-chill of autumn before the first frost; a sparrow crouching beneath the protection of an eave, a cat beneath a hedge, a young boy out of school with coat wrenched over his head as he races down the block ahead of the wind. Cars move quickly, as if prodded by shadows, taking corners too close, taking stop signs not at all. An overturned tricycle in a postage-stamp yard, a red wagon whose dented handle points weakly at the clouds, a rope-and-tire swing that spins slowly, without a rider.

Movement and still-life, and soundless as I watched.

A draught found its way through the living room's bay window, found its way to my neck, and across the backs of my hands. I shivered, but didn't move. My arms were folded across the back of the old sofa, my legs crossed at the ankles and tapping the air to a melody I couldn't hear. A windgust shimmered the panes and rattled acorns in the gutter rimming the narrow porch. Something cracked against the roof, but I didn't move. It was a matter of pride: I was trying foolishly not to admit to myself that miracles didn't happen, that if I only had the patience she would walk by the house, sooner or later.

Of course she would. She only lived five blocks away, up Hawthorne Street where the river came close enough to grind at the backyards.

Another gust, and the beech at the curb yard shook a downpour to the lawn.

She would, but she didn't have to, and she probably wouldn't. What did it matter that it was June, the celebrated month of lovers and weddings in spite

of the weather? What did it matter that I sometimes believed in hunches and ESP and prayed she would hear me whenever I tried them. If it sometimes worked when I was working a story, why wouldn't it work now? With her. Today.

I scowled then and shook my head. It was hardly the way for a man my age to think, much less behave. It was silly, it was embarrassing, yet here I was like a fumbling adolescent, just yearning for a glimpse of a woman I barely knew. And a woman I couldn't have, no matter how miraculous my dreams made my living. It was ridiculous. It was more than likely emotionally dangerous.

And it was definitely not the way I'd been taught to react to the woman who was going to be the wife of my best friend.

I first saw her just over two months ago and was . . . I guess the word is *smitten*. Patrick was as well, but since she was working in his law firm as a temporary secretary, he had the best opportunity to do something about it. I, on the other hand, felt as if I'd been suddenly dropped into a movie they'd stopped making thirty years ago—Patrick was going to marry this secretary of his, and I was in love.

And I only made it worse by creating a woman for myself, someone he'd never seen but about whom he advised with little compunction.

"Listen," he'd said only the week before, "what you have to do is establish more contact, okay? Once you do that you can let your instincts take over. I mean, she isn't going to come at you with an ax or anything, y'know. She's not like those creeps you write about every other week."

"Well," I'd offered by way of defense, "we have had coffee a couple of times, actually. Lunch twice, in fact." A truth about which I felt only a mild guilt; Pat had been in court, and she had seemed lonely.

Patrick had rolled his dark eyes toward the ceiling. "Hank. Hank. Look, all you've done so far is show the natives you're not carrying any guns. So to speak. It's a good step, don't get me wrong, but it isn't enough."

"She's awfully quiet," I'd said hopelessly. "I don't know what to say to her."

"Not quiet, Hank, intense. Remember, you of all people should know she's had a hell of a time. With luck like hers you'd be afraid to talk too. Especially to a man."

Yeah, I thought. Yeah.

Four years ago she'd been engaged to a salesman who had died while on a business trip to Minneapolis; the man's family hadn't allowed her to attend the funeral. A month shy of two years ago, her next fiancée had disappeared. Run off, the St. Louis police said, never heard of again. She had been in neither city when it happened, nor had she attracted any blame.

Patrick believed this was my woman I was talking about, and I didn't dissuade him. He was so unfailingly joyous at finding himself near married I didn't have the heart or the stomach to tell him what I'd learned. And I only knew it because a contact of mine at the newspaper morgue saw doodles of her name on my notepad, recognized it, and showed me the articles. I was both shocked and sympathetic; Patrick would have been appalled and broken off the engagement. He was a good man, but he was a lawyer with ambition, and ambition forbade a wife with a past.

I was tempted more than once to tell him.

I could have told him, and he would have dropped her, and I could have courted her on my own.

But I didn't. The instincts that had me go for a story with every trick in the book stopped short of that. Perhaps it was foolish, or needlessly masochistic.



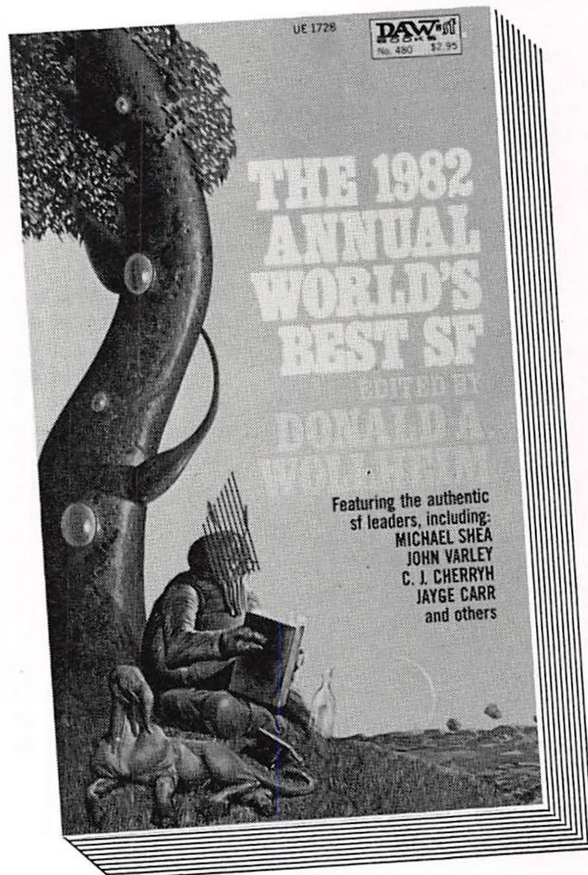
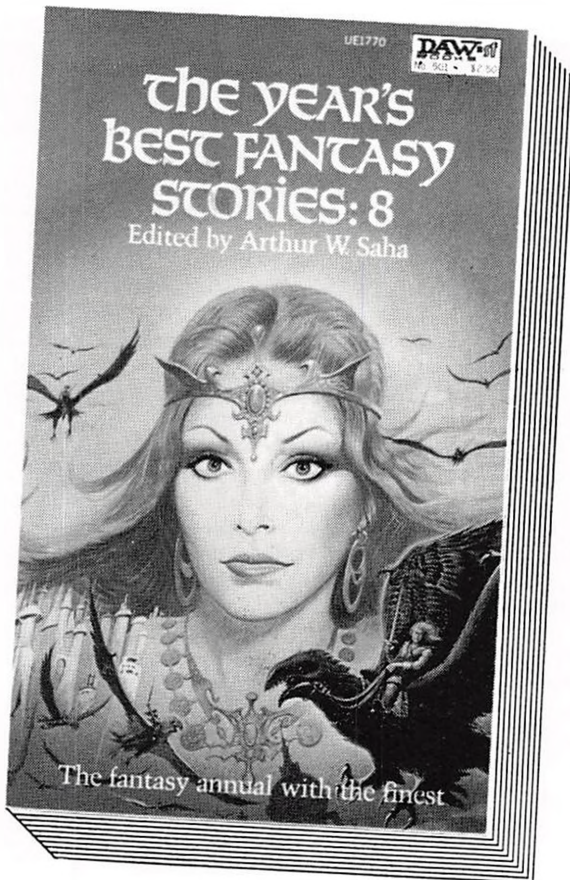
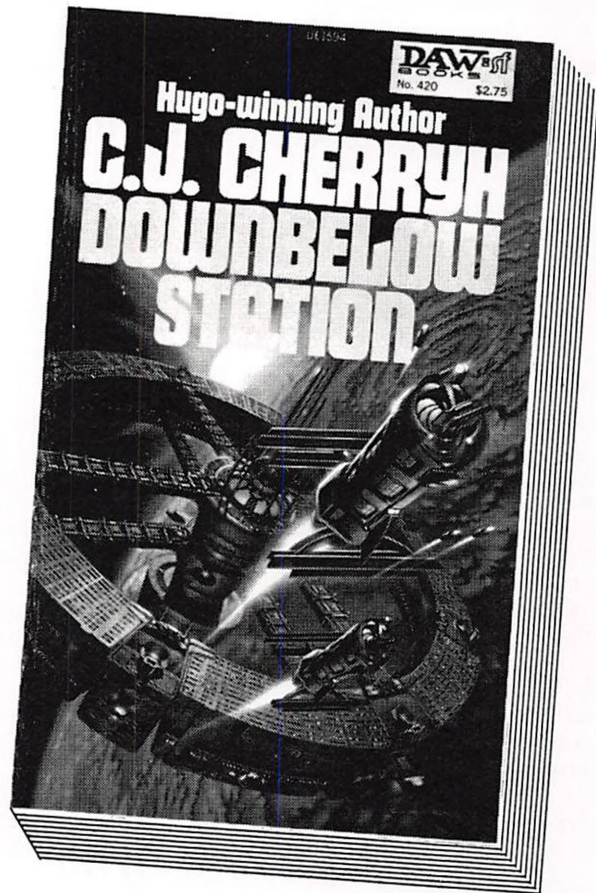
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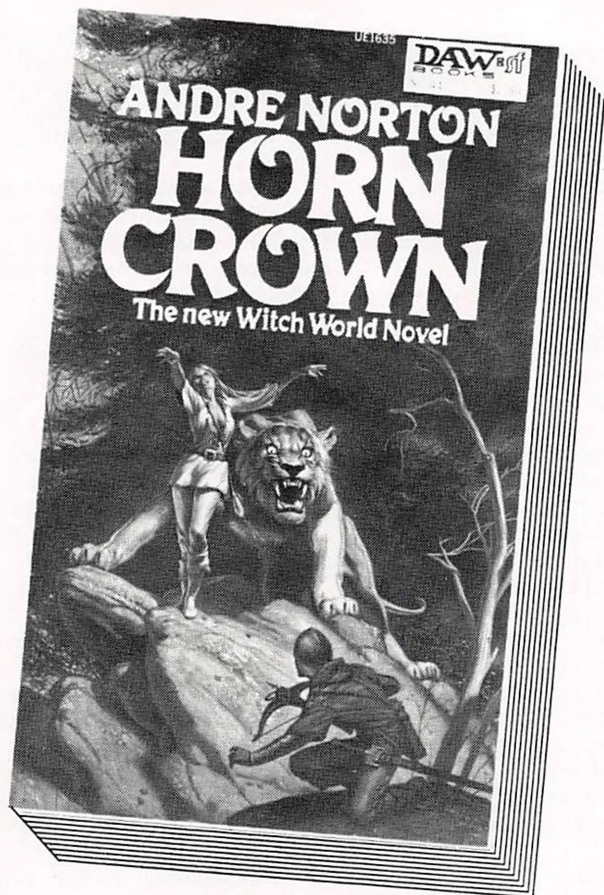
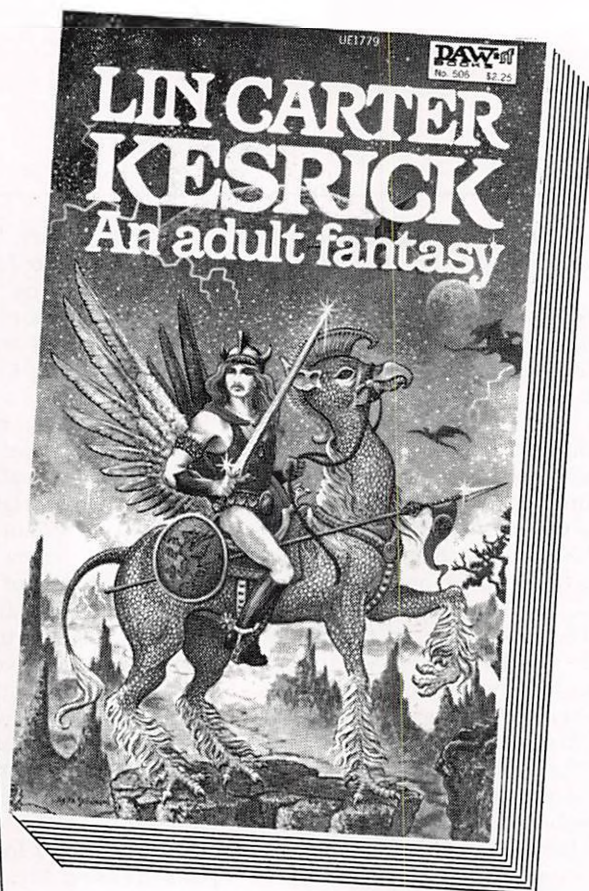
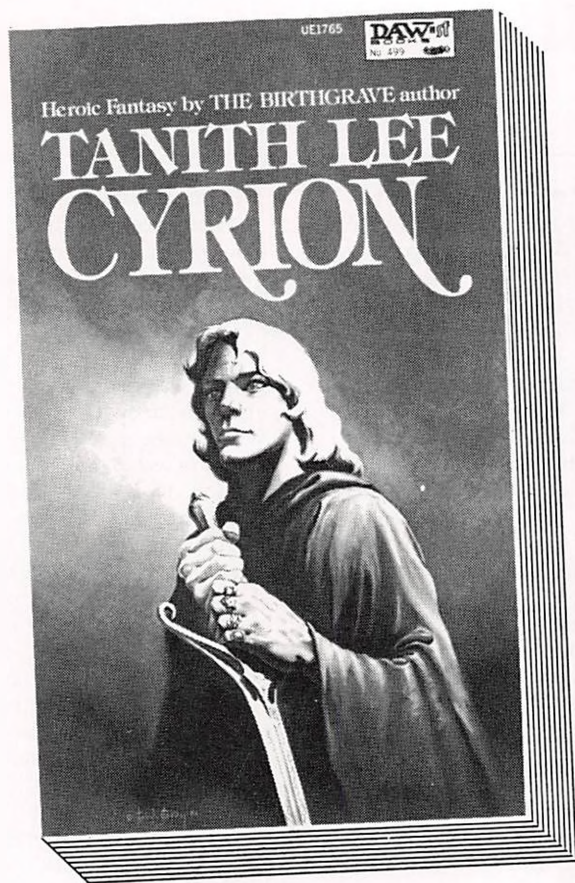
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But sooner or later I would have to live with myself, and since I'm all I have, it would be unpleasant company indeed, in the dark.

Besides, one of these days I would grow up and get over her, it would be done, and a poignant chapter in the biography someone would write.

The wind a third time, and I had a meeting with Patrick about the upcoming wedding. I pushed off the sofa, brushed at my trousers and headed for the hall closet. A coat hanger rattled to the floor when I pulled out his jacket. I left it there, reminding myself to pick it up later. Then I snapped up the sheepskin collar, closed the zipper to my throat, and hurried outside. My shoulders hunched briefly against a breeze barely blowing, eyes squinting hard in the rain-turned-mist.

You will not feel sorry for yourself, I ordered as I headed for Maloney's apartment. Like her, you're only having a bad streak that could happen to anyone. Just roll with the punches and keep your chin out of danger. I grunted what might have been a laugh, and turned the corner, paying no attention to the gutters filling with white water.

So what if on Monday Lorraine calls to say she's getting married again and I don't have to pay alimony anymore but would I mind if whatshisname adopts Lindsay as their daughter; and so what if on Tuesday city editor Morris Wakeman chews me out for not following up on a killing that had baffled the police and how would I like to cover libraries and garden shows; and on Wednesday I don't get to see her because she doesn't come into work; and this morning the car drops its goddamned transmission. So what? Life's bowl of cherries had pits and stems, you know. You just gotta be careful you don't choke, or chip a tooth.

Besides, I added as I turned another corner, you did win a couple hundred bucks in the lottery three months ago, and Wakeman did say a raise was virtually certain once this new case was over, and you're going to be Pat's best man at his wedding in a week—even if it is to her, he's happy and that's what counts. So checks and balances, Hank m'boy; cherries have meat as well as pits.

And the longer I muttered to myself and ran a personal tally sheet, the more ludicrous it all sounded until, by the time I reached the apartment I was grinning, laughing aloud when Pat let me in and we were in the kitchen opening the wine.

"Jesus, Henry," Pat said as he shoved a small manicured hand through tangled grey hair trying desperately to stay brown, "I think that by this time I'd be ready to cut my wrists."

"Great. All I have is an electric razor."

A pause, then raucous laughter.

Another pause while Pat filled the glasses. "Look, pal, you've had problem stories before, right? And you always made like a Mountie and got your man, right? Hell, they can't all be easy, y'know. Think of it as a test of your superior abilities and your reporter's intellect. You said it yourself—you learn something new every time, so this time you must be learning enough for a degree. Actually, if you were of a mind, you'd consider this a lucky sign."

I took a deep breath, drank, sighed loudly and shrugged. "Yeah, if I were of a mind."

And when I looked up at him, saw him grinning, I realized that it was over. She was marrying *him*, not me, and miracles didn't happen.

"So how's this mysterious woman of yours," he said over the second glass. "From what you say—and I'm very annoyed you haven't let me meet her, by the way—from what you say she sounds bright, intelligent, and awfully independent."

Pat was not one for independence among women; he was still old-fashioned enough to believe in kitchens and decorations.

"You going to marry her?" Like a reformed smoker, there's not much worse than a reformed single man.

"Patrick," I said, trying to be stern though I knew I was being baited, "I am not—repeat, am not—ready for an independent woman. The trouble is, I'm also not in the market for a bubble-head whose reading comes solely from a box of cake mix." I rubbed at an ear slowly, without looking up. "To tell you the truth, she frightens me a little."

"Good!" he said with a sharp single nod. "Damn it, that's good. Maybe it'll keep you on your toes. Christ, every time you get interested in a woman and she crosses her eyes at you, you run like a scared rabbit. But you and I know you're too old for that crap now, Hank. Too damned old."

"Easy for you to say," I countered. "You're the one getting married in just over a week."

"And you and she are coming as a couple, you understand?"

I almost panicked. "You're crazy."

"You love her, right?"

I scoffed. "How can I? In six months I've spent maybe six hours with her. Just because . . . well, I wouldn't exactly . . ."

Just as quickly as I'd decided it was done, it was back—when I read a newspaper her face was every model's; when I watched TV she was every character in the show; when the telephone rang my stomach dropped to my knees; when I approached her in Pat's office I found myself shining my shoes on the backs of my trouser legs. We'd had lunch twice, I'd walked her home less than a dozen times, and I'd given her one ride to work when her car stalled in traffic and she was tearfully panicked.

I looked up and saw Pat watching me, concerned and melancholy.

"Excuse me," I said, emptied my glass and left. Pat didn't follow.

That night I ate and didn't taste a thing, worked on some notes I'd brought home from the station, and had just about decided I was tired enough to sleep when the telephone rang. I stared at it, squatting black and gleaming on the table beside my armchair. At the fifth summons I lifted the receiver.

"Hello, am I speaking to Henry Laughlin?"

It was a man, his voice faded and slurred. I scowled; a solicitation for subscriptions more than likely. Take thirteen weeks of a newspaper and help the crippled children.

"Hello?"

"I'm not interested," I said as flatly as I could.

"You'd better be," the caller said, "because I almost married her."

I sat up and stared at the mouthpiece. When the man spoke again, every sentence was interrupted by a hiccup, or a belch so strong I could almost smell the beer.

"Listen, Laughlin, you don't know me, but . . . but I'm Dick Overton. I knew her, see, and . . . it's taken me a couple of years to find her again, and I'm not letting another . . . chance go by. I know what you're . . . you're going through, and I just wanted you to understand . . . understand that I'm going to help you. You have nothing to . . . nothing to worry about. You or your friend. She'll be dead in a week."

I was standing, ready to yell, but all I heard was the dial tone. I hung up and thought immediately of the police, discarded the idea because I didn't know the man, couldn't prove it wasn't some-



one with a warped sense of humor. I thought of Pat, and decided this was something he didn't have to know until I knew more; and I thought of her, and knew she didn't have a phone. I was almost at the door then before I realized it was a crank. A jilted lover. A man drunk and trying to salvage some pride.

Curiously, as I made my way upstairs, I started to smile. She certainly did have an effect on her men, no question about it, and it must have been a hell of a shock for her when her last two affairs ended so badly. Pat was right, then, and he was wrong; intense, yes, but not with character—with caution. She probably feels as if she's a jinx.

But not anymore, I thought, and to hell with morality and Patrick Maloney; dawn will be the first great day of her brand new life. And immediately after work I raced through the mist-rain to her house and knocked on the door loudly, almost pounding. When she recognized me through the screen her smile made me grin. When she agreed solemnly we needed to talk—about Pat, about her, about me and my sickness, I almost wept for the swelling joy I felt lodged in my throat.

When she said she didn't care if it was raining, she would love to take a walk, I couldn't for the life of me remember the asking.

"I really feel silly," I said, holding the umbrella in my left hand, and an-

noyed because it put an arm between us.

"Well, I think it's nice."

I almost told her about the call, but didn't want to spoil the glow she gave me, and the comfort she obviously felt walking at my side. Later, I thought; much later.

Yet I couldn't help staring at the cars that passed us, at the pedestrians that waited in the shop doorways for a break.

Twenty minutes, and we were at the river that followed Hawthorne Street to the bridge, watching the water shift to black as the sun set behind the clouds.

I was silent. This wasn't a movie any longer; this was me, like a fool, trying to steal a jewel from a friend. Anything I said now would be irrevocable, and damning.

"Y'know, I like you an awful lot," I said, immediately wishing I had Cyrano to guide me.

She nodded after a moment's painful shyness. "Yes. Me too."

"Well, I'll be damned."

She laughed quietly and poked an elbow into my side.

"I mean, I like you a lot!"

Softly: "Yes."

"Pat's going to hate me."

"He loves me," she said.

"Yes, in his way."

She glanced at me sideways, looked away toward the river, and I couldn't help frowning at the look I saw there—suspicion, and wondering, and a quiet sort of anger.

Then it was gone, and we sat on a redwood-slatted concrete bench until the mist became a downpour; I walked her home, kissed her goodnight on the cheek, and strode into my house—singing off-key and not giving a damn. Nor did I care when my favorite breakfast had no taste, when Wakeman chewed me out soundly for not spending forty-eight hours a day on the story, when the garage called and told me to save my money and buy a new car. I only smiled, nodded, whistled every song I knew twice over and loudly, and when the day was done I walked to Pat's law firm in the building next door and offered to walk her home.

Pat was in court, and I felt no guilt at all, especially when she agreed readily, giggling, not looking at me straight on but holding my hand.

After dinner I snatched up the phone and called Pat.

"All right, all right, I admit it—I love her."

Pat laughed. "It's about time, pal. I knew that weeks ago."

My breathing abruptly turned shallow. "It's weird, though. Everywhere I look, there she is. Not really there, I mean, but there. You know that football trophy I have here on the mantel? Christ, she's wearing the helmet, right now while I'm looking at it."

"Maybe I should tell the preacher to set the altar for four."

Shallower still, until I had to lie on the floor and stare at the ceiling.

"Patrick?"

"I'm listening, Hank."

"Patrick, I've been a single man for over ten years now. Not a monk, you understand, but a single man. I even lived with my parents for two years. They think there's something wrong with me, of course, that I can't get a nice girl, you know how parents are. And I'd just about given up thinking there was still a sane woman who'd want to live with a reporter. But Patrick, damnit, ever since I met her I've never been so lonely in my whole damned life."

I knew it was stupid, but I felt my eyes burning and I rang off before I found the nerve to confess. Then I lay there until long after midnight, praying she'd find an excuse to call, or come to the door, or leave a note on the welcome mat for me to find in the morning.

I fell asleep where I was.

I woke up with a backache, and the telephone ringing.

"Laughlin?"

"God damn . . . !"

"I just wanted you to know that I can't do it."

"Damn it, Overton, what the hell's the matter with—"

"I saw her, see, and told her I knew she'd done it somehow, and she started to cry and the next thing I knew I forgave her, I knew I was wrong and . . . well, I just want you to know I'll be seeing her again. Soon. I guess she really loves me, you know?"

I slammed the receiver down, grabbed it back up and called Pat, catching him just before he left for court. Within five minutes I was calm again, my hands no longer trembling, my jaw no longer tight and aching with rage. Pat confirmed my initial impression of a lover hoping to salvage self-esteem. Not to worry; it happens all the time.

"You're a pal, Pat."

"Hey, that's what I'm here for, right? Right."

Nevertheless, I headed straight for my office, thinking I'd keep the editor

*Continued on page 54.*





## Peter Straub: An Informal Appreciation

by Stephen King

Peter Straub always looks out of place at fantasy conventions.

Most convention-goers wander around in a wild variety of t-shirts (my most memorable con t-shirts include BEAT ME, DADDY, EIGHT TO THE BAR, RUGBY PLAYERS EAT THEIR DEAD, and WILL SOMEBODY PLEASE BEAM RONALD REAGAN UP?), strange headgear, weird footwear, eccentric jewelry, and actual *costumes*—it is not unusual to see a giant tribble drifting softly down a post-midnight hallway at one of these shindigs, or a gentleman in a silver leisure suit who apparently has antennae growing not only from his temples but from his nipples and navel as well. Above all else, of course, one sees jeans—jeans by Levi, jeans by Jordache, jeans by Army-Navy Surplus. Jeans are everywhere.

A fantasy convention always looks like a gypsy caravan that just tumbled out of a Ray Bradbury story: here is a lady with a python wrapped around her shoulders, there is a gentleman balancing a holograph ballerina on the palm of his hand, and over in the corner a fellow is holding forth on The Society for Creative Anachronism. And through the midst of all this confusion and hurly-burly strolls the subject of this homily. "One Peter Straub," I can almost hear Rod Serling intoning, "caught somewhere between Brooks Brothers . . . and *The Twilight Zone*." But it's nothing as ordinary as Brooks Brothers; he is more apt to be clad in a three-piece pinstriped suit from Paul Stuart. His tie is apt to be subdued without being so hopelessly mellow you don't even see it (Peter believes ties are worn to be seen, and one has only to read *Ghost Story* to know how much he likes them—one of the characters in that novel, Ricky Hawthorne, muses to himself that he would not really mind wearing a nice new tie to bed). He does not wear aviator goggles, funky orange-shaded wraparounds, or soft lenses, for that matter. He wears dark plastic-framed spectacles which sit firmly on his nose and declare to the world: *No bullshit!*

And in a convention atmosphere where long hair is the rule rather than the exception on both men and women (Karl Edward Wagner wins the prize; his flowing locks are, well, Wagnerian), Peter is mostly bald. His head gleams

mellowly as he strides through the halls and rooms and bars (let's by no means forget the bars) of various convention hotels—he has not missed one of these since 1979, when we gathered in Providence to celebrate many arts of fantasy, both dark and light.

A favorite Peter Straub story:

One night during the 1980 World Fantasy Convention I was sitting at the bar, drinking beer and eating a jumbo frankfurter (what Peter, in his infinite wisdom, calls Godzilla-Dogs). The subject of this memoir was sitting at a table in the lounge; I was able to observe the jolly crew in the mirror behind the bar.

With Peter (God, this is starting to sound like a gossip column in the New York *Post*) was Karl Edward Wagner, Dennis Etchison, and two fans. The fans seemed to be holding forth with passion (and almost surely drunken) abandon on the subject of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

Two ladies with blue hair sat down next to me (it was the genteel sort of bar where such ladies usually feel welcome; they feature sixteen types of frozen drinks, including their famous Rutabaga Daiquiri, not to mention a bartender with arthritis and a picture of Ronnie and Nancy on the wall) and ordered frozen strawberry daiquiris. They soon observed the table I had been looking at; first they looked in the mirror, and then back over their shoulders. At Peter's table, both the booze and Karl Edward Wagner's locks were flowing. The fans were gesticulating. One of them began making a loud chainsaw sound—RRRR-RRRRRRRRRR!!!. Dennis Etchison looked impeccable, except for the naked woman painted on his necktie (unlike Peter's, Etchison's tie could hardly be called subdued).

"Aren't they *awful!*" One of the ladies murmured.

"Yes," the second murmured back, and then smiled. "But they'll be leaving soon."

"Why is that?"

"Because I recognize that nice bald man. He's the manager, and he'll *make* them leave."

Only moments later, *Peter* began making chainsaw sounds: RRRRRRRRR-RRR! The two ladies with the blue hair looked at each other, alarmed . . . and left in a hurry.

Peter Straub looks like somebody who must be terribly conservative, an

upholder of the system, the status quo, Things As They Have Been as well as Things As They Are. Hearing chainsaw sounds emanating from a gent of such respectable appearance could indeed be . . . well, unsettling.

His dress is conservative and impeccable, so conservative and impeccable that at most conventions *he* becomes by far the most exotically dressed person in attendance, the one you can pick out at once in a crowded room, the way you used to be able to instantly pick out the only kid in your high school class who had a Beatle haircut back in 1964.

His prose has always been as impeccable and correct as his dress. It is what I think of as "the good prose," prose which is almost always structurally correct (and if there is a sentence or passage which is not structurally correct, Peter will be able to tell you exactly *why* it is not, or at least how he felt when he created said sentence or passage—what he will not do is shrug and say, "Oh . . . is that wrong?") and which is, in its own way, as subdued—but as authoritative—as his ties. It is not flashy, gaudy prose, but each sentence is as tight as a time-lock, as unobtrusively strong as the good (but hidden) joists in a fine Victorian house that will last for three hundred years. "The good prose" has served a lot of great writers in good stead despite its lack of flash—its users extend in an unbroken line which includes such writers as Sinclair Lewis, Henry James, Thomas Hardy, M.R. James, Thomas Hardy, Wilkie Collins, and Charles Dickens—perhaps the greatest practitioner of "the good prose" to ever work in English.

All of the writers mentioned above (along with many fantasists I could name—George Orwell, John Wyndham, J.G. Ballard, J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Fritz Leiber, and H.G. Wells among them) wrote "the good prose," but that prose never kept their work from being enthralling . . . and, in many cases, subversive.

The idea that fantasy, with its incursions into taboo lands and its deliberate flaunting of subjects upon which most people allow a free rein only in their dreams, is often subversive should come as a new thought to no one who is a subscriber to this convention. And the idea that radicals are known only by their clothes or the weird substances that they smoke should be discarded by any naive enough to still hold it. Peter Straub is a



perfect case in point.

He cuts an impressive, dignified figure on panels; in the swirl and caper of late-night parties he appears a figure of sanity in a sea of madness. It is only when you speak to him for a while and get to know him a little (or hear him pull the starter-cord on his imaginary chainsaw in the Wagon-Wheel Lounge of some forgettable hotel in suburban Maryland) that you realize he is an authentic crazy person. Just as Harlan Ellison is an authentic crazy person, and Fritz Leiber, and Dennis Etchison, and Karl Edward Wagner with his Norseman's locks. Even the critics in this business are crazy. Douglas Winter, a *Fantasy Newsletter* writer, for instance, looks almost as straight as Peter, but of course he is utterly mad. You can see it in his eyes. You have to be mad to be in this business in the first place.

Peter Straub is a gentle man (as well as a gentleman) with dark hollow spaces inside. He fills some of these dark spaces with the sound of jazz—his impressive collection of EPs spans a period of over fifty years, from Bessie Smith to Art Tatum to Dexter Gordon to people none of us has ever heard of. He fills some of those spaces with his family, some with a liking for good food and good wine, some, as I've said, with a liking for traditional clothes and shoes, eyeglasses . . . and ties.

But those things don't fill all of the dark spaces. Some of them—lucky for the rest of us—he fills with tales brought back from the black places, tales which seem all the more terrible for the sane prose in which they are jacketed.

He is, simply, the best writer of supernatural tales that I know. He has built upon the things he has already done (read closely and you will see a family connection between some of the people in *Ghost Story* and one of the boys in *Shadowland*) but he has never repeated himself; could, for instance, any two books be more different in style than *If You Could See Me Now*, with its Chandleresque first-person narrative, and *Ghost Story*, with its Jamesian diction? His ambition seems boundless, something the reader might also be grateful for. Great ambition in a poor writer usually results in a sour man or woman who is writing theses masquerading as novels; great ambition in a good or a great writer is a rare and startling gift.



Photo by Paul Gagne

Literature teachers are too often like technicians photographing Rembrandts. The real writer—the one with a combination of class and nerve—is God's bona fide crazy, screaming and cackling behind the controls of one big mother-humping bulldozer, slamming down on the clutch, running gear-levers with dirty gloved hands, hardhat wheeled around backwards, screaming: *Look out! Daddy's gonna do a little operating here on the language! Daddy's gonna open up your head and mess wid it! Here I come! Get out of the way or stand there, I don't give a fuck!*

A genuine gonzo crazy, get it?

There's a literary progression here, a journey into the heart of craziness that even old Joe Conrad himself (another gonzo who masqueraded as Mr. I'm All Right, Jack) might have appreciated. *Julia* is a discovery of the supernatural tale not as an amusing antique but as something very old which still works terrifyingly well—something like a djinn's lamp that only needs to be rubbed by a willing hand. *If You Could See Me Now* recasts the form as Peter first came to it—the form of *Julia* is the

form of the "classic ghost tale," as told by Hawthorne, Henry James, and M.R. James—into the American idiom. *Ghost Story* triumphantly fuses the two in an effort to redefine the ghost story as novel—to give it breadth and thematic content. *Shadowland* goes a step further yet; we see Peter Straub as gardener, enthusiastically (madly?) excavating at the very roots of the supernatural tale, trying to discover where it all came from, and how far that root-system spreads ("When we all lived in the forest and nobody lived anywhere else . . ."). None of it is academic; this is not stuff from a writer's workshop (the tenth circle of Hell, the one Dante never got to), or a master's thesis, or a boozy discussion in some bar—Peter is as fond of boozy discussions in bars as I am, but so far as I know, he leaves whatever he's working on outside of the batwings. It's too easy to piss that stuff away with the beer.

Peter Straub's books smack neither of tired academic *ennui* or foolish self-indulgence. Instead there is the clean enthusiasm of the authentic crazy human being—the sort of dudes who staggered back from the wilderness with the skin around their eyes blasted black by the



sun of visions and a scorpion or two crawling in their hair. And I don't suppose it matters if the prophet in question came back from those lonely places where ordinary people are afraid to go in a lice-infested robe or a suit from Paul Stuart. The look is the same, the intelligence just as mind-popping.

My own relationship with Peter has been complex and enriching. He does not suffer fools gladly, but his store of patience—with fans, with interviewers who are sometimes inept and sometimes downright rude, with publishers who want blurbs, and with all the other performers who come along with the sometimes ghastly circus of popular success—has been prodigal. His kindness and generosity are great enough to sometimes be mistaken for *naivete* (a mistake a would-be advantage-taker would only make once, I suspect). His conversation is witty and erudite. He loves children—he has two of his own and has been un-failingly kind and thoughtful with my own.

In terms of his writing, I suppose

none of that matters much—he could be an utter shit and the writing would still remain what the writing is. But it's lucky for the rest of us—and perhaps me in particular, since he and I are collaborating on a book together—that he is such a fine and considerate man.

One final Peter story. Perhaps this will illustrate what I mean about the divine craziness that goes with the territory:

A year has passed since the blue-haired ladies, the chainsaws in the Wagon-Wheel Lounge, and Baltimore (or wherever the hell it was). Now it's Oakland, and the Claremont (at least I *think* it was Oakland; I was drunk most of the time, and all I remember for sure was that it was a real improvement over that place in Maryland), and I am sitting blearily on a bed in Kirby McCauley's suite at two in the morning. Around me, the party rages on. Some folks, straight out of the hot-tub, are naked. A girl walks past in a slinky black Vampira dress—is that cold-cream on her face or is she really (gulp!) dead? Robert Silver-

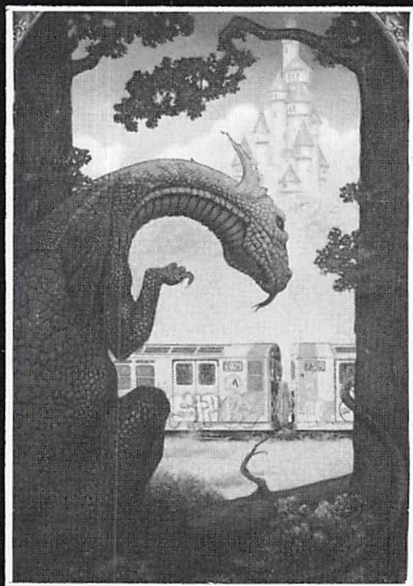
berg looks at me fixedly for several moments and then says: "You know, a little vitamin E will take care of that flaking skin around your nose." In the bathroom, a few remaining cans of beer slosh around in a tub which was full of ice only three short hours before.

And cutting through it, as solid as the Bank of England (as if the Bank of England could cut through anything—a mixed metaphor if there ever was one . . . as Peter would be the first to point out), comes Peter Straub in a charcoal gray suit, his tie still firmly knotted, a Bombay martini in one hand. Wondering eyes follow his progress; he looks as if he just stepped out of a Board of Directors meeting.

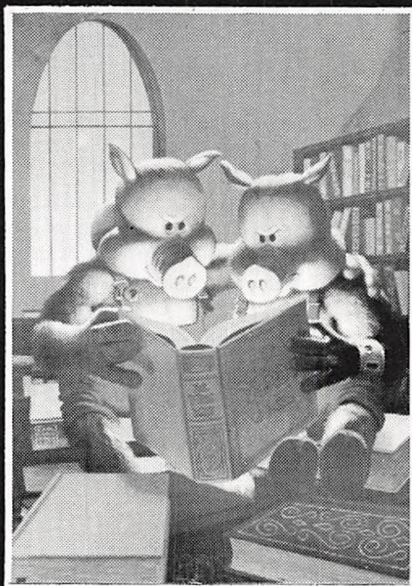
He sits on the foot of the bed next to me.

"Stevie," he says, and up this close you can see, oh yeah, this guy is totally crazy. "How bad do you think a house could get? I mean, how really *bad*?"

They don't ask questions like that—genuinely subversive questions—in the Bank of England.



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---

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*KINGSBANE*, John Morressy

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*DEATH*, ed. by Stuart David Schiff

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Coming up in 1983, we have Joyce Bal-lou Gregorian's splendid epic fantasy THE BROKEN CITADEL and its sequel CASTLE-DOWN available in paperback for the very first time; HARPY'S FLIGHT by Megan Lindholm, magical fantasy with a Romni Gypsy touch; KING'S BLOOD FOUR by Sheri S. Tepper, a complex novel of dark fantasy about a young man's coming of age in a vivid, original world; DAUGHTER OF WITCHES, the second novel by Shadow Magic author Patricia C. Wrede, as well as a publishing debut by a member of Ms.

Wrede's Minnesota writers' group, Steve Brust's JHEREG—a fantasy romp through a world of sorcerers, assassins, and wise-mouthed little winged reptilian creatures; Australian fantasist Keith Taylor's second BARD novel, as his wily Irish hero is swept up into even more adventures; SONGS FROM THE DROWNED LANDS, a delicate, mystical novel of historical fantasy from Eileen Kernaghan, author of Journey to Aprilioth; Les Daniels' vampire trilogy for lovers of good horror; Dee Morrison Meaney's UNKINDNESS OF RAVENS, a novel that combines the fantasy and historical romance genres, set in Saxon England...and that's just the first half of the year!

Short fantasy fiction is in abundance too. Brand new stories of heroic fantasy by top authors in the field can be found in Jessica Salmonson's new anthology HEROIC VISIONS (which contains a new Fafhrd and Mouser story by Fritz Leiber!) and in Volume 5 of Robert Lynn Asprin's Thieves' World saga. Orson Scott Card's collected tales of dragons beautiful and dragons dreadful—DRAGONS OF LIGHT and DRAGONS OF DARKNESS—will be available in mass-market size for the first time. And the third volume of our own house anthology, ELSEWHERE, is being lovingly put together now for fall publication.

We hope you'll enjoy our forthcoming titles — and we thank you for your continued support.



COVER ILLUSTRATION FROM HARPY'S FLIGHT BY KINUKOY CRAFT



ACE SCIENCE FICTION



## Joseph Payne Brennan Quiet Achiever

by Donald M. Grant

### *The Scene:*

*The 8th World Fantasy Convention,  
New Haven, Connecticut*

A little knot of convention officials stood in the lobby of the New Haven Park Plaza talking animatedly, though in low tones. At a lull in the conversation, Convention Chairman Norman Hood raised his voice, and his companions paused to listen. In the sudden quiet, his words were overheard by a casual listener resting in an overstuffed easy chair, his back to the conversants.

"Our Co-Guest of Honor, Peter Straub, is missing. There are only two clues: the party in the neighboring suite was awakened by a scream at midnight, and when Straub's door was opened, a pool of slime was found beside the bed."

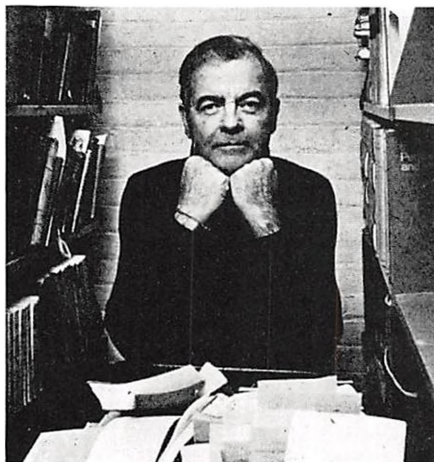
"This is a case that would be ideal for Brennan's fictional detective, Lucius Leffing," mused Co-Chairman Harold Kinney, thoughtfully.

The casual listener sighed resignedly. "Damnation!" muttered Joseph Payne Brennan from his overstuffed chair. "Not again."

. . . .

There are many among us who will testify that Lucius Leffing in the company of Joseph Payne Brennan was in attendance at the 1st World Fantasy Convention held in Providence, Rhode Island in the autumn of 1975. Indeed, there are those who will relate how the actions of this fearless pair saved that noteworthy convention from great embarrassment and perhaps an evil fate (chronicled in the book, *Act of Providence*). . . . But the purpose of this little piece is to call attention not to Lucius Leffing, but to that sly sleuth's friend and confidant, Joseph Payne Brennan . . .

—Copyright © 1982 by Donald M. Grant



the man I like to call "the quiet achiever." And Joe Brennan has been achieving without notoriety for more years than I like to remember!

A quick look at his output is nothing less than astonishing: between four and five hundred short stories, several *thousand* poems, fifteen books, and inclusion in more than one hundred anthologies. His verse has been published widely—in journals such as *The American Scholar*, *The Chicago Review*, *Commonweal*, *The New York Times*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *The University Review*, and *Yale Literary Magazine*. Among his numerous recognitions, Brennan can count the prestigious first International Clark Ashton Smith Poetry Award for Outstanding Achievement—a one-time life award.

Not so unusual when one stops to consider the voluminousness of his writing, Brennan's talents spill abundantly from one genre to another. Most convention attendees will recognize his classic weird-horror tales such as "Slime," "The Horror at Chilton Castle," and "The Corpse of Charlie Rull," as well as those episodes centering

around psychic detective Lucius Leffing (whose cases are sometimes solved within the boundaries of straight detection). But are they aware that Brennan's first published stories written shortly after World War II were westerns? When the market for western fiction dried up in the mid-1950s, Brennan simply turned his considerable talents to the supernatural. "Probably because I enjoyed reading it," he relates. More recently he has produced a venture into sword-and-sorcery with "Kerza, Queen of the Dead," (Joe, I never expected that one!) and a hardboiled, 1940s detective-type, Justin Searle, whose Connecticut adventures fill a volume called *Evil Always Ends*, premiering here at this 8th World Fantasy Convention. So broad is Brennan's output that I wouldn't be in the least surprised to see some volumes of ladies' romances, done in the Barbara Cartland fashion, escaping from his hardworking pen. (How about Luciana Cartwheel for a pseudonym, Joe?)

To go along with this incredible and diversified output, somehow Joe Brennan found the time and energy and literary ability—and yes, the money—to bolster the weird-horror and poetry fields in a time of lesser enthusiasm, of lesser support. In 1950, he established the attractive little poetry journal, *Essence*, which was published irregularly, with 47 issues spanning a period of 28 years. In 1955, Brennan tried his hand at a new endeavor, and *Macabre* House was launched with the publication of the pamphlet, "H. P. Lovecraft. An Evaluation" (now incredibly scarce, like many of the other Brennan efforts). Two years later, notwithstanding, another little periodical appeared—*Macabre*.

The initial issue stated: "*Macabre* . . . cannot replace *Weird Tales*. But it can



do two things: it can work for the revival of that unique magazine, and it can, meanwhile, serve as a rallying place for all those devoted to horror and the supernatural."

Actually, it served to fulfill another most important function: Together with its companion magazine, *Essence*, it—Joe Brennan—provided the opportunity and the encouragement for publication of poems and stories by writers seeking recognition in a period that lacked a vehicle for development. *Macabre* ran for just shy of twenty years—23 issues that are now prized as collector's items.

Under the Macabre House imprint, Brennan published *Scream at Midnight*, *The Dark Returners*, and the first volume of his famous Lucius Leffing chronicles, *The Casebook of Lucius Leffing*.

Other important Brennan books have appeared under varied imprints. Included in this group are *Nine Horrors*, *Nightmare Need*, *The Shapes of Midnight*, *The Chronicles of Lucius Leffing*, *Creep to Death*, and *Act of Providence*.

For more than 41 years (less three years spent in the U.S. Army during World War II—one year with Patton's Third Army), this native son of Connecticut has divided his time between writing, on the one hand, and the Sterling Memorial Library of Yale University, where he presently serves as Acquisitions Assistant, on the other.

I've known Joe Brennan for a good many years now. I've watched his achievements over three decades—his dogged tenacity and determination in the face of physical problems that

would have floored another man. I've seen that astonishing output continue in times not so friendly to the weird-fantasy genre, and I've seen the encouragement he's provided to other writers.

Joe Brennan *loves* the genre, and it is only fitting and just that the 8th World Fantasy Convention has chosen to pay tribute to this quiet achiever in his own state of Connecticut—yes, in the very stamping ground that he and Lucius Leffing have patrolled on so many occasions. Don't expect to see Leffing in the company of Joe Brennan during convention hours; he's too canny a devil for that. But when the convention is threatened by some diabolical plot, rest assured that we can count on Brennan and his sarsaparilla-sipping friend to carry the day.



### Cornstalk Riddles

A hundred years ago,  
when late autumn locked the sky,  
I'd wait and watch for snow.

When it finally came,  
I'd cross the freezing fields  
straight to the old corn lot.

I'd wander up and down  
between the cornstalk rows,  
a scarecrow summoned into life.

The wind-tossed tattered fronds  
would whisper in my ears  
subtle secrets scratched on air.

### The Only Ghosts

"Credulous fool! The only ghosts are in your head!  
Why don't you write of things that are?"  
He cursed and took another drink;  
I left him there—to mutter and to think.

The years crept by like cripples up a hill;  
I met him now and then and nodded.  
He stared at me with questions left unsaid.  
I counted him as one already dead.

His eyes, I thought, were haunted by the past,  
or by a present that invoked the past.  
He drank and drank and drank some more,  
while desperate eyes devoured a granite door.

Daily, while memory met the might-have-been,  
he trudged toward fiery anterooms of hell.  
The day he hanged himself, I said:  
"Credulous fool! The only ghosts were in your head!"

### Arrowhead

Quartz arrowhead  
buried in clay,  
dug out,  
lies in my hand,  
clean, white,  
hard.

Shaft and feathers  
filtered dust,  
lost Indian bow  
locked in yellow hills,  
campfires cold  
two hundred years . . .

Quartz,  
sharp-edged, shining,  
survives,  
flaked for death,  
firm in my ephemeral hand.

### Two Haiku

#### December Death

Snowy wood. Deer passed,  
for once fearless. I turned—  
no footprints followed me . . .

#### Scarecrow

Dusk. Cornstalks rustling . . .  
Rakish hat, ravelled face, loom . . .  
Death's-head, I decide.

### This Winter's Day

The pale sun, this frosty day,  
limns the leafless trees in passive light.  
Promises of summer sink to earth;  
honeyed futures fall far out of sight.

I prowl the desolate pastures like a wraith,  
a too-familiar ghost in failing clay.  
The hopes I held through forty years  
fall into dust this winter's day.



# My Ghosts of Old New Haven

by  
*Joseph Payne Brennan*

38 Everyone who has an awareness of the past must be at least occasionally haunted by a ghost or two. I encounter a number, here in New Haven, where most of my life has been spent. In former years I explored every section of the city; today, unfortunately, some areas are virtually off-limits. But I still walk as much as muggers and my aging arteries permit!

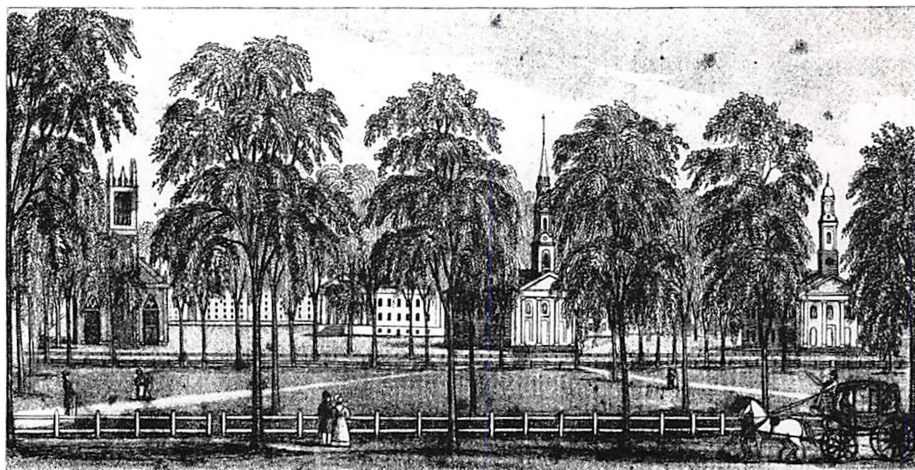
Since, among other things, I write poetry, in imagination I have met the restless shade of James Gates Percival, the eccentric New Haven poet once regarded as a great literary figure and now—alas!—diminished to little more than a footnote.

I have encouraged the sterner shade of James A. Hillhouse, the dark-visaged "Sachem," at one time hailed as the best poet in America (excepting Bryant). Hillhouse is still revered as an outstanding civic leader—but not as a poet.

Crossing the Green, I may glimpse the ghost of Thomas Holley Chivers, Georgia poet and sometime friend of Poe, emerging from the Tontine House where he spent a year or two. Chivers's ghost, I suspect, is still searching for his own true identity. He could write a line of sheer magic, followed by another of incomprehensible banality.

Poets *manque*, all three of them I suppose, but haunting the mists of time for me nevertheless!

I am haunted more often and more intensely, however, by the image of a vanished New Haven, a New Haven that existed long decades ago. In what seems like a personal recollection, I see great arched elms over many of the streets, cool brick sidewalks chinked with velvety moss, carefully tended old-fashioned gardens right in the central city—grapevines, lilacs, moss roses,



*Drawn by J.W. Barber Engraved by A. Willard.*

mounds of pinks, mats of violets and banks of lemon lilies, dwarf pear trees with glistening fruit—all buried now under oil-encrusted parking lots and acres of cold cement. The delicate fragrance of old gardens has been replaced by fetid gasoline fumes.

I think perhaps the huge lost elms haunt me most. In a sense, they were New Haven's trademark. The Elm City still has elms, but most are dwindled by the giants of the past. Their vast swaths of shade created cool oases against the glare and heat of summer sun. In full leafage they were long green tunnels of quiet and contentment. They are gone, yet they live on in legend, in reminiscence, even in recollection.

I am haunted, also, by the ghosts of my forebears: my grandfather, choir-master and music instructor, striding down Franklin Street with high silk hat and gold-headed cane; my grandmother, firmly in the background, overseeing a sizable family with a minimum of strife. In the dubious name of "progress," their home has been swept away, along with most of the street itself.

Their entire neighborhood, in fact, was obliterated long ago.

Can one be haunted by the ghosts of houses, buildings, etc.? I think so. I know that I am. Former homes; schools I attended; halls where I graduated; stores I patronized; streets I walked—have been bulldozed out of existence. I have always felt that as the landmarks of one's past are destroyed, something of one's self goes with them. This concept, no doubt ridiculous to "practical people," seems valid to me. (I am not, I fear, a very "practical" person.)

Probably New Haven has ahead of it a healthy and thriving future. I sincerely hope so. But I will not be part of it, for:

I have wandered on desolate streets . . .  
crying for time to turn back,  
seeking a vanished face, a forgotten door,  
hungry as a famished ghost  
to walk back through the years,  
down the decades, down the dim  
lost corridors of a century  
to a summer age of elms. . . .

—Copyright 1982 by Joseph Payne Brennan

## *This Snowy Night*

This snowy night seems structured  
for my own special isolation.  
Deserted walks draw me out;  
the cold cleaves through my mind;  
the past assumes perspectives.  
The whole city grows silent,  
swept with wind-blown flakes.  
I stride for hours  
down the quiet streets.  
Cold and happy,  
I come back home.

## *Street Dogs*

If I ever acquired wealth,  
I wouldn't ride horses;  
I'd walk the dusty streets  
of this harbor-front city  
and take home every starved  
abandoned dog I happened on.

I see them daily—  
roaming, bewildered, lost,  
hope dwindling to despair  
in their hungry eyes,

eyes that search my face,  
eyes that haunt me for hours.

I may speak  
or reach out  
but empathy ends in the air.

Famished, weak,  
they run through the rain.  
They tremble all night  
in trash-littered alleys.  
They limp under loading docks  
and die in the dark.



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# THE MAGIC OF DON MAITZ

by Michael Whelan

Norm Hood just called again asking about my intro. on Don. I suppose there's no way out. I've been hood-winked! How can I honestly write such a thing when I know what I know. . .?

Don Maitz and I began our careers in this field in the same issues of Marvel sword and sorcery comics. That his work showed imagination and skill was obvious, especially to another newcomer eager to succeed in the cut-throat world of illustration.

Don professed to be a student at the Paier School of Art here in Connecticut when his work first appeared with mine at Marvel. He reportedly graduated at the top of his class. Later, I began to see his art on paperback covers, but it wasn't until we met at the World Fantasy Con in Fort Worth that my curiosity was first aroused. He was busy pulling his paintings from a huge black box to hang them in the art show, so we shared a hasty handshake over it. I was busy too, but I noticed something - he carefully closed the lid just before I approached him. Also, no illustrator I'd ever met was organized enough to have such a safe and secure way to transport his work and I was immediately struck by this inconsistency.

Later, Audrey and I attended a Halloween party at Don's house in Plainview. Throughout the entertaining though uneventful evening, that peculiar black box loomed in the corner. We left in the early hours of the morning and, once on I-84, I felt relieved somehow to be out of its presence. I was going to ask Audrey if she shared my curiosity about the black box, but didn't get the chance. We hit a twisted hunk of metal which caught on the transmission and forced us off the road. We were near one of Connecticut's highway amenities, the motorist call box, so I walked back to call a tow truck. I was sure I heard laughter in the bushes, but after all, this was Halloween.

I worked on the front end with the service man and the repairs held the rest of the way home. However, having narrowly escaped death, my concentration was so completely on getting us there safely that I forgot about the laughter, and I forgot to ask Audrey about the black box.

The following year Don's work appeared on covers for almost every major SF publisher. He also began working with Norm and F. Jacque von Schneden on putting together a group show of SF and fantasy art at the New Britain Museum of American Art. Once again my suspicions were aroused. In a world of self-seekers who often paint only for the dollar, Don has done much to advance interest in and appreciation for all SF and fantasy art. The success of the New Britain show was a boon for all of us and we have Don to thank for it, but this was decidedly unusual. It was almost as if he were creating a diversion - but from what, I wondered.

From then on Don's career skyrocketed. He won a Silver Medal at the Society of Illustrators' Annual Show in 1980 for his painting for *The Road to Corlay*. He's been nominated for the Hugo Award and has won a World Fantasy Award. As well as on bestselling SF and fantasy books, his work can be found on game box covers, in advertising, and in most of the anthologies of SF art. I continually marvel at how he's been able to achieve all this by the unripe age of 29. How, indeed!

The Black Box. In the flourish of Don's success I'd forgotten about it, but early this year I became sure it held the key to the mystery. At Boskone in February, I finally had the opportunity

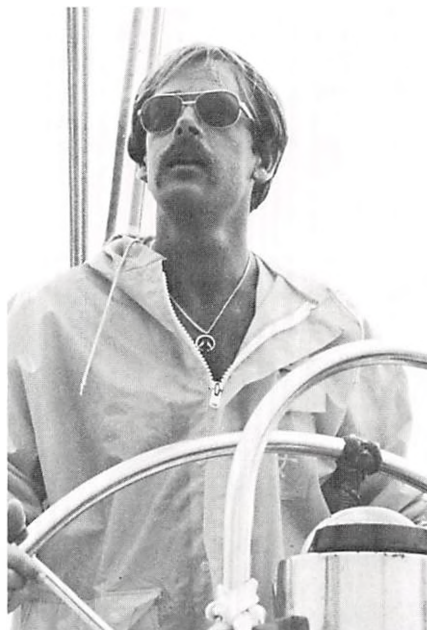
to get near it again. First I saw it during the art show set-up as Don and I exchanged hellos and room numbers. But it wasn't until Saturday night that the time was right for a close examination. During the showing of the original "Nosferatu" with a live organ accompaniment, those of us in the reserved section were enjoying a few beers provided by the Boskone staff. Audrey sat between Don and me and plied him with ale while I slipped out, got a key from the front desk (under some vague pretext) and dashed up to his room.

There I confirmed my wildest fears. Floating above the box was The Wizard - you know, that old gent Don has immortalized so well. There he was with his hookah and wine glass, exactly as pictured, but Don had omitted a few things: brushes, paint, and canvas! He heard my gasp and let go some Maitzean lightning as he sprung toward me. Eldritch lights flared, throwing shadows like a gigantic checkerboard over the walls. A grinning skull floated at me, cackling with menace. I reeled into the hall, with the Wizard in hot pursuit.

Now at a con, a wizard doesn't attract much attention, so except for an occasional "Hey, nice costume" he was free to give chase. He would've had me for sure then, save for my taking the stairs while he took the elevator. Everyone knows how long it takes a con elevator to get anywhere!

I made it back to the movie just in time to join in the standing ovation for the Organist. On seeing Don, the Wizard slunk out a side exit and I caught my breath. Now I was really confused. How was Don able to get the Wizard to do his painting for him? What hold on him did he have? And how could I get him to do some for me? Did capturing his likeness also capture most of his powers?

Don's popularity and success continue to increase at an alarming rate, as does his health and good nature. If you have the pleasure of meeting him, you'll find him open and friendly and more than willing to chat about "his" work. Be sure to see "his" paintings in the art show and to attend his slide presentation, but use caution. Don has never mentioned my discovery and I am convinced that the Wizard cannot remain enslaved much longer. My friends, New Haven just may be the place where he plans to regain control and to claim his rightful place in the limelight as artiste, not model. Beware of the Black Box.



Janny Wurts



“An Impressive Book.”

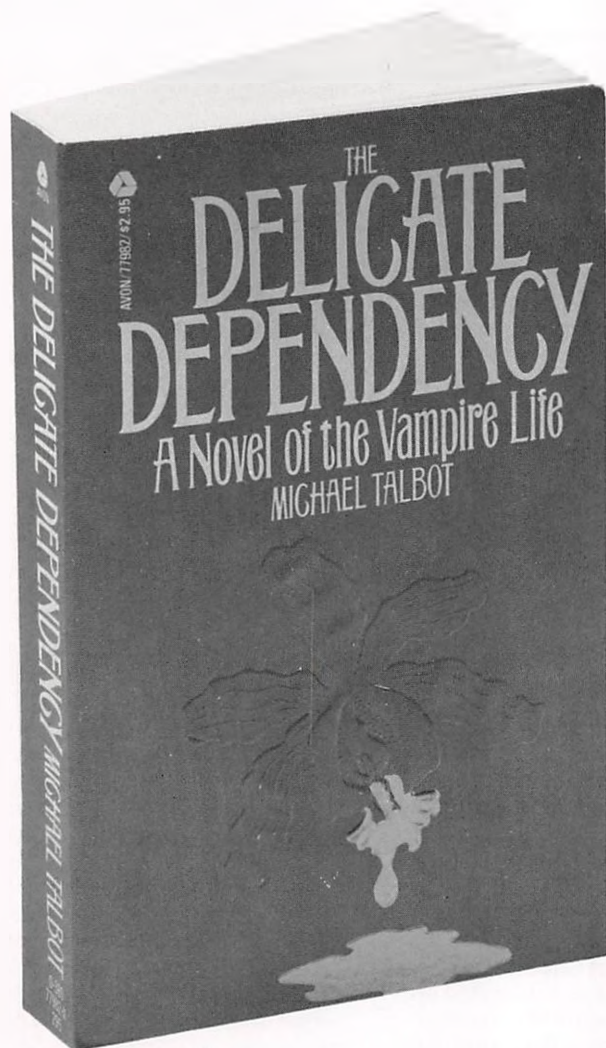
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42 In May of this year, Charlie Grant, his wife Kathy Ptacek, my lady friend Marie Marino, and I were celebrating my birthday over dinner at the V.I.P. Room of New York's Playboy Club. When Charlie and I weren't eyeing Bunny Margie (and our ladies simultaneously eyeing us), we got to talking about birthdays and that reminded us of another conversation Charlie and I had had some while back.

A couple of years ago, Charlie outlined for me his four great ambitions, goals he wanted to achieve before he reached his fortieth birthday, which auspicious occasion has recently taken place. One of these goals is not at all suitable for mention in public, especially in a Program Book like this where impressionable young people might see it. He hasn't achieved that one because in February of this year he married Kathy and *that* put an end to *that*. At least he tells me it did, and Kathy tells me that it *better*.

But he did achieve the other, more honorable, goals he set for himself. He wanted a book published by Arkham House, and in October 1981 that venerable publisher issued *Tales from the Nightside*, a collection of his best short stories. He wanted a book published by Donald M. Grant, the distinguished small press publisher of handsome limited editions of fantasy and horror, and Don has just released a new short novel by Charlie called *The Soft Whisper of the Dead*. And he wanted a bestseller. In June of this year, Pocket Books published *The Nestling*. The first two printings, before publication, reached a total of 360,000 copies, and that's a bestseller in anybody's accounting ledger.

Those goals reveal a good bit of where Charlie stands as a writer, his roots are set firmly in the horror tradition and nourished by years of reading in the field. He doesn't like all of it—he doesn't like Lovecraft, for example—but he knows it and respects it. At the same time, he believes, quite apart from economic considerations, that a writer's task is to reach an audience, a wide au-

dience, and ideally to do it without compromise of literary standards or violation of the tradition.

In particular, his interest in the short story has done much to keep the field vital, through his own seventy or so stories and through his editing of six volumes of the Doubleday anthology series *Shadows* and five other anthologies. Several of his own stories and many of those he has published have collected an impressive array of nominations and prizes. For those of us who love short stories, whether we only read them, or write them as well, this is a considerable contribution to the field.

The way in which those goals were reached tells a good deal about the random ways of the publishing business and the making of a writer's career therein. The Arkham House book sprang from a conversation with Arkham's editor, Jim Turner, in Fort Worth, and was several years in the making. The Don Grant book started as a story idea for a piece I wanted as part of an anthology project I was working on. I wanted a vampire story but told Charlie it had to be contemporary. He came back with an idea for a story set in 19th century Oxrun Station (a fictional town of which he is the sole owner and proprietor), and he was so enthusiastic about it that I said it would be all right. As is the way of these things, the project didn't sell, but the story idea stayed in his mind. In the course of time, Don Grant heard about it, bought him a drink and listened, then offered to publish it. The piece was supposed to be 25,000 words long, but Charlie's excitement carried him away and he ended up with 40,000 words. As for *The Nestling*, the proposal for that had been through half a dozen rewrites before it finally came together in just the right way and turned into Charlie's first really big, commercial novel. From now on, the path should be a little straighter; at this writing, he tells me he's halfway through *Night Songs*, his next novel for Pocket Books.

Now, briefly, for the facts. He was born in 1942, attended Trinity College

in Hartford, Connecticut, spent several boring years teaching English to "ignorant louts" in small towns in New Jersey, and two rather less boring years serving in the Military Police in Qui Nhon, Vietnam.

He and Kathy live in a century-old house (which they only rent rather than own, so keep buying copies of *The Nestling* and keep those royalties adding up) in a small northwestern New Jersey town called Newton. Newton is so small—and that's just the way Charlie likes it—that there's a guy down the road who sells only *miniature* donkeys. I can vouch for it.

Charlie generally leads a very quiet suburban . . . no, make that *rural* existence, except for flying visits to New York to see his agent and buy a new supply of videotapes of horror movies. But his neighbors in Newton are a little worried. Why, for example, is a grown man his age at home all the time instead of going out to work and make an honest living? Why do strangled voices, oddly like those of Boris Karloff, Christopher Lee, and Jamie Lee Curtis, issue from his living room window late at night? What is that cackling sound, chilling yet somehow gleeful, coming from the upstairs office window? What could he possibly mean when he speaks to someone on the telephone late at night (myself, in this case, when he was working on *The Soft Whisper of the Dead*) and is heard to say, "God, I'm having so much fun with this and I haven't even gotten to the part about the rats yet!"

What else shall we say about this year's Toastmaster? He bristles at being called "the recluse of New Jersey" (a term some people consider redundant), but he can be calmed instantly by placing another Bloody Mary in front of him. He has two children of his own but thinks children are "evil little creatures." He fights hard to promote his own brand of quiet horror but his critical comment on a story of mine was, "Ryan, this is sickening! I love it!"

I'm a little worried. He got to the part about the rats a few months ago. And now he's smiling again.



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Byron Preiss, editor. A Ballantine book.



# Mark Twain

(Samuel Langhorne Clemens, 1835-1910)

Since no person could write more eloquently about Mark Twain than he himself did, the following excerpted material is offered in lieu of a biographical appreciation.

Chapter XLII from  
*Roughing It* (1872)

"My First Literary Venture"  
and  
"How the Author Was Sold in Newark"  
from  
*Mark Twain's Sketches, Old and New*  
(1875)

## from ROUGHING IT CHAPTER XLII

What to do next?

It was a momentous question. I had gone out into the world to shift for myself, at the age of thirteen (for my father had endorsed for friends; and although he left us a sumptuous legacy of pride in his fine Virginian stock and its national distinction, I presently found that I could not live on that alone without occasional bread to wash it down with). I had gained a livelihood in various vocations, but had not dazzled anybody with my successes; still the list was before me, and the amplest liberty in the matter of choosing, provided I wanted to work—which I did not, after being so wealthy. I had once been a grocery clerk, for one day, but had consumed so much sugar in that time that I was relieved from further duty by the proprietor; said he wanted me outside, so that he could have my custom. I had studied law an entire week, and then given it up because it was so prosy and tiresome. I had engaged briefly in the study of blacksmithing, but wasted so much time trying to fix the bellows so that it would blow itself, that the master turned me adrift in disgrace, and told me I would come to no good. I had been a bookseller's clerk for awhile, but the customers bothered me so much I could not read with any comfort, and so the proprietor gave me a furlough and forgot to put a limit to it. I had clerked in a drug store part of a summer, but my prescriptions were unlucky, and we appeared to sell more stomach pumps than soda water. So I had to go. I had made of myself a tolerable printer, under the impression that I would be another Franklin some day, but somehow had missed the connection thus far. There was no berth open in the Esmeralda

Union, and besides I had always been such a slow compositor that I looked with envy upon the achievements of apprentices of two years' standing; and when I took a "take," foremen were in the habit of suggesting that it would be wanted "some time during the year." I was a good average St Louis and New Orleans pilot and by no means ashamed of my abilities in that line; wages were two hundred and fifty dollars a month and no board to pay, and I did long to stand behind a wheel again and never roam anymore—but I had been making such an ass of myself lately in grandiloquent letters home about my blind lead and my European excursion that I did what many and many a poor disappointed miner had done before; said "It is all over with me now, and I will never go back home to be pitied-and-snubbed." I had been a private secretary, a silver miner and a silver mill operative, and amounted to less than nothing in each, and now—  
What to do next?

...Now in pleasanter days I had amused myself with writing letters to the chief paper of the Territory, the Virginia Daily Territorial Enterprise, and had always been surprised when they appeared in print. My good opinion of the editors had steadily declined; for it seemed to me that they might have found something better to fill up with than my literature. I had found a letter in the post office as I came home...., and finally I opened it. Eureka! [I never did know what Eureka meant, but it seems to be as proper a word to heave in as any when no other that sounds pretty offers.] It was a deliberate offer to me of Twenty-Five Dollars a week to come up to Virginia and be city editor of the Enterprise.

I would have challenged the publisher in the "blind lead" days—I wanted to fall down and worship him, now. Twenty-Five Dollars a week—it looked like bloated luxury—a fortune, a sinful and lavish waste of money. But my transports cooled when I thought of my inexperience and consequent unfitness for the position—and straightway, on top of this, my long array of failures rose up before me. Yet if I refused this place I must presently become dependent upon somebody for my bread, a thing necessarily distasteful to a man who had never experienced such a humiliation since he was thirteen years old. Not much to be proud of, since it is

so common—but then it was all I had to be proud of. So I was scared into being a city editor. I would have declined, otherwise. Necessity is the mother of "taking chances." I do not doubt that if, at that time, I had been offered a salary to translate the Talmud from the original Hebrew, I would have accepted—albeit with diffidence and some misgivings—and thrown as much variety into it as I could for the money.

I went up to Virginia and entered upon my new vocation. I was a rusty looking city editor, I am free to confess—coatless, slouch hat, blue woolen shirt, pantaloons stuffed into boot-tops, whiskered half down to the waist, and the universal navy revolver slung to my belt. But I secured a more Christian costume and discarded the revolver. I had never had occasion to kill anybody, nor ever felt a desire to do so, but had worn the thing in deference to popular sentiment, and in order that I might not, by its absence, be offensively conspicuous, and a subject of remark. But the other editors, and all the printers, carried revolvers. I asked the chief editor and proprietor (Mr. Goodman, I will call him, since it describes him as well as any name could do) for some instructions with regard to my duties, and he told me to go all over town and ask all sorts of people all sorts of questions, make notes of the information gained, and write them out for publication. And he added:

"Never say 'We learn' so-and-so, or 'It is reported, or 'It is rumored,' or 'We understand' so-and-so, but go to headquarters and get the absolute facts, and then speak out and say 'It is so-and-so.' Otherwise, people will not put confidence in your news. Unassailable certainty is the thing that gives a newspaper the firmest and most valuable reputation."

It was the whole thing in a nut-shell; and to this day when I find a reporter commencing his article with "We understand," I gather a suspicion that he has not taken as much pains to inform himself as he ought to have done. I moralize well, but I did not always practise well when I was a city editor; I let fancy get the upper hand of fact too often when there was a dearth of news. I can never forget my first day's experience as a reporter. I wandered about town questioning everybody, boring everybody, and finding out that nobody knew anything. At the end of five hours my notebook was still barren.



I spoke to Mr. Goodman. He said:

"Dan used to make a good thing out of the hay wagons in a dry time when there were no fires or inquests. Are there no hay wagons in from the Truckee? If there are, you might speak of the renewed activity and all that sort of thing, in the hay business, you know. It isn't sensational or exciting, but it fills up and looks business like."

I canvassed the city again and found one wretched old hay truck dragging in from the country. But I made affluent use of it. I multiplied it by sixteen, brought it into town from sixteen different directions, made sixteen separate items out of it, and got up such another sweat about hay as Virginia City had never seen in the world before.

This was encouraging. Two non-pareil columns had to be filled, and I was getting along. Presently, when things began to look dismal again, a desperado killed a man in a saloon and joy returned once more. I never was so glad over any mere trifle before in my life.

I wrote up the murder with a hungry attention to details, and when it was finished experienced but one regret—namely, that they had not hanged my benefactor on the spot, so that I could work him up too.

Next I discovered some emigrant wagons going into camp on the plaza and found that they had lately come through the hostile Indian country and had fared rather roughly. I made the best of the item that the circumstances permitted, and felt that if I were not confined within rigid limits by the presence of the reporters of the other papers I could add particulars that would make the article much more interesting. However, I found one wagon that was going on to California, and made some judicious inquiries of the proprietor. When I learned, through his short and surly answers to my cross-questioning, that he was certainly going on and would not be in the city next day to make trouble, I got ahead of the other papers, for I took down his list of names and added his party to the killed and wounded. Having more scope here, I put this wagon through an Indian fight that to this day has no parallel in history.

My two columns were filled. When I read them over in the morning I felt that I had found my legitimate occupation at last. I reasoned within myself that news, and stirring news, too, was what a paper needed, and I felt that I was peculiarly endowed with the ability to furnish it. Mr. Goodman said that I was as good a reporter as Dan. I desired no

higher commendation. With encouragement like that, I felt that I could take my pen and murder all the immigrants on the plains if need be and the interests of the paper demanded it.

### **from Mark Twain's Sketches, Old and New**

#### MY FIRST LITERARY VENTURE

I was a very smart child at the age of thirteen—an unusually smart child, I thought at the time. It was then that I did my first newspaper scribbling, and most unexpectedly to me it stirred up a fine sensation in the community. It did, indeed, and I was very proud of it, too. I was a printer's "devil," and a progressive and aspiring one. My uncle had me on his paper (the Weekly Hannibal Journal, two dollars a year in advance—five hundred subscribers, and they paid in cordwood, cabbages, and unmarketable turnips), and on a lucky summer's day he left town to be gone a week, and asked me if I thought I could edit one issue of the paper judiciously. Ah! didn't I want to try! Higgins was the editor on the rival paper. He had lately been jilted, and one night a friend found an open note on the poor fellow's bed, in which he stated that he could no longer endure life and had drowned himself in Bear Creek. The friend ran down there and discovered Higgins wading back to shore! He had concluded he wouldn't. The village was full of it for several days, but Higgins did not suspect it. I thought this was a fine opportunity. I wrote an elaborately wretched account of the whole matter, and then illustrated it with villainous cuts engraved on the bottoms of wooden type with a jack-knife—one of them a picture of Higgins wading out into the creek in his shirt, with a lantern, sounding the depth of the water with a walking-stick. I thought it was desperately funny, and was densely unconscious that there was any moral obliquity about such a publication. Being satisfied with this effort I looked around for other worlds to conquer, and it struck me that it would make good, interesting matter to charge the editor of a neighboring country paper with a piece of gratuitous rascality and "see him squirm."

I did it, putting the article into the form of a parody on the Burial of "Sir John Moore"—and a pretty crude parody it was, too.

Then I lampooned two prominent citizens outrageously—not because they had done anything to deserve it, but merely because I thought it was my duty

to make the paper lively.

Next I gently touched up the newest stranger—the lion of the day, the gorgeous journeyman tailor from Quincy. He was a simpering coxcomb of the first water, and the "loudest" dressed man in the State. He was a inveterate woman-killer. Every week he wrote lushy "poetry" for the "Journal," about his newest conquest. His rhymes for my week were headed, "To Mary in H--l," meaning to Mary in Hannibal, of course. But while setting up the piece I was suddenly riven from head to heel by what I regarded as a perfect thunderbolt of humor, and I compressed it into a snappy foot-note at the bottom—thus:—"We will let this thing pass, just this once; but we wish Mr. J. Gordon Runnels to understand distinctly that we have a character to sustain, and from this time forth when he wants to commune with his friends in h--l, he must select some other medium than the columns of this journal!"

The paper came out, and I never knew any little thing attract so much attention as those playful trifles of mine.

For once the Hannibal Journal was in demand—a novelty it had not experienced before. The whole town was stirred. Higgins dropped in with a double-barrelled shot-gun early in the forenoon. When he found that it was an infant (as he called me) that had done him the damage, he simply pulled my ears and went away; but he threw up his situation that night and left town for good. The tailor came with his goose and a pair of shears; but he despised me too, and departed for the South that night. The two lampooned citizens came with threats of libel, and went away incensed at my insignificance. The country editor pranced in with a war-whoop next day, suffering for blood to drink; but he ended by forgiving me cordially and inviting me down to the drug store to wash away all animosity in a friendly bumper of "Fahnestock's Vermifuge." It was his little joke. My uncle was very angry when he got back—unreasonably so, I thought, considering what an impetus I had given the paper, and considering also that gratitude for his preservation ought to have been uppermost in his mind, inasmuch as by his delay he had so wonderfully escaped dissection, tomahawking, libel, and getting his head shot off. But he softened when he looked at the accounts and saw that I had actually booked the unparalleled number of thirty-three new subscribers, and had the vegetables to show for it, cordwood, cabbage, beans, and unsalable turnips enough to run the family for two years!



## HOW THE AUTHOR WAS SOLD IN NEWARK

It is seldom pleasant to tell on one's self, but sometimes it is a sort of relief to a man to make a confession. I wish to unburden my mind now, and yet I almost believe that I am moved to do it more because I long to bring censure upon another man than because I desire to pour balm upon my wounded heart. (I don't know what balm is, but I believe it is the correct expression to use in this connection— never having seen any balm.) You may remember that I lectured in Newark lately for the young gentlemen of the----Society? I did at any rate. During the afternoon of that day I was talking with one of the young gentlemen just referred to, and he said he had an uncle who, from some cause or other, seemed to have grown permanently bereft of all emotion. And with tears in his eyes, this young man said, "Oh, if I could only see him laugh once more! Oh, if I could only see him weep!" I was touched. I could never withstand distress.

I said: "Bring him to my lecture. I'll start him for you."

"Oh, if you could but do it! If you could but do it, all our family would bless you for evermore—for he is so very dear to us. Oh, my benefactor can you make him laugh? can you bring soothing tears to those parched orbs?"

I was profoundly moved. I said: "My son, bring the old party round. I have got some jokes in that lecture that will make him laugh if there is any laugh in him; and if they miss fire, I have got some others that will make him cry or kill him, one or the other." Then the young man blessed me, and wept on my neck, and went after his uncle. He placed him in full view, in the second row of benches that night, and I began on him. I tried him with mild jokes, then with severe ones; I dosed him with bad jokes and riddled him with good ones; I fired old stale jokes into him, and peppered him fore and aft with red-hot new ones; I warmed up to my work, and assaulted him on the right and left, in front and behind; I fumed and sweated and charged and ranted till I was hoarse and sick, and frantic and furious; but I never moved him once—I never started a smile or a tear! Never a ghost of a smile, and never a suspicion of moisture! I was astounded. I closed the lecture at last with one despairing shriek—with one wild burst of humor, and hurled a joke of supernatural atrocity full at him!

Then I sat down bewildered and exhausted.

The president of the society came up and bathed my head with cold water, and said: "What made you carry on so towards the last?"

I said: "I was trying to make that confounded old fool laugh, in the second row."

And he said: "Well, you were wasting your time, because he is deaf and dumb, and as blind as a badger!"

Now, was that any way for that old man's nephew to impose on a stranger and orphan like me? I ask you as a man and brother, if that was any way for him to do?

## Letter to the Earth

by

Mark Twain

OFFICE OF THE RECORDING ANGEL

Department of Petitions, Jan. 20

*Abner Scofield*

*Coal Dealer*

*Buffalo, New York*

I have the honor, as per command, to inform you that your recent act of benevolence and self-sacrifice has been recorded upon a page of the Book called *Golden Deeds of Men*; a distinction, I am permitted to remark, which is not merely extraordinary, it is unique.

As regards your prayers, for the week ending the 19th, I have the honor to report as follows:

1. For weather to advance hard coal 15 cents a ton. Granted.

2. For influx of laborers to reduce wages 10 percent. Granted.

3. For a break in rival soft-coal prices. Granted.

4. For a visitation upon the man, or upon the family of the man, who has set up a competing retail coal-yard in Rochester. Granted, as follows: diphtheria, 2, 1 fatal; scarlet fever, 1, to result in deafness and imbecility. NOTE: This prayer should have been directed against this subordinate's principals, the N. Y. Central R. R. Co.

5. For deportation to Sheol of annoying swarms of persons who apply daily for work, or for favors of one sort or another. Taken under advisement for later decision and compromise, this petition appearing to conflict with another one of same date, which will be cited further along.

6. For application of some form of violent death to neighbor who threw

brick at family cat, whilst the same was serenading. Reserved for consideration and compromise because of conflict with a prayer of even date to be cited further along.

7. To "damn the missionary cause." Reserved also—as above.

8. To increase December profits of \$22,230 to \$45,000 for January and perpetuate a proportionate monthly increase thereafter—"which will satisfy you." The prayer granted; the added remark accepted with reservations.

9. For cyclone, to destroy the works and fill up the mine of the North Pennsylvania Co. NOTE: Cyclones are not kept in stock in the winter season. A reliable article of fire-damp can be furnished upon application.

Especial note is made of the above list, they being of particular moment. The 298 remaining supplications classifiable under the head of Special Provisions, Schedule A, for week ending 19th, are granted in a body, except that 3 of the 32 cases requiring immediate death have been modified to incurable disease.

This completes the week's invoice of petitions known to this office under the technical designation of Secret Supplications of the Heart, and which, for a reason which may suggest itself, always receive our first and especial attention.

The remainder of the week's invoice falls under the head of what we term Public Prayers, in which classification we place prayers uttered in Prayer Meeting, Sunday School, Class Meeting, Family Worship, etc. These kinds of prayers have value according to classification of Christian uttering them. By rule of this office, Christians are divided into two grand classes, to wit: (1) Professing Christians; (2) Professional Christians. These, in turn are minutely subdivided and classified by Size, Species, and Family; and finally, Standing is determined by carats, the minimum being 1, the maximum 1,000.

As per balance sheet for quarter ending Dec. 31st, 1947, you stood classified as follows:

*Grand Classification:* Professing Christian.

*Size:* one-fourth of maximum.

*Species:* Human-Spiritual.

*Family:* A of the Elect, Division 16.

*Standing:* 322 carats fine.

As per balance sheet for quarter just ended—that is to say, forty years later—you stand classified as follows:

*Grand Classification:* Professional Christian.

*Size:* six one-hundredths of maximum.



*Species:* Human-Animal.

*Family:* W of the Elect,

Division 1547.

*Standing:* 3 carats fine.

I have the honor to call your attention to the fact that you seem to have deteriorated.

To resume report upon your Public Prayers—with the side remark that in order to encourage Christians of your grade and of approximate grades, it is the custom of this office to grant many things to them which would not be granted to Christians of a higher grade—partly because they would not be asked for:

Prayer for weather mercifully tempered to the needs of the poor and the naked. Denied. This was a Prayer-Meeting prayer. It conflicts with Item 1 of this report, which was a Secret Supplication of the Heart. By a rigid rule of this office, certain sorts of Public Prayers of Professional Christians are forbidden to take precedence of Secret Supplications of the Heart.

Prayer for better times and plentier food "for the hard-handed son of toil whose patient and exhausting labors make comfortable the homes, and pleasant the ways, of the more fortunate, and entitle him to our vigilant and effective protection from the wrongs and injustices which grasping avarice would do him, and to the tenderest offices of our grateful hearts." Prayer-Meeting prayer. Refused. Conflicts with Secret Supplication of the Heart No. 2.

Prayer "that such as in any way obstruct our preferences may be generously blessed, both themselves and their families, we here calling our hearts to witness that in their worldly prosperity we are spiritually blessed, and our joys made perfect." Prayer-Meeting prayer. Refused. Conflicts with Secret Supplications of the Heart Nos. 3 & 4.

"Oh, let none fall heir to the pains of perdition through words or acts of ours." Family Worship. Received fifteen minutes in advance of Secret Supplication of the Heart No. 5, with which it distinctly conflicts. It is suggested that one or the other of these prayers be withdrawn, or both of them modified.

"Be mercifully inclined toward all who would do us offense in our persons or our property." Includes man who threw brick at cat. Family Prayer. Received some minutes in advance of No. 6, Secret Supplications of the Heart. Modification suggested, to reconcile discrepancy.

"Grant that the noble missionary cause, the most precious labor entrusted to the hands of men, may spread and

propser without let or limit in all heathen lands that do as yet reproach us with their spiritual darkness." Uninvited prayer shoved in at meeting of American Board. Received nearly half a day in advance of No. 7, Secret Supplications of the Heart. This office takes no stock in missionaries, and is not connected in any way with the American Board. We should like to grant one of these prayers, but cannot grant both. It is suggested that the American Board one be withdrawn.

This office desires for the twentieth time to call urgent attention to your remark appended to No. 8. It is a chestnut.

Of the 464 specifications contained in your Public Prayers for the week, and not previously noted in this report, we grant 2, and deny the rest. To wit: Granted, (1) "that the clouds may continue to perform their office; (2) and the sun his." It was the divine purpose anyhow; it will gratify you to know that you have not disturbed it. Of the 462 details refused, 61 were uttered in Sunday School. In this connection I must once more remind you that we grant no Sunday School Prayers of Professional Christians of the classification technically known in this office as the John Wanamaker grade. We merely enter them as "words," and they count to his credit according to number uttered within certain limits of time; 3,000 per quarter-minute required, or no score; 4,200 in a possible 5,000 is a quite common Sunday School score, among experts, and counts the same as two hymns and a bouquet furnished by young ladies in the assassin's cell, execution morning. Your remaining 401 details count for wind only. We bunch them and use them for head winds in retarding the ships of improper people, but it takes so many of them to make an impression that we cannot allow anything for their use.

I desire to add a word of my own to this report. When certain sorts of people do a sizable good deed, we credit them up a thousand-fold more for it than we would in the case of a better man—on account of the strain. You stand far away above your classification record here, because of certain self-sacrifices of yours which greatly exceed what could have been expected of you. Years ago, when you were worth only \$100,000, and sent \$2 to your impoverished cousin the widow when she appealed to you for help, there were many in heaven who were not able to believe it, and many more who believed that the money was counterfeit. Your character went up many degrees when it was

shown that these suspicions were unfounded. A year or two later, when you sent the poor girl \$4 in answer to another appeal, everybody believed it, and you were all the talk here for days together. Two years later you sent \$6, upon supplication, when the widow's youngest child died, and that act made perfect your good fame. Everybody in heaven said, "Have you heard about Abner?"—for you are now affectionately called Abner here. Your increasing donation, every two or three years, has kept your name on all lips, and warm in all hearts. All heaven watches you Sundays, as you drive to church in your handsome carriage; and when your hand retires from the contribution plate, the glad shout is heard even to the ruddy walls of remote Sheol, "Another nickel from Abner!"

But the climax came a few days ago, when the widow wrote and said she could get a school in a far village to teach if she had \$50 to get herself and her two surviving children over the long journey; and you counted up last month's clear profit from your three coal mines—\$22,230—and added to it the certain profit for the current month—\$45,000 and a possible fifty—and then got down your pen and your check-book and mailed her *fifteen whole dollars!* Ah, heaven bless and keep you forever and ever, generous heart! There has not been a dry eye in the realms of bliss; and amidst the hand-shakings, and embracings, and praisings, the decree was thundered forth from the shining mount, that this deed should outhonor all the historic self-sacrifices of men and angels, and be recorded by itself upon a page of its own, for that the strain of it upon you had been heavier and bitterer than the strain it costs ten thousand martyrs to yield up their lives at the fiery stake; and all said, "What is the giving up of life, to a noble soul, or to ten thousand noble souls, compared with the giving up of fifteen dollars out of the greedy grip of the meanest white man that ever lived on the face of the earth?"

And it was a true word. And Abraham, weeping, shook out the contents of his bosom and pasted the eloquent label there, "RESERVED"; and Peter, weeping, said, "He shall be received with a torchlight procession when he comes"; and then all heaven boomed, and was glad you were going there. And so was hell.

[Signed]

THE RECORDING ANGEL [SEAL]

By command



The children are dead...  
but their games  
have just begun

# The Playground

T.M. WRIGHT

**STEPHEN KING SAYS  
T. M. WRIGHT IS "A RARE AND  
BLAZING NEW TALENT"...**

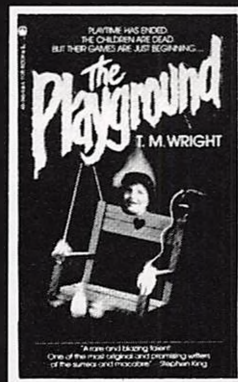
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50 I have been thinking of what I might say about my father if I were to attend the convention and be given the opportunity to address that body of friends and peers that he thought highly of and enjoyed spending time with

Of all the conventions, he regarded the World Fantasy Convention as the most necessary to attend in terms of the attendees. He attended last year's convention knowing it would be his last and was in severe difficulty at the time. We made an attempt to discourage his going, but he was determined to attend one last time. He went, and though I did not expect to see him again when he left, he came back and it is a tribute to his courage that not many knew the pain that he was actually suffering. He believed in love and he believed in heroes and in many ways he lived those ideals.

I know that most knew him as H. Warner Munn, the writer. I knew him as a man who worked in a tool factory in Athol, Massachusetts and walked back and forth the five miles to work. I knew him as a man who worked in a lumber mill taking 2x4 lumber from a moving conveyor belt in Tacoma, Washington. I knew him as a man who, during a three month strike at the mills, collected iron from the beach where we were living and hauled it by hand in fifty pound loads up 150 steps and sold it at a penny a pound, supporting us for that three months. I knew him as a man who moved from here to New York state because my mother wanted to be near her relatives and sold ice cream house to house working six days a week 12 to 14 hours a day, in all kinds of weather. Always a charming man, it took all he could muster to sell ice cream when the thermometer read 20 to 30 below zero and the snow was so deep he had to use a 4-wheel drive vehicle. It was during one of those days, when we were in the middle of an uncontrollable spin on an icy road that, with great feeling, he uttered the four letter word that sent me into wild laughter and made him famous in the family until the day he died. I made sure of that. It was the only time I ever heard him use the word.



And he was a writer of stories. And he was a writer of poetry. And he was a writer of plays. An amazing man who continues to surprise me as I receive notice that something he placed before he died has been published, the most recent being *The De Pertriche Ring* in Budapest, Hungary. He was successful in that too, as he was in everything else he did, though he would argue that maybe.

What a model to follow. I am proud that he was a writer and that he will be talked about in your circles for many years and I wonder what else he would have accomplished had he started writing earlier or lived another twenty years. But, I tell my wife and children about the man who bought a piece of property, and together with his wife cut down the trees, pulled the stumps with an old Studebaker and built a house. Or the man who hauled iron to put food on the table. And being a layman who considers authors a special breed I try to impress them of the final triumph for him

to receive the tribute of the participants of The World Fantasy Convention.

I think that is what I would like to have had the opportunity to say. He was not a God and he would not like to be made into one. He was really no more than an average man who worked hard to raise a family and once that was done was able to do some of the things he had always dreamed about. But, he and I had a special closeness and he taught me many things. He taught me that it was important that you do your best at whatever you try to do. He taught me that loyalty to family was of the utmost. And he taught me that there was beauty in nearly everything if you could only see it and take the time to appreciate it.

And so, I think that it is fitting that a hard working laborer who lived his life for his family and wanted to leave something behind that they could be proud of, shares space on the bookshelves of the world with those considered to be the greatest in the World of Fantasy.



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KILL

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—Robert Bloch

THE  
KILL

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THE  
KILL

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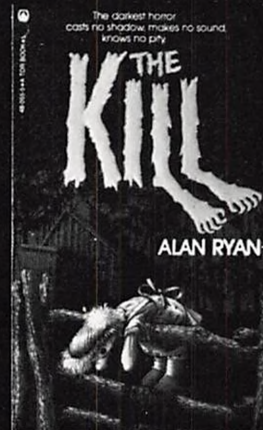
—David Morrell

THE  
KILL

"Most writers scare you one way or the other. Alan Ryan scares you when you feel safely at home. You have been warned. Now, I dare you to turn the first page of THE KILL."

—John Coyne

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Dad had a lifelong love for cats. He admired their independence and though they are classified as pets he never viewed them as belonging to him, rather that they merely tolerated him for the roof and food he provided. The last cat he had was named Toby and he lived here for ten or twelve years before dying the year before Dad did. Toby was probably the fiercest tom cat to hit the neighborhood, having whipped everything within reach, including most dogs. Even when he was so old that he had lost most of his teeth, other cats in the area treated him with respect, approaching very slowly. He came and went as he pleased, but he loved my father and would do anything to get his attention. Numerous times at the dinner table, a paw would come up in front of Dad and something would disappear from his plate. Didn't impress my Mother much, but he viewed it as part of Toby's individualism. To make a long story short, he wrote several letters as though they were written by Toby himself and they are unique. They are not fantasy, but they do show another side of the man that may be of interest.

*Dear Human Friend:*

Master went to a wedding. It was my birthday and he left me all alone. I was not invited, so I stayed home. He said he would bring me something. I said, "A fish cake? Goody!" He said, "Never mind, it will be a surprise." Believe me, it was. I couldn't stand another one like it!

He said it was a big affair. He said that over a hundred people were there to hear Claire and Bill say they are going to live together and to throw rice at them. (Why not something useful? Sardines, maybe? Who wants rice?)

People - people are funny. When Peri and I exchanged vows, nobody came, although we told everybody as loud as we could - almost all night. People - people stand up and have rice thrown at them. We had shoes and bottles and tin cans thrown at us, but we did not stand up.

Cat-people are smarter than that. We stayed in back of the fence, thanking people for all the nice things they were saying about us, but not for the presents. The tin cans were empty. The shoes did not fit. Nothing was in the bottles, and nobody threw a fish.

Master drank whisky-sours and

champagne and beer. He seemed sorry about this. He took some pictures and had trouble with the camera. Do whisky-sours do that to cameras?

He was sorry that I couldn't go. He said there were some women there that were cats. I don't know what he meant. I guess I would have been right at home if I had gone.

Anyway, he brought me a fish for my birthday, because I didn't go. (He says! I don't believe him.)

Anne, I have had a terrible experience. I am in bad shape. My nose is bugged up. My ears are scratched. I have lost some fur on top, like Master, and I am seeing double. My poor tail!

Peri says it serves me right for trusting people - people. She says no one else would have deceived me the way I was deceived - not rat-people or spider-people. (She don't like either one, or bee-people, especially. One sat down on her nose once, to rest. She said its tail was red-hot -- and she had just as soon it hadn't happened.)

Well, Anne; I had just as soon I hadn't got that fish I sent you a picture of. What a battle! We were all over the floor!

I backed off and looked at Master. He did not give me any help or any sympathy. (I think when he is not looking I will kick him.)

He laughed and said, "Sic him, Toby!" I don't know what he thought was so funny. You should have seen the teeth on that fish! I showed my teeth at him and snarled, "You would insult a poor, respectable cat, would you? I'm a fighting Siamese, not a mongrel like you!"

He hissed, I growled and we went at it again. You know, Anne? I think that fish thought Master had given *me* to *it*, for *its* dinner! It said, "Glup! Glop!" and clamped down on my tail bone. It wouldn't let go.

(Do cats taste good to fish? Peri says cat-fish taste good to cats, but she has strange appetites when she is 'that way' - you know what I mean? I wouldn't eat one. I would feel like a cannibal.)

I yelled, and we went round and round. I banged him against the wall and he fell off. Then first I was on top, and then the fish was on top. Master was in hysterics.

I won, but I was too tired to eat him. I had a big slug of milk with catnip in it. (That really does something for me. You should try it some time. It would make you feel like a kitten.) Tiger-Tea, that is!

Then I went to bed, in Master's chair. He will get hair on his good clothes, when he sits in it next time. I hope he is mad. If he isn't mad enough, I will make a mess under his bed. He won't find it for a week. I know just where to go.

Now he has apologized. He says he only did it to make me quit teasing for fish. (I told you he was a mean man.) Don't you ever let him give *you* a fish. He says this has improved my education.

Ha! I was educated enough before, but I have never been to South America. So -- how was I to know that fish was a piranha!

Frisky, my squirrel friend, says I may be a Washington cat and a Siam immigrant, but he is pretty sure Master must be from Brazil. He says that is where the nuts come from.

Anne, I am looking for a new home. Can I come and live with you? I will chase elephants and sea-serpents away, if you are bothered with them. I have packed my catnip mouse and said goodbye to Peri and Boozer. They will probably hit it off together when I am gone.

Maybe they have already. I have been wondering if Peri has two-timed me. Her last batch of kittens is five weeks old and they still can't walk straight. They stagger.

Anne, is drunkenness inherited? I think maybe I will stay here-just till I get my strength back-and then I will have words with Boozer. I am pretty sure I can take him. I will let him know where the flowers grow! They will grow on him!

I will make it a matter for the hangman and I will dance at his funeral. Peri is a disreputable, dissolute character, anyway, being a Persian. That comes of hanging around a harem.

If it wasn't for making her children orphans (*Hers, not mine*) I would ask you to send me down a piranha for her. Then we'd see who laughs last. As for me, I will take goldfish, 24 Carat-without teeth, please.

Your poor abused friend, Toby.

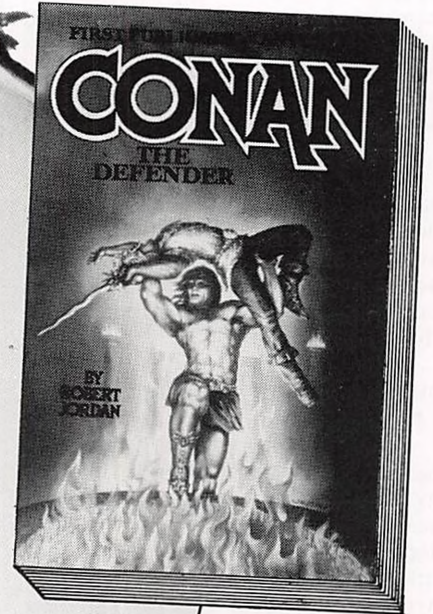
P.S. ODE TO FISH

I will take Tuna,  
Without fork or spoon-a,  
Or a nice slice of turtle,  
Either Wilbur or Myrtle,  
Or cracked crab, with banana,  
But - as for piranha,  
Ish! what a fish!



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off my back by working on the story. I looked for her name instead, guilt making me cringe. But I discovered nothing beyond the fact that my clerk hadn't been wrong—except the salesman dead in Minneapolis hadn't been just killed—the word a tabloid used was "destroyed." That, I decided, was journalism for mutilation.

Jesus, I thought; Jesus, no wonder.

It was obvious she needed more than a lover; what she needed was a friend. And the worst part about it was, Pat couldn't give her what I knew she had to have. He was a fine man, a damn good friend, but he wanted her for his arm, not for his loving.

It was a terrible thing to think of a pal, but it was the only way I could justify behaving as I did.

Her car wasn't in her driveway that night, nor over the weekend. On Monday she wasn't at work. I told myself she was only a temporary, but I couldn't forget the call. And Pat was too busy with his work and the wedding to do anything more than slap my shoulder regretfully and show me the door.

On Wednesday she walked unannounced into my office and I was so astonished I forgot to ask where she'd been. Instead, I tripped over my wastebasket, laughed, took her in my arms and kissed her. She responded, softly, and when Wakeman came in and told me I was off the story, I yanked the old man's tie and walked out with her, arm in arm to the bench by the river.

"Do you believe in love at first sight?" I said, looking at the water, holding her hand. "No, don't answer that. I just thought maybe you did. I mean, I'm really too old for this sort of thing, you know. God Almighty, it's dumb and ridiculous, and I should know better. But damn, I don't eat, I don't sleep, I walk around like there was some kind of fog hanging over me and I don't give a damn."

"Yes," she said quietly, "I know what you mean."

I almost cried, and cursed the weakness that tempted the crying. "Listen, I don't know what you've done to me, but when you're not around I'm not here at all." I punched a thigh in frustration. "Hell, that sounds sophomoric, doesn't it. A high school kid could do better. But I don't know any poets, and I don't know any Shakespeare—"

"It's all right," she told me. "I said I knew what you meant."

I slouched down and shoved my hands in my pockets, rested my chin on

my chest. The water lapped at the low brick-and-stone embankment, and in the river's center a small sailboat ghosted past. Slender factory chimneys speared the June-blue sky, scattering their clouds of sulphuric yellow haze.

"You hardly know me," she said at last.

"I know enough, thank you very much."

She rose and walked to the embankment's edge. "If I jumped off, would you jump in to save me?"

Without hesitation: "Damn right."

She turned, a tiny dark figure shimmering black against the setting sun. Featureless, formless. "What would you do if I left you?"

I stretched my arms along the bench's back and grinned. "I'd pine away forever, just like they do in those country songs."

A tugboat plowed the water.

"You know about me, don't you."

I squirmed uneasily, then sat up and nodded. "It's no secret, you know. And you have to believe it doesn't make a difference to me at all."

"I didn't kill them."

"I know that," I said sharply. "The police know it, everyone who cares knows it."

"Pat doesn't know it."

I shrugged and looked down at the soiled tips of my shoes. "He'll have to. It'll come out. He'll have to know, before Saturday."

"I know."

I waited, hoping she would say something to banish the moment we both knew was coming.

I'm a fool: "All right. I'll tell him."

She said nothing, only nodded. Then she shifted, and the sun was directly behind her head. I had to squint, but I still couldn't see her face.

I couldn't help myself. "Darling? Darling, who's Dick Overton?"

She shifted again, but the sun still kept her black. "A man I knew."

"He called me." I smiled. "I think he's jealous."

"I know."

This time I couldn't ask because I knew—she had seen him; while she was gone she had seen this man, this voice on the phone.

"People don't always understand," she said then, shrugging and turning to stare down at the water. "They're afraid to be open, even when they're in love. They don't want to get hurt. I . . . I can't have secrets, Hank. I can't. And I'm greedy. I have a lot of love to give, and I

want a lot in return." She seemed to shrug again. "If I don't get it, I don't love."

"Well, you shall have it," I declared gallantly, smiling. "I shall sacrifice spring lambs and virgin doves on your pristine marble altar and make sure there's always milk and orange juice in the fridge for your breakfast every morning."

"You're making fun of me now."

I shook my head sternly. "No. No, I'm not. Damn, I'd never do that, darling. Never."

"You won't be afraid to love me? I mean, really and truly love me?"

I sobered. "It would be an honor to love you, darling. If the others were afraid, it's their loss and my gain. Commitments don't scare me. Not anymore."

She returned to sit beside me, and as we watched the factories pierce and swallow the sun, Pat was forgotten and my eyelids grew heavy. I yawned, stretched, put my arm around her shoulders and closed my eyes with a languid sigh. Pulled her close. Nuzzled her hair. Never before, I thought, had I ever felt so comfortable, so full. As if I were a jigsaw puzzle that had been missing a crucial piece for centuries, a piece unearthed by the purest chance. I didn't question it; I simply accepted.

And when I woke an hour later, it was dark, and she was gone, and there was a curious weight settled on my chest.

I tried to rush back to her house, but I was oddly disoriented, the town I'd grown up in seemingly just different enough that I almost didn't recognize it. Stupidly, I got lost twice; I walked by her place three times before I knew what it was. The car was still in the driveway, but she wasn't at home.

A long moment's self-pitying rage, then: all that talk about love was her way of telling me she was going away with Dick and she wouldn't see me again. Both Pat and I, played for goddamn suckers. Flirted with and toyed with and knowing exactly what she was doing. I loved her. And she knew it, and took advantage of my feelings to fill all her time until she made up her mind which of us it would be. And as it turned out, it was neither one, not me.

The rage replaced with fear: Overton had threatened to kill her once. He still might do it. A panicked search through the phone book revealed nothing, and I was about to start calling nearby towns when I remembered the man



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saying he'd been hunting her for years. That meant no permanent address, no phone, no way to reach him.

I grabbed my coat from the closet and walked the streets on the off-chance I might see them.

I considered calling Pat, but suddenly was afraid that despite my resolution I'd not be able to tell him in the way it had to be. I slept little that night, less on Thursday, on Friday not at all.

Saturday morning I stumbled into the bathroom and stared at myself in the mirror. The wedding was supposedly that afternoon. Pat hadn't called to say it was off, and the way I looked now I'd be more at home at a funeral. I stared again; there was something odd . . . , but I dismissed it and showered quickly, and shaved, and forced a breakfast into my stomach that tasted too much like acid. And while I dressed I had a thought: she was frightened. By god, she was frightened that Pat would do something horrid, and that I wouldn't measure up to her expectations. She loved me, and she didn't want to be disappointed again.

I ran to Pat's, studs for my open shirt clutched tightly in my hand. My anxiety increased as I lost my way a half-dozen times, couldn't remember the doorman's name, couldn't remember the apartment number. Once straight, however, I got Pat to let me in.

"You look like hell, you know," he said, deftly maneuvering his way into his tuxedo as he walked back to the bedroom.

I followed, slowly, feeling my stomach turn to ice and my mouth to grains of sand. "Have you heard from her today?"

He turned, and stared. "No."

"Pat—"

Rage was there, narrowing his eyes, tightening his lips; a rage that subsided as soon as it surfaced. He tried a smile. "You're supposed to comfort and succor me on this last day of my bachelorhood."

"Pat, for god's sake, I've got a problem!"

"Damn right you do," Pat said, turning on me suddenly and pointing a hairbrush at my chest. "More than you know, pal. That guy Overton was found in an alley this morning. Dead, just like the others."

I gaped foolishly, sputtered to deny it and was silenced when Pat told me Wakeman had called the apartment on the off-chance I'd stopped by. A moment's awkwardness, and I raced into

the living room to call the paper. Wakeman was gone, but a secretary filled me in tersely, acidly, not ringing off until she'd made it clear I was in more trouble than I knew if I didn't show myself at the office in the next ten minutes.

I rang off and stared at the receiver, looked up at a Gauguin print silver-framed on the wall. My reflection was a spectre I did not recognize until I shook my head once, hard, and rubbed a knuckle over my eyes.

"Jesus," I whispered as I returned to the bedroom. "That guy really was killed."

"Not quite," Pat said. "That's a police euphemism, Hank. What happened was, his heart exploded. And he went with it."

My mouth opened, closed, and Pat nodded.

"Exploded?"

"All over the walls and the garbage."

"But she—"

Pat almost sneered. "Of course she didn't do it, stupid. Nobody can do something like that to someone unless they shove a stick of dynamite down their throat. Which didn't happen. But the police are beginning to wonder. Three times in a year, and they're thinking maybe there are more than that."

I pushed off the bed and stalked angrily to the doorway. "Nonsense. That's . . . that's damned nonsense."

"Where is she, Hank?" Pat asked quietly as he adjusted his tie and smoothed the black satin lapels.

"I don't know."

"Hank, I may be slow, but I'm not blind. I know. Hank, I know what's been going on."

The floor wavered, but I only took a deep breath and shook my head in despair.

"Where is she, Hank?"

"I told you, I don't know."

"She's going to have to talk with somebody."

"This is insane."

Pat said nothing.

I took another deep breath and met his gaze squarely. "I love her, Patrick. She knows that. She knows I'd do anything for her." I grinned sheepishly. "Even jump off the embankment if she fell. At least, that's what I told her."

Pat examined himself critically in the mirror, nodded, turned and put his hands on my shoulders. "You are my friend, Henry, and I won't lie to you. I'm mad enough to cut your throat, and goddamnit I'm hurt. But I don't think we're ever going to see her again. And if

you want to know the truth, after this morning I think we're better off. There's something about her, pal—"

I pushed him away and stumbled down the hallway, shaking my head in stubborn denial. At the front door I turned to shout something, anything at all. Instead, I ran out, ran home. I stripped off my clothes and stood in the bedroom, trembling with indignation, with tidal surges of betrayal. She was right, I thought as I went into the bathroom and turned on the shower. She was right; few people understand what it's really like to be in love, to give of oneself, to take that final step and—

I stared in the mirror, feeling sorry for Pat and the sure loss of our friendship, feeling sorry for myself and the loss I couldn't name. I was ready to wash, then, when the condensation on the mirror suddenly cleared and I stepped back in a hurry, nearly colliding with the wall.

She was there.

She was right there, and had been since that day by the river.

She was there: a lovingly smiling spectre imposed on my body, on my features, in my eyes. I lifted an arm, and her arm lifted; I turned to the right, and she followed like a shadow. I rubbed my stomach, and told myself I was besotted . . . and felt the vague stirring just beneath my skin. There, and on my arm, and on my leg, on my nape and buttocks.

The sound I made was a moan and a strangling.

Overton and the others—their hearts didn't explode.

Overton and the others—she loved them until they had no more love to give, or until their fear took hold and they didn't love her anymore.

When that happened, it was over; she simply left them for another; and she left them in the same way she had claimed them for herself.

*Hank, she said in the rose garden of my mind, I love you, you know. I love you, and you're mine.*

I grabbed the edge of the basin to keep myself from falling.

This should have been Pat, I thought; this shouldn't be me.

*Hank, she said, please tell me you love me.*

"You know I do," I whispered, thinking again this should have been Pat. "For god's sake, don't leave me!"

*Oh my darling, she told me sadly, haven't you learned that nothing lasts?*





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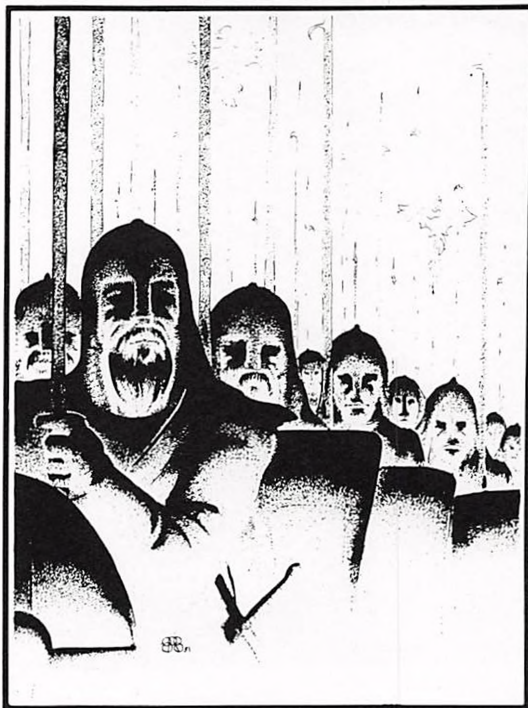
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62

After lengthy and sometimes acrimonious debates, a final plan, suggested by Kerza at the start of the talks, won unanimous approval.

When agreement was reached, Kerza and Prang drew daggers, moistened the ends with their own blood and pressed each other's dagger points into their own flesh. The bond was sealed in blood. To break it was blasphemy against the gods themselves.

Shortly after Prang and his two men returned underground, a squinting, paint-smearing Pict emerged, leading Pit by a short leather thong. After a brief exchange with Brell, the burrow man handed over his charge and hurried back into the shadows.

Kerza was waiting. Squirring with ecstasy, the great dog bounded forward, reared on his hind legs and licked his mistress's face. She embraced him, tears of joy in her eyes.

"The burrow toad said he refused to eat the whole time. He would take water only," Brell told her.

In the palace room reserved for her, Kerza fed the dog some of the choicest morsels remaining in Ostrove's fast-diminishing supply larder.

Unlike most starving animals, the great hound did not bolt the food. He ate slowly, stopping from time to time to wag his tail and gaze at Kerza with idolatry in his brown eyes.

Squinting across the desert sands toward the desolate ruins of Ostrove, Hamid Mur, the Arab war chief, nodded with satisfaction.

"The ranks of the Saxon swine are so depleted, they have cut the sentry force in half."

Lowering his head, Ibn Dul, his lieutenant, dropped down behind the dune. "They dwindle," he agreed.

Speculatively, Hamid Mur fingered his curled black beard. He came to a sudden decision. "We attack tonight. Alert the forces. See that all is in readiness. When the moon stands highest, we strike. No quarter, no captives. The Saxons will be exterminated!"

Ibn Dul sprang up with alacrity. "Long have we waited for this hour, Great One!" He hurried off to begin preparations.

The moon was a golden sovereign suspended against a velvet-blue sky when the massed Arab horsemen moved out from behind the high sand dunes which had shielded their maneuvers.

They advanced so silently, a hidden observer might have mistaken them for an army of ghosts. Only the keenest ear could detect the soft plunge of hooves into the yielding sand.

Leveled lances, drawn scimitars and short stabbing swords glinted in the clear moonlight.

The silent host, hundreds strong, could see details of the remnant walls of Ostrove standing stark and gaunt on the grey sands before a sentry's warning cry finally rang out.

Turning in the saddle, Hamid Mur lifted his tassel-hung lance high over his head.

Yelling like demons delivered from hell, the Arab horsemen raked the flanks of their mounts with sharpened spurs. The barbaric force thundered forward.

A suicide squad of Saxon sentries went down like clay effigies contending against an avalanche as the eager horsemen rushed through the ruined walls and poured down the sand-smitten streets of Ostrove.

Ibn Dul glanced toward Hamid Mur, who rode at his side. "I think the fools have already fled," he growled, disappointment in his voice.

Hamid Mur looked about with puzzled eyes. His men were spreading everywhere, apparently without opposition.

"It may be that—" he started to say. He never finished the sentence.

The air was abruptly filled with a great whirring sound. A cloud of short, metal-tipped arrows, seemingly arched

out of nowhere, knifed into the close-packed Arab ranks.

Horses stumbled; riders, confident a moment before, plunged cursing from their saddles.

A second later the earth erupted. Swarms of bandy-legged, paint-smearing savages rushed out of the ruins. Spears ripped more riders out of their saddles. Those already unhorsed were quickly dispatched by the short daggers which the nightmare men wielded with terrifying speed and efficiency.

Rearing up in the saddle, Hamid Mur roared at his demoralized men. "Reform! Cut them down! They are nothing but earth toads the Saxons left behind!"

Glancing ahead, as if at a premonition, he saw at once that he was mistaken.

The black-visored warriors of Ostrove, last of a once-great legion, advanced in a solid phalanx.

As Hamid Mur stared in momentary disbelief, the massed Saxon infantry struck his disorganized horsemen like a massive fist of steel. Sword, mace and axe created quick carnage.

Bellowing orders and encouragement, Hamid Mur leveled his attack lance, loosened his scimitar and charged the Saxon line, Ibn Mur fighting at his side.

Once over their initial shock, the Arabs fought savagely, each one of them spurred on by the realization that their attack had been anticipated and that now they fought for survival.

For a time it appeared that they might prevail. Although they had ridden into a bloody ambush, they still outnumbered their combined foes. They fought in a frenzy, blood-maddened, infuriated by the Saxon trap which had been sprung on them.

Hamid Mur was everywhere, a hurricane of concentrated hate, blade dripping blood, roaring orders and inspiring hope.

Ibn Dul slashed nearby like some kind of grim, untiring automaton impervious to wounds.

At the head of his phalanx, Bruwald fought with reckless fury, battle sword in his right hand, mace in his left. With one lightning sweep of his blade, he decapitated an Arab who was leaning down from the saddle to chop at him with a scimitar. At almost the same instant his left hand, wielding the oversize mace, smashed in the skull of another Arab's horse, catapulting its rider to the



ground where he was instantly skewered by the daggers of the busy Picts.

The moonlit contest became a scene of barbaric carnage and confusion. The Arabs fought ferociously to stay mounted; once unhorsed, with rare exceptions they were dead men within seconds. A very few, with remarkable luck or exceptional skill, managed to leap back onto one of the screaming, riderless horses which plunged wildly about.

The stolid Picts, disregarding the whistling scimitars of the Arab horsemen, grabbed the reins with one hand and stabbed the rider with the other.

Bruwald's Saxon infantry fought methodically, a disciplined deadly unit, unswerving in dedication, prepared to battle until the last man lay dead.

In the ruins of Ostrove, in the silvery sweep of moonlight, the savage conflict swayed back and forth and both Bruwald and Hamid Mur knew that it could go either way.

Kerza, much against her own desires, had finally been persuaded by Bruwald to remain in Queen Sarmempra's palace quarters while his own men, with the help of the hidden Picts, met the Arab attack. She was Queen of Ostrove, Bruwald had insisted; her life must be preserved at all costs.

Now, as the furious battle approached its climax, as the bellows of command, the screams of the mortally wounded and the ring of steel on steel reached her ears, Kerza paced her quarters in a mounting fever of impatience, expectancy and apprehension.

At length, as the roar of sound increased in volume and intensity, she could restrain herself no longer. Disregarding her promise to Bruwald, she strapped on her cutlass scabbard and then lifted the huge two-edged battle-axe which the Saxon leader had presented to her before she ventured into Prang's underground pits.

As she hurried across the room, Pit, chained to the wall nearby, raised his head and howled. When she stopped and turned, he wagged his tail and pulled at his chain, whining to be freed.

Kerza hesitated, considering. If Pit joined her in the fight, as he inevitably would, he might be killed. On the other hand, if she herself were killed, as seemed not unlikely, the great dog would probably not survive in any case. He might be driven off and starve to death. If the Arabs prevailed and he were captured alive, he might be abused

or even tortured for their amusement.

Striding to the wall, she freed him from the chain.

The Arab war chief, Hamid Mur, took heart. Although the horde of dagger-wielding Picts had taken an appalling toll of his men, their reckless attacks had heavily depleted their own forces. Now, most of them fought in small isolated groups, or singly, and his scimitar-armed horsemen harried them relentlessly.

The shrinking phalanx of Saxon infantry, ranks diminished but still unbroken, hurled aside every charge of his mounted men, but Hamid was convinced that the phalanx could be broken. Once that happened, the surviving footmen could be ridden down.

As he scowled at the stolid wedge of fighting Saxons, he knew the price of victory would be fearfully high. But that price had to be paid.

Bruwald, blood-spattered and nearing exhaustion, sensed defeat. Although his men held their ground grimly, their numbers were dwindling. In spite of the surprise arrow-and-dagger attack of Prang's Picts, the Arabs still held a numerical advantage. Initially disorganized and, in fact, near panic, they were now gaining confidence.

As his sword sheared another enemy horseman from the saddle, Bruwald vowed that the Arab victory, if it came about, would be a hollow one once they counted their own dead.

Prang, sword in one hand, dagger in the other, fought at the head of a meager band of Picts. The lines of blue paint on his face were smeared with blood. The tip of an Arab scimitar had ripped across his forehead; an Arab lance had knifed through the fleshy part of his left forearm; but he paid no attention to the wounds.

Glancing at the Saxon phalanx, he felt reassured. At least they had not proved treacherous, as he had half-feared. Nimbly dodging a cutlass swing, he slashed out viciously. The Arab rider rushed away but then stiffened in the saddle and toppled off, blood spouting from a mortal wound in his neck.

Prang waited for the next charging rider. After all, he reflected, there were far worse ways to die. He had always hated the Arabs more than he did the Saxons.

Hamid Mur was about to lead yet another charge against the Saxon wedge when Ibn Dul gripped his arm. Ibn was

staring into the shadows some yards beyond the phalanx.

Hamid thought he was seeing spectres. In a shaft of moonlight he saw a scantily-dressed, black-haired girl gripping a huge battle-axe hurrying toward the Saxon line. Upon her head rested a queen's gold crown set with a great fiery red stone. By her side trotted an enormous dog, or some strange kind of northern wolf.

A spontaneous roar went up from the hard-pressed Saxon ranks. It was a cry, partly of protest, but more of welcome.

Momentarily, a lull spread over the battlefield. As Hamid Mur continued to stare, the superstitious Arabs hesitated. Was it mortal—or a female devil hastening to aid the hated Saxons?

Before Hamid Mur recovered sufficiently to organize the charge, the spectre-like girl was at Bruwald's side and the Saxon wedge lunged forward.

Hamid's horsemen, caught off balance, wavered under the unexpected enemy attack. Most of them managed to escape the Saxon infantry charge, but they were left disorganized and they had lost the initiative.

As they reassembled, mutters of "Valkyrie!" were heard. The Saxons came on relentlessly, the axe-wielding female apparition at their head.

Quickly apprehending the danger, Hamid Mur bellowed at his men. "She is bone and skin like the rest of us! At them!"

Lance leveled once again, he led the charge, Ibn Dul still pounding at his side.

Ibn spoke, glancing aside. "We had best kill the girl swiftly, Highness."

Hamid nodded, somewhat absently. Even under the climactic stress of the moment, he half-cherished some thought of taking the strange girl alive. He had never seen a more beautiful female and he had seen thousands.

Spurred by both fear and a rising sense of desperation, the Arab horsemen struck the Saxon spearhead again. Screaming prayers and imprecations, the mounted desert hawks cut their way into the phalanx. Frantically, the Saxons sought to contain them without breaking their own formation.

Kerza's oversized two-edged axe became a sweeping engine of instant death. The lethal weapon smashed through bone and sinew as if propelled by a non-human force.



The great axe tore Arab riders from the saddle before they could get close enough to thrust. One horseman, lance leveled, leaned too low and the deadly axe, in a sudden backward lunge, cut him in two. The terrified horse broke loose and pounded away with the lower half of the rider's body still upright in the saddle, spouting blood.

In the beginning, Kerza had stood at Bruwald's side at the head of the phalanx, but as the battle boiled, some of the Saxon infantry, either by accident or design, moved ahead of her. Now Hamid Mur found it necessary to chop through a group of the black-visored northmen in order to reach her. Tirelessly, Ibn Dul slashed and parried at his side.

Hamid had reluctantly abandoned all thought of taking the girl alive. She had inspired the shrinking Saxon ranks. Her death might well dishearten them enough to decide the battle.

Dodging the downward swing of a Saxon sword, Hamid skewered the footman, broke into the phalanx and spurred toward the strange girl, crowned with a queen's diadem, who handled a huge battle-axe with such lethal efficiency.

Ibn Dul was acutely aware of Hamid Mur's weaknesses. The worst of them was a persistent hankering to acquire yet one more handsome concubine for his ever-expanding harem in Azturel. Ibn did not fully trust his master. Hamid, he feared, might yet try to take the axe-hewing wench alive. That, he was convinced, would be a mistake. She must die if the Arabs were to win.

Bending low in the saddle, he roweled his horse viciously and shot past Hamid straight toward the girl.

At the last instant, Kerza saw him coming. The mighty axe, just at the end of a downward arc, could not be lifted in time. She twisted down and aside. Ibn's lancehead, aimed at her belly, broke like a concentrated thunderbolt against the flashing ruby set in the girl's gold crown. Ibn's lance shattered in his hand, leaving his entire arm paralyzed. The momentum of his charge swung him past his intended target. With his good arm, he tried to turn his horse and draw his scimitar at the same time. It was an awkward maneuver and a fatal one.

The horse was half-turned, the scimitar half out of the scabbard, when Kerza's bloody battle-axe descended. Ibn Dul crashed from the saddle, cloven from crown to crotch.

Hamid saw him go down. Cursing, he lifted his heavy crescent-shaped saber and swung forward for the kill. The axe-

wielding Amazon must die if the Arabs were to snatch victory from the carnage.

The great sabre flashed downward with a force which could sever a camel's spine. In mid-stroke, it met the arc of Kerza's axe.

Hamid felt as if his arm had been broken off. Staring down, he saw that his hand gripped only the hilt of a weapon. The blade had been hewn off.

Leaping from the saddle, he drew a dagger and lunged for the girl's throat.

Kerza saw the knife coming but she was off balance and Hamid moved with the speed of an enraged adder.

In the shadow of a second before the razor-edged blade would have ripped into Kerza's jugular, a furry shape shot through the air like an arrow.

Moments later Hamid Mur lay sprawled on the slippery ground with glazing eyes as a great wolfhound savagely tore apart what remained of his throat.

A wail arose from the Arab ranks. Disheartened, the horsemen backed off, fighting furiously still, but now more in defense than in attack.

With a great battle cry, the Saxon force surged forward.

As the Arabs turned their horses to escape, Prang and his few remaining Picts stood in their way.

At the start of the battle, mounts had been an advantage, but now, as the horsemen milled about in a desperate attempt to escape into the open desert, they found the ruined buildings, treacherous sand-covered slabs and confining lanes a serious obstacle. Now the Saxon infantry and the darting, dagger-handling Picts held the advantage.

The Pictish line was a poor thin one and the Arabs expected to crash through it with relative ease, but Prang and his men, maddened by their own fearful losses, fought like maniacs.

The Pictish line held under the frantic scimitar attacks long enough for the Saxon phalanx to close in.

From then on it was systematic slaughter. Fighting with hopeless fury, the desert hawks went down one by one. Riderless horses bolted away over the empty moonlit dunes, a number dragging dead or dying riders whose feet had become entangled in the stirrups. No more than half a dozen Arabs rode alive out of the Ostrove death-trap. Daggers of the decimated Picts quickly finished off the wounded.

While the moon waned, the exhausted remnant of defenders tended their own wounded as well as they were able and then rested.

As the first grey fingers of dawn groped over the dunes, shallow graves were dug in the cold sands. With care, but without ceremony, Saxon and Pict were laid side by side. A few Arab horses, wandering amid the ruins, were rounded up to transport the wounded.

Reluctantly, Bruwald agreed with Kerza that it would be foolish to stay and defend the shattered wreckage of Ostrove with the small forces remaining.

As light strengthened over the surrounding waste of sand, the few survivors assembled—Bruwald with less than fifty fighting men, Prang with a scant twenty.

Kerza, with Pit, the giant wolfhound, at her side, addressed them.

"You have all fought like the great ones of legend, but we are too few to remain. To stay means starvation—or attack by another Arab force. No matter how well we fought again, we would be overcome by their numbers."

She turned toward Prang who stood somewhat apart with his few surviving Picts.

"Prang, go you alone—or leave with us?"

The face of the Pictish leader was a motley smear of blue paint mixed with caked blood. He surveyed the weary Saxons somberly.

In his brief association with his erstwhile enemies, he had already picked up a fair modicum of their speech.

"We fought well together," he said at length.

Kerza waited, as he hesitated.

Finally he nodded. "We leave together."

After gathering up the scant remaining supplies of food and water, the small force reassembled.

Kerza, with the jeweled crown of a queen on her head and Pit, her devoted wolfhound trotting at her side, paused as they reached the last fissured wall of Ostrove.

In the chill morning light the deserted ruins looked more desolate than ever. It was a shattered city of lost glories, a city of mournful ghosts.

The warrior girl, outcast, outsider, reaching up to touch the great ruby which flashed in the center of her crown, recalled Queen Sarmempta whose pitiful dust had been scattered across her own dais by the final winds of oblivion.

"Kerza," she thought, "Queen of the Dead!"

She turned away.



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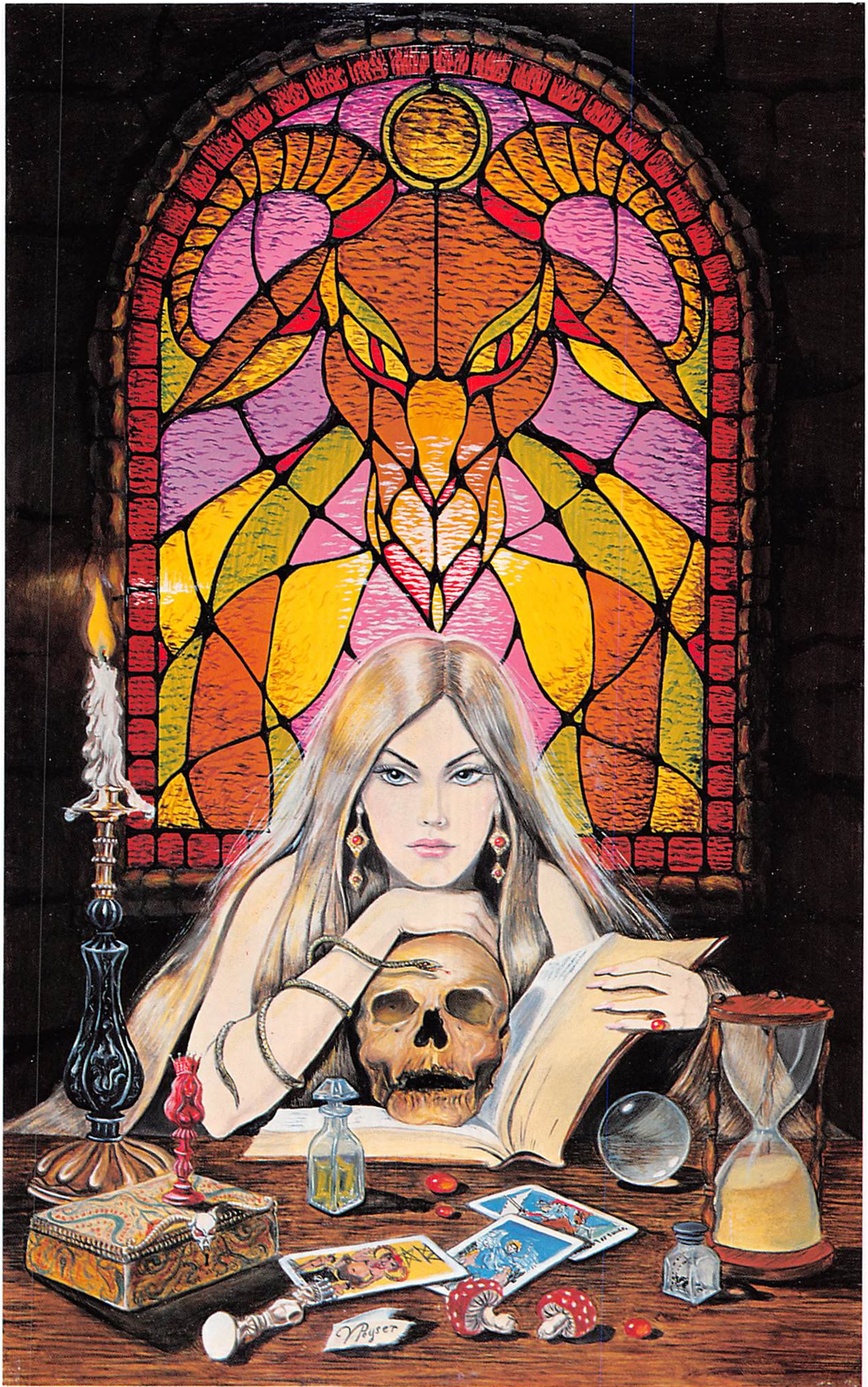
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# Display of Rare Fantasy Literature

One of the most important exhibits of the 1982 World Fantasy Convention will not even be at the convention hotel. The Sterling Memorial Library (a part of Yale University), in conjunction with the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, will be hosting a small but impressive display of early fantasy literature.

Special convention thanks to Joseph Payne Brennan, Mr. Siggings, and Mrs. Walker of Sterling for putting together this display, and to the people of Beinecke for the loan of the books to Sterling.

Sterling is just a short walk from the Park Plaza, so be sure to make the trip over a part of your convention itinerary. **Library hours** are: Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Sunday, 2 p.m. to midnight.

## Books on Display

Compiled by Joseph Payne Brennan

**The Monk** by Matthew Gregory Lewis. J. Bell, London, 1796 (3 vol.).

Written when he was only 19, Lewis's novel has been called the "culmination of the Gothic movement." It brought him wide notoriety and has influenced other authors of terror right up to the present. After its publication, Lewis was known as "Monk," a name he preferred to his own. The novel concerns Abbot Ambrosio, who is seduced by a demon disguised as a young woman masquerading as a monk!

**Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus** by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor, & Jones, London, 1818 (3 vol.).

Sojourning in Switzerland during a rainy summer, Shelley and Byron agreed to pass the time reading and writing ghost stories. At Shelley's suggestion, Mary, his second wife (17) undertook a horror tale. The result was *Frankenstein*, the story of a Genevan student who, learning how to impart life to inanimate matter, constructs a monster from human remains. The monster, lonely, bewildered, and

vengeful, finally destroys Frankenstein, his creator.

**Melmoth the Wanderer** by Charles Robert Maturin. Archibald Constable and Co., Edinburgh, 1820 (4 vol.).

Born in Dublin (1782), the son of exiled French Protestants, Maturin was reared in relative poverty, took orders and became a curate. His first book, *The Fatal Revenge*, was published in 1807. *Melmoth the Wanderer*, issued in 1820, established his reputation. The novel was praised by writers throughout Europe (Balzac even wrote his own sequel, *Melmoth Reconciled*.) Maturin's story concerns a necromancer who sells his soul for near-immortal life, and finally, weary and disillusioned, attempts to find someone to take over his burdensome role. After Maturin's death in 1824, his son William destroyed many of his unpublished manuscripts.

**The Two Magics** by Henry James. MacMillan, New York, 1898 (?).

*The Turn of the Screw*, a famous supernatural novelette, is contained in *The Two Magics*. James, a major figure in the history of the novel, not infrequently used the supernatural as psychological symbolism. His ghost stories are collected in *The Ghostly*

*Tales of Henry James*, edited by Leon Edel (Rutgers 1948).

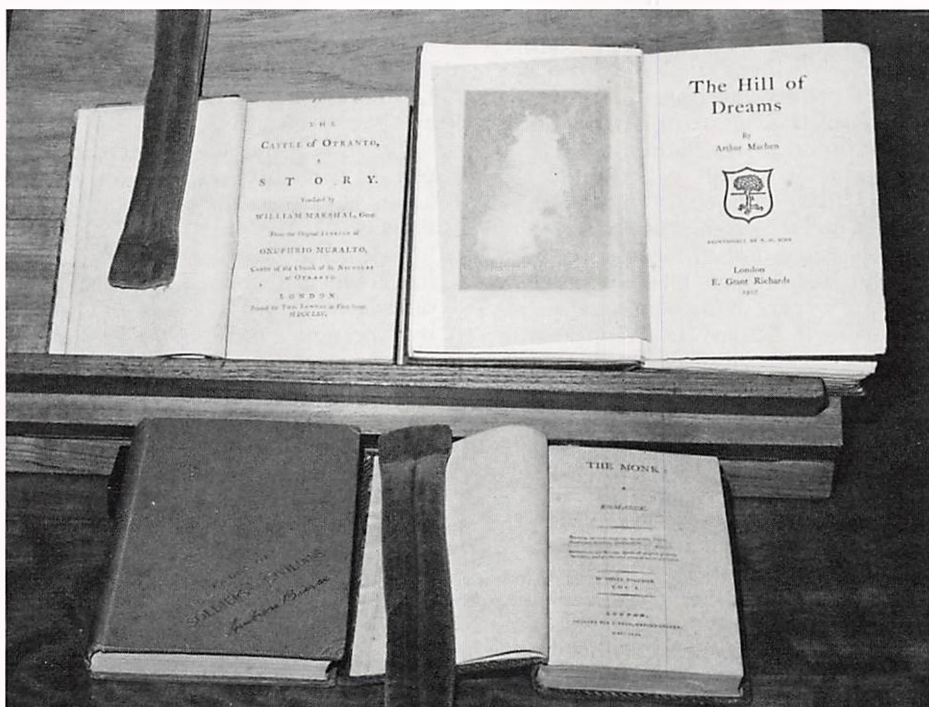
**The Hound of the Baskervilles** by A. Conan Doyle. George Newnes Ltd., London, 1902.

Sherlock Holmes is known throughout the world. Many readers may be unaware, however, that much of his creator's work concerns, not detection, but horror, the weird, and the supernatural. Doyle's first sale, written while he was studying to be a doctor, was a terror tale, *The Mystery of Sasassa Valley*. Although *The Hound of the Baskervilles* does not contain actual supernatural elements, it has been called "a masterpiece of fear and the unknown."

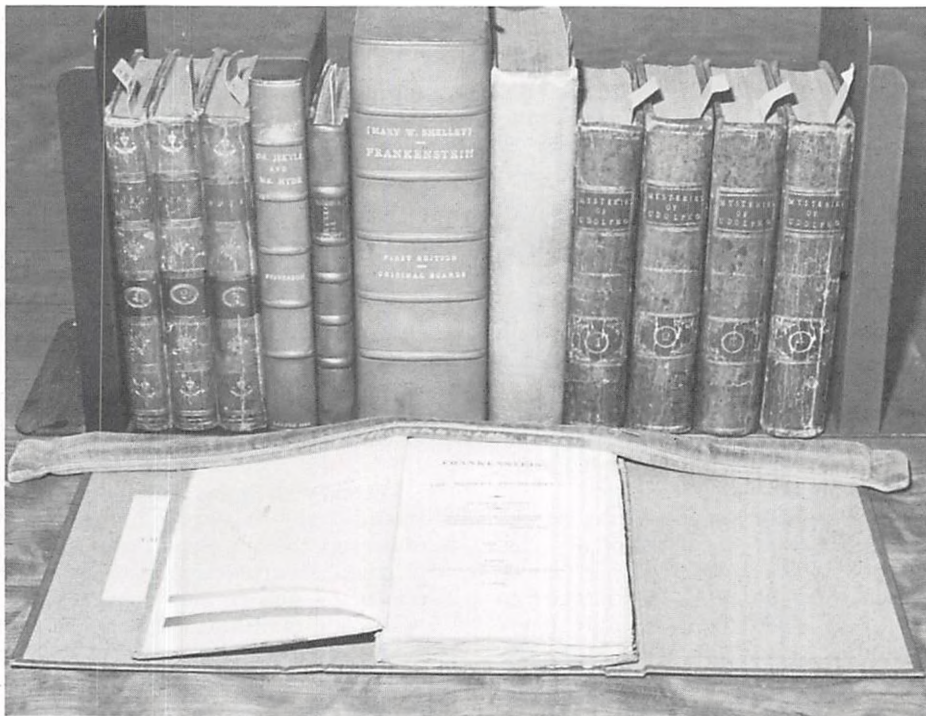
**The Hill of Dreams** by Arthur Machen. E. Grant Richards, London, 1907.

Fascinated in his youth by Welsh legends and lore, Machen imbued much of his supernatural fiction with a strong element of mysticism. Although *The Hill of Dreams* is often considered his best work, two short novels, *The Great God Pan* and *The Inmost Light*, and the compilation *The Three Imposters*, have had the most influence on later fantasy writers, including Lovecraft.

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**Tales of Soldiers and Civilians** by Ambrose Bierce. E.L.G. Steele, San Francisco, 1891.

Largely self-educated, Bierce became virtual literary dictator of the Pacific Coast. His brilliant, corrosive wit could make or break reputations. His fame rests chiefly on this collection of 19 stories (later entitled *In the Midst of Life*). The tales, somewhat reminiscent of Poe, feature horror, surprise endings, and sardonic humor. Bierce was one of the first writers to introduce realism into American fiction. He disappeared in Mexico in 1913 and may have been killed in the war between Villa and Carranza.

**Dracula** by Bram (Abraham) Stoker. Archibald Constable and Company, Westminster, 1897.

Although *Dracula* has been attributed to the nightmare brought on by "a too-generous helping of dressed crab" which Stoker consumed one evening, the more likely origin was Joseph Sheridan LeFanu's vampire story, *Carmilla*, published in 1872. In any case, *Dracula* is a classic of the genre. Stoker, business manager for Sir

Henry Irving, the famous English actor, died from the effects of long-term syphilis in 1912.

**The King in Yellow** by Robert W. Chambers. F. Tennyson Neely, Chicago and New York, 1895.

Chambers began his career as a painter and illustrator, but abandoned art in 1895 with the success of his second book, *The King in Yellow*. These loosely connected horror stories have had a wide and continuing influence on other writers in the genre, right up to the present. During the following decade, Chambers concentrated chiefly on weird fiction. Subsequently, he devoted most of his writing time to popular novels, which brought him a huge audience. In all, he published 72 books. Today, with the possible exception of *Cardigan*, a novel about the American revolution, the historical romances are forgotten.

**The Empty House and Other Ghost Stories** by Algernon Blackwood. 1906.

Blackwood, born in London in 1869, was educated at Wellington College and Edinburgh University. When

he was 20, his father packed him off to Canada with a scanty allowance. Failing in a number of business ventures, Blackwood left for New York, where he nearly starved until becoming a reporter for *The New York Sun*. He returned to England in the late nineties. His first story, "A Haunted Island," appeared in a British magazine in 1899. *The Empty House*, a number of his tales later collected by an acquaintance, was issued in England in 1906 and reprinted nine years later in the U.S. Blackwood wrote more than 150 stories, as well as novels, plays and humorous sketches, but only the short stories seem to have attained lasting popularity. Many of Blackwood's stories were based on personal experiences. He possessed a rare gift for creating atmospheric effects and for evoking the haunting auras of forbidding landscapes.

**Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque** by Edgar Allan Poe. Lea and Blanchard, Philadelphia, 1840 (2 vol.).

Poe's first collection of stories, published in 1840, included 24 tales, all that he had written up to that time. The collection was limited to 750 two-volume sets. Poe's only payment was 20 author's copies. When he wrote to Lea and Blanchard about a year and a half later, proposing a new enlarged edition, the publishers curtly declined, replying that the collection "has not returned us the expense of publication." Over subsequent decades, the stories have been reprinted uncounted thousands of times.

**The Diamond Lens, with Other Stories** by Fitz-James O'Brien. Charles Scribners, New York, 1885.

Although he had published widely in Irish and English periodicals, O'Brien did not become prominent until some time after his arrival in New York in 1852. Prolific and inventive, O'Brien turned out short stories, verse, plays, and sketches. Known today primarily as the author of three frequently reprinted stories, "The Diamond Lens," "What Was it?" and "The Wondersmith," he is regarded as one of the important forerunners of modern science fiction. A Civil War volunteer, O'Brien died in his mid-thirties as the result of a battle wound.

**Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde** by Robert Louis Stevenson. Longmans, Green, and Co., London, 1886.

Stevenson's writing career began about 1878; he became famous in 1884 with the publication of *Treasure Island*.

*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, a classic masterpiece of horror, was published in 1886. Stevenson is said to have written it in a feverish burst of creative activity after a series of terrifying nightmares. He died in Samoa, where he had gone to arrest the tuberculosis which had afflicted him most of his adult life.

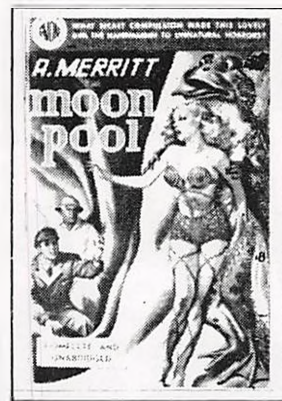
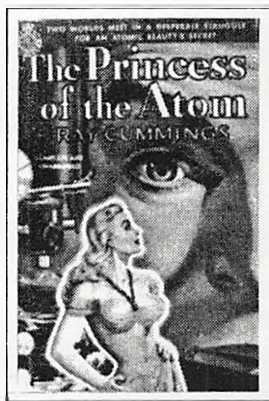
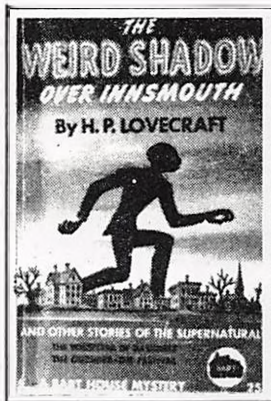


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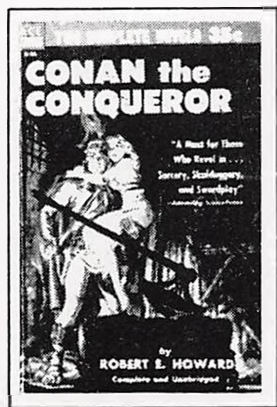
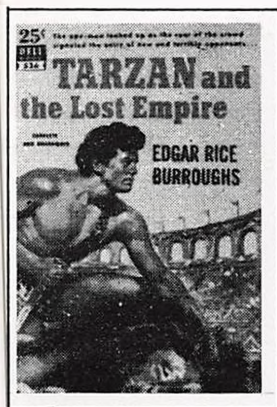
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**Malleus Maleficarium** by Henricus Institoris. Anton Koberger, Nuremberg, January 17, 1496.

*Malleus Maleficarium* or *Hexenhammer* ("Hammer of Witches") was first published in 1484 in Cologne by Jacob Sprenger, the Dominican inquisitor of Cologne, and Heinrich Kramer, the Prior. The textbook of its time on witchcraft and black magic, it detailed how witches should be tracked down, tortured, and executed. This notorious tome set the stage for the savage persecutions of the 16th and 17th centuries.

**The Castle of Otranto** by Horace

Walpole. Tho. Lownds, London, 1765.

Walpole was the son of a Prime Minister and he himself served in Parliament, but he had no abiding interest in politics. On receiving an inheritance at his father's death in 1745, Walpole constructed a Gothic-style "castle" called Strawberry Hill in Twickenham.

*The Castle of Otranto*, first published under a pseudonym in 1765, has been called "the direct progenitor of nearly all supernatural horror." Walpole wrote nearly 40 books, but *Otranto* is one of the few remembered.

**The Mysteries of Udolpho** by Ann

(Ward) Radcliffe. G.G. and J. Robinson. London, 1794 (4 vol.).

London-born Radcliffe, the daughter of tradespeople, married a law student who later became a newspaper editor. Her first novel, a Scottish historical romance, was issued in 1789. The classic *Mysteries of Udolpho*, published in 1794, was her most influential and popular work. Radcliffe created tension and aroused curiosity by describing occurrences ostensibly supernatural, but later explained away by natural means. This was acceptable to some readers, but disappointed and even exasperated others.



**This Halloween . . .  
We're Gonna Get'cha!**





# TALES BY MOONLIGHT

Remember going to your bookshelf, late at night when you were all alone, and looking for that special book? The one that you brought out every Halloween to scare the children? The book that your big brother or father always used to scare *you* with.

Remember lifting that book off the shelf and looking at the title again just to make sure it's not really all that mysterious and haunting? That it's just a book after all? Didn't you take it to bed with you and curl up under the blankets and by the dim light of the bedside lamp start all over again? Didn't you scare yourself to sleep with a tale of treachery and terror?

Stories that can scare you over and over again are rare things. Yet, inside Jessica Amanda Salmonson's latest anthology you will find the stuff that nightmares are made of: tales that will frighten you, and bother you, and make you want to go into the kitchen one last time before you go to bed, just to get a glass of water or a bite of that sandwich, just to see the familiar warm light of your refrigerator and look at the assuring brand name labels or the little notes hanging on the door telling you that all is normal and sane in the world, and that the ghosts and goblins haven't gotten you trapped, yet.

Inside **Tales By Moonlight** you will read of the 200-

year-old spectre disturbing the sleep of a young, new pastor of a very old English community; of the mother and father willing to pay any price to regain their dead daughter and the woman who is willing to give up anything to see it happen; of the husband and wife who just never learned to leave *well* enough alone; and more. Each one more disturbing, more horrific than the last.

But between the tales of witchcraft and sorcery are fables of a gentler kinder magic, a magic of fairie. Only three in all, but the stories tell of princesses and toys and unfamiliar heroes, speaking of honor and love. These too are tales to be told to children and read aloud around a campfire and kept around to ease the fears of those scared by the dark and the stories told there.

These are stories that will last long into the night from a book made to keep on your shelves for years to come. All are tales to be read to your family or just to yourself on those nights when the storm threatens on the horizon, and the wind blows the leaves off of the trees, and the moonlight casts shadows hiding all

of those things that go bump in the night.

**Tales By Moonlight:** as you open to its first pages, a new horror begins.



Foreword by Jessica Amanda Salmonson

Introduction by Stephen King

Fiction by Dale C. Donaldson, Jody Scott, George Florence-Guthridge, Phyllis Ann Karr, Janet Fox, William Green, Eileen Gunn, Jeffrey Lant, Richard Lee-Fulgham, Austelle Pool, Mary Ann Allen, Elinor Busby, Bruce MacDonald, Linda Thorton, Steve Rasnic Tem, John D. Berry, Gordon Linzner, Ron Nance and N.K. Hoffman.

Art by Stephen Fabian, Paul Sonju, Jeff Polter, Brad Foster, Randy Broecker, Stephen Jones, Wendy Adrian Schultz and Thomas Clark.

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 Franz Cahoon A467  
 Paul Cahoon A468  
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 Janet Campbell A115  
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 Tamzen L. Cannoy A231  
 Catherine Cargill A539  
 Eugene R. Carman A112  
 Sylvia J. Carman A113  
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 Jeanne Carpenter A120  
 Patricia Carraway A503  
 Grant Carrington A178

Roy L. Carter A047  
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 Joyce Cates A437  
 Elizabeth Cerritelli A449  
 Nick Certo A308  
 Patty Certo A309  
 Jack Chalker A316  
 Jack Chavez A316  
 Chris Chavez A429  
 C.J. Cherryh A543  
 M. Lucie Chin A325  
 Aina Chu A087  
 Frank Cirocco A331  
 C.S. Claremont A272  
 Dale C. Clarke A560  
 Michael Clarke A581  
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 George Coe A458  
 Jeff Coe A300  
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## D

Angelo D'Alessio A160  
 Fred D'Ignazio A075  
 Danielle Dabbs Monson A241  
 Liz Danforth A419  
 Andrew G. Dangelas A103  
 Bernie R. Dangelas A104  
 Les Daniels A533  
 Tim Daniels A342  
 Jack Dann A119  
 Ellen Dattlow A148  
 Leta Davis A293  
 Catherine C. De Camp A264  
 L. Sprague De Camp A263  
 Gerry De La Ree A186  
 Helen De La Ree A187  
 Charles De Lint A515  
 Lisa Grace Delorenzo A534  
 Rhonda Dembiczak A494  
 Walter Dembiczak A493  
 Sandy Desautell A438  
 Mr. Anthony Dewey A482  
 Mrs. Anthony Dewey A483  
 Susan Dexter A028  
 Vincent DiFate A552  
 Gordon R. Dickson A270  
 Ted Dikty A306  
 Genevieve Dimodica A133  
 Paul Dovich A153  
 Robert Dobson A138  
 Kevin M. Doddy A370  
 Barbara Doherty A303  
 Tom Doherty A304  
 Ira Donewitz A536  
 Michele K. Donovan A522  
 Leo Doroschenko A010  
 Tom Draheim A207  
 Debbie Dunacuskay A531

## E

Mike Eagle A259  
 Patricia B. Eber A391  
 Robert M. Eber A390  
 Jason C. Eckhardt A408  
 Allan D. Edels A096  
 George Alec Effinger A389  
 Galad Elflandsson A337  
 Norman Epstein A440  
 Jon Estren A039

## F

Fantasy Archives A031  
 Fantasy Archives A032  
 Doug Faunt A068  
 Richard Fawcett A094  
 Gary Keith Feldbaum A212  
 Arnie Fenner A583  
 M.C. Fernandez A343  
 Jan Howard Finder A179  
 Bayla B. Fine A224  
 Barbara Fisher A222  
 Lou Fisher A221  
 Wilma Fisher A402  
 Gillian Fitzgerald A341  
 Jo Fletcher A157  
 Jeff Ford A095  
 Ellen Frankiin A185  
 Christine A. Freelin-LittleJohn A202  
 Freff A324  
 Jim French A321  
 David Friedman A200  
 Esther M. Friesner-Stutzman A289  
 Randolph Fritz A169  
 Gregory Frost A191  
 Mara Frost A192

## G

Sam Gafford A495  
 W. Paul Ganley A470  
 Craig Shaw Gardner A147  
 Elizabeth Gardner A462  
 Maria V. Gavelis A139  
 Rita Gavlis A443  
 Larry Gelfand A403  
 Denise Gendron A508  
 Suzanne Gendron A509  
 Stephen Gervais A377  
 Michael Ginies A516  
 James M. Glenn A060  
 Dorothy Godin A355  
 John Godin A356  
 Parke Godwin A348  
 Margaret Goldfarb A189  
 Jack Gonzalez A017  
 James E. Gonzalez A283  
 Loren N. Gould A016  
 Claire Graham A374  
 Donald M. Grant A117  
 Kathryn Grant A584  
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 Martin H. Greenberg A305  
 Suzanna Griffin A474  
 Chip Gronauer A246  
 Robert L. Grote A090  
 Michael P. Gryklik A411

## H

Karen V. Haas A074  
 Robert Hadji A548

Gary P. Halada A182  
 Gay Haldeman A205  
 Joe Haldeman A204  
 Charles Hamilton A076  
 Donald Hammill A048  
 Diana Harian A569  
 Dell Harris A379  
 David G. Hartwell A365  
 Karen Hazel A135  
 Paul Hazel A134  
 Brenda Hendrickson A512  
 Dave Hendrickson A511  
 B.J. Herbison A301  
 Janet P. Herkart A277  
 Paul G. Herkart A276  
 Paul S. Herman A130  
 Gene Hess A245  
 Rusty Hevelin A220  
 Don Higgins A435  
 Gail Higgins A386  
 Arthur D. Hlavaty A478  
 Mary A. Hochberg A085  
 John Eric Holmes A057  
 Clifford R. Hong A183  
 Norman L. Hood A317  
 Diane Howard A236  
 John Howard A235  
 Kenny Howard A237  
 Jim Hudson A184  
 Cortland Hull A585  
 Ken Humphreys A082  
 C. Bruce Hunter A234

## J

Ann Marie Jackowski A426  
 Walter Jackowski A425  
 Michele A. Jacobson A490  
 Sheldon R. Jaffery A064  
 Sharon Jarvis A114  
 Sharon Jarvis A368  
 Christine Jeffords A195  
 James C. Jennings, Jr. A392  
 Jo Jensen A079  
 Jane Jewell A436  
 Deborah Johnson A168  
 Kenneth R. Johnson A412  
 Kevin Johnson A238  
 Jim Jones A461  
 Stephen Jones A156  
 S.T. Joshi A530

## K

Ruth B. Kaplan A131  
 Diane Karpovich A554  
 Richard Katze A215  
 Tom Kavanaugh A475  
 Marvin Kaye A586  
 Paul J. Kelly A070  
 Greg Ketter A557  
 Tom Kidd A019  
 Virginia Kidd A375  
 Virginia Kidd A576  
 Stephen King A314  
 Tabitha King A587  
 Tappan King A431  
 Terry King A041  
 Harold E. Kinney A318  
 Tess Kissinger A567  
 Mark J. Klause A171  
 Jay Kay Klein A059  
 John W. Knott, Jr. A354  
 Robert Knowlden A211  
 Herman J. Krauland A194  
 Ralph Kristiansen A030  
 Dave Kurzman A285  
 Ellen Kushner A588

## L

Chuck Landau A413  
 Richard Lavoie A336  
 Robert Lavoie A323  
 Alexis Layton A562  
 Jonathan T. Lebow A397  
 Daniel W. Lee A344  
 Evelyn C. Leeper A006  
 Mark R. Leeper A005  
 Fritz Leiber A514  
 Bob Leman A001  
 Fred Lerner A260  
 Sheryl Rubin Lerner A261  
 Maureen P. Leshendok A154  
 Tom Leshendok A155  
 Fran Leventhal A254  
 Steve Leventhal A253  
 Andrea Levin A451  
 Jeff Levin A450  
 Ellen Levine A206  
 Paula A. Lieberman A091  
 Paula A. Lieberman A219  
 Brad Linaweaver A388  
 Wendy Lindboe A229  
 Eric Lindsay A401  
 Fred Link A497  
 Joseph P. Littlejohn A201  
 Lou Lofaro, Jr. A268

## M

Tara MacDonald A550  
 Lois Macmillan A547  
 Judy Maffei A255  
 Serge Mailloux A040  
 Deborah Malamut A407  
 Allen Malanowicz A481  
 Keith Manheck A540  
 Ken Manson A173  
 Marie Marino A249  
 Dianne Mariotte A372  
 Jeff Mariotte A371  
 W.P. Marks A250  
 Lynn Marron A250  
 Mary H. Martine A542  
 Victor C. Martine A541  
 Paula Mastine A029  
 William Matthews A098  
 Julian May A307  
 Frederick J. Mayer A046  
 David M. McQueen A165  
 Shawna McCarthy A351  
 Patrick McCormick A349  
 Michael McDowell A073  
 Seth McEvoy A053  
 Erin McKee A422  
 Patricia A. McKillip A590  
 Michael McLaughlin A282  
 Beth Meacham A430  
 M. Patrick Meenehan A132  
 Paul Memoli A228  
 Edmund R. Meskys A346  
 Chauntecleer Michael A387  
 Paul Mikel A457  
 Martha Millard A223  
 Chuck Miller A105  
 M. Michael Miller A433  
 Teresa Minambres A004  
 Joan Mitchell A427  
 Jane Mongello A199  
 Andrea Montague A020  
 Thomas F. Monteleone A418  
 Ken Moore A226  
 Lou Moore A225  
 Lynn Morgan A140  
 Howard Morhaim A428



David Morrell A589  
 John Morressey A150  
 Barbara Morressey A151  
 Skip Morris A213  
 Charlotte D. Moslander A434  
 Jim Mueller A292  
 Bradley Munn A484  
 James E. Munn A591  
 Will Murray A477

**N**

Michael Nally A459  
 Jackson L. Neigenfind A278  
 Janet M. Neigenfind A279  
 Kenneth Neily A529  
 Shirley Nicks A084  
 Frank N. Norulak A524  
 Terry Nudds A083

**O**

George O'Nale A256  
 Jan Landau O'Nale A036  
 James R. Odbert A108  
 Erin Olson A044  
 Mark L. Olson A210  
 Paul Olson A045  
 Sheila Oranch A092  
 Julianne Owings A062  
 Mark Owings A061  
 C.E. Owston A299

**P**

Aaron Pagnozzi A452  
 Mimi Panitch A364  
 Curtis Pardee A500  
 David Pardee A439  
 Aly Parsons A381  
 Paul Parsons A380  
 Dan Patterson A463  
 Andrea Pautz A417  
 Peter D. Pautz A416  
 Dorean A. Pendergast A232  
 Katya Pendill A302  
 Carol Peregrine A274  
 Stephan Peregrine A273  
 Frank Perna A267  
 Richard W. Pero A538  
 Betsy Perry A454  
 Brian Perry A216  
 Brian Perry A453  
 Elizabeth Perry A217  
 Kelly S. Persons A395  
 Jeff Pert A537  
 Linda Pletro A472  
 Richard Pini A111  
 Wendy Pini A110  
 Allen Pitt A077  
 Robert W. Plante A271  
 Dawn Plaskon A445  
 Joel David Pollack A106  
 Priscilla Pollner A126  
 Andrew Porter A012  
 P. J. Porter A400  
 Katherine Pott A093  
 Kennedy Poyser A322  
 Victoria Poyser A054  
 Audrey E. Price A176  
 Robert M. Price A498

Lawrence R. Proksch A008  
 David T. Pudewitts A369  
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Robert Rand A382  
 Randall Rau A487  
 Jack Rems A456  
 Haversack Revsham A247  
 James W. Reynolds A350  
 Frank Richards A399  
 James B. Robinette A396  
 Frank M. Robinson A491  
 Scottie Robinson A420  
 Renee G. Robitaille A519  
 Paul Rochefort A563  
 Kate Rogers A338  
 Mark Rogers A339  
 John Rose A188  
 Bill Ross A421  
 Jim Roth A565  
 A.Z. Rowland A275  
 Alan Ryan A315

**S**

Louise Sachter A007  
 Art Saha A414  
 Michael T. Saler A015  
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 Anne Marie Sano A141  
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 Geoffrey L. Sargent A393  
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 Peter Schneider A145  
 Linda M. Schultz A290  
 Westley J. Schultz A289  
 Susan M. Schwartz A592  
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 Andrew Smith A033  
 Joseph E. Smith A022  
 Julia Smith A122  
 Charlotte Spivack A523  
 James Sprague A441  
 Maryland Sprague A442  
 Nancy Springer A009  
 Bill Spurlock A570  
 Pam Spurlock A571  
 Roy A. Squires A042  
 John D. Squires A203  
 Michael Stackpole A359  
 Michael E. Stamm A035  
 Don Stark A535

Erica Stark A536  
 Sharon L. Stefanick A239  
 David M. Stein A572  
 Stuart H. Stock A269  
 Whitley Strieber A394  
 Greg Stump A532  
 Theodore Sturgeon A577  
 Tim Sullivan A568  
 Frances K. Surprenant A556  
 Linda Sweeting A123

**T**

Michael Talbot A593  
 Judith Tarr A528  
 Charlene Taylor A161  
 Forrester Taylor A544  
 Guest of F. Taylor A545  
 J. Barry Taylor A124  
 Kevin B. Taylor A125  
 Patricia E. Taylor A162  
 Melanie Tem A489  
 Steve Rasnic Tem A488  
 John Terrill A252  
 Thomas Tessier A525  
 Gregory Thokar A209  
 Diane Thomes A555  
 Albert J. Thompson A347  
 Amy Louise Thomson A298  
 W. Thornton A180  
 James C. Tibbetts A485  
 Adrienne R. Tollin A358  
 Anthony G. Tollin A347  
 Samuel J. Tomaino A003  
 Charlie Tomberg A193  
 George Townsend A240  
 Nancy Tracy A052  
 Patricia A. Traub A501  
 William T. Trojan A561  
 Mark Turek A473  
 James Turner A038  
 Roger Turner A136

**V**

Mary E. Vahlkamp A496  
 Lester Van Epps A116  
 Donna Van Gunden A405  
 Ellen Vartanoff A208  
 Paula Volsky A287  
 Katherine Von Ehr A227  
 Kenneth Von Gunden A404  
 Jacques Von Schednen A594

**W**

Barbara Wagner A333  
 Karl Edward Wagner A332  
 Clayton Walnum A526  
 Lynn Walnum A527  
 Michael J. Walsh A447  
 Roy Walsh A069  
 Bob Walters A566  
 Craig Ware A464  
 Cyndi Warren A291  
 David Weidl A128  
 Robert Weinberg A366  
 Cherry Weiner A518  
 Lee Weinstein A553  
 Manly Wade Wellman A334  
 Mrs. Manly W. Wellman A335  
 Lelitia C. Wells A230  
 Reg Wells A258

Stuart Wells A011  
 Larry J. Westerburg A423  
 Michael Whelan A177  
 Stanley Wiater A504  
 Robert K. Wiener A118  
 Susan L. Williams A521  
 David J. Williams III A078  
 Chet Williamson A050  
 David Willson A251  
 Dawn E. Wilson A218  
 F. Paul Wilson A055  
 Mrs. F. Paul Wilson A595  
 Gahan Wilson A329  
 Lynne G. Winter A340  
 Douglas E. Winter A578  
 Nancy Winters A330  
 Paul Wishinsky A326  
 Allen L. Wold A071  
 Diane Wold A072  
 Suzan Woodard A378  
 Helen S. Wolverton A174  
 Rusty Wornom A469  
 Patricia C. Wrede A167  
 T.M. Wright A596  
 Janny Wurts A466  
 V.M. Wyman A465  
 Nancy Wyndham A014  
 Tex Wyndham A013  
 Abbie Wysor A281  
 John C. Wysor A286

**Y**

Benjamin M. Yalow A197  
 Chelsea Quinn Yarbro A579  
 Yoganathan A242  
 Jane Yolen A164  
 Don York A551  
 Jeanne Youngson A037

**Z**

James Zaccaria A409  
 Robert Zaccaria A410  
 Paul Edwin Zimmer A444  
 Paul Zimmerman A159  
 Ralph Zimmerman A158  
 Elizabeth Zwanzig A383

Roland J. Green S5  
 Lawrence Hass S12  
 Walter J. Hibbert, Jr. S15  
 Brian Hughes S4  
 Karla Marie Ko S39  
 Ginger Lajeunesse S13  
 Alain Lefebure S19  
 Floyd Lightsey S6  
 John J. Lynch S38  
 John Melville S3  
 Ken Nahigan S25  
 Spiro Peters S35  
 William M. Peterson S16  
 J.B. Post S18  
 Eric A. Press S14  
 Joe Rainone S27  
 Gregory G.H. Rihn S30  
 Robert E. Sacks S23  
 Richard H.E. Smith II S1  
 David W. Stanchak S20  
 Ann L. Streeter S40  
 David Sutton S29  
 R. Swzarc S31  
 Mykaljon Thompson S28  
 Nick Turner S43  
 Greta Y. Walker S42  
 Richard W. Weiglsh S8  
 M.A. White S22  
 J. Barry Zeiger S37  
 John Zinn S17

**Dealers**

Alternities D27  
 Archival Press D37  
 Alicia Austin D17  
 The Bookie D1  
 David C. Bray D32  
 Robert L. Brown D33  
 Nicholas J. Certo D20  
 Cheap Street D18  
 Chimera Publishing D2  
 Ina N. Cooke D11  
 Curious Used Books D29  
 Dragon's Hoard D9  
 Fantasy Archives D19  
 Fat Cat Books D31  
 Bayla B. Fine D7  
 Jack Gonzalez D12  
 Donald M. Grant Publications D38  
 Rusty Hevelin D39  
 The House on the Borderland D14  
 Jay Hutschnecker D10  
 Greg Ketter D8  
 Ralph Kristiansen D13  
 Carl Lundgren D15  
 K & V Poyser/ Matrix D26  
 Merlin's Closet D25  
 Nova Enterprises D6  
 F.J. Mayer/Outre House D23  
 The Pendragon Gallery D3  
 J.D. Pollack D34  
 Andrew Porter D5  
 Sleeping Dragon D21  
 Roy A. Squires D22  
 Startreader Books D35  
 Don Stark D4  
 Twice Told Tales D40  
 Underwood/Miller D36  
 Stuart David Schiff Whispers Press D16  
 Phyllis White D24  
 Ziesing Bros. Books D30

**Guests**

Peter Straub A311  
 Joseph Payne Brennan A310  
 Donald Maitz A312  
 Charles L. Grant A313

**Supporting Members**

Richard G. Allen S32  
 Harry J. N. Andruschak S9  
 David W. Clark S34  
 R.D. Coleman S24  
 Scott C. Dennis S41  
 Frank Denton S36  
 Stephen R. Donaldson S10  
 Robert Dougherty S26  
 Emily Egan S7  
 Judy Fetter S21  
 Charles Gray S44



## ARTISTS

Color Plates	
Alicia Austin	69
Jill Bauman	9
Kevin Johnson	21
Don Maitz	covers
David Mattingly	57
Rowena Morrill	12
Victoria Poyser	72
Boris Vallejo	60
Michael Whelan	24
Interior Art	
J.W. Barber	38
Susan Shay Collins	80
Leo & Diane Dillon	44
Randy "Tarkas" Hoar	16
Don Maitz	1, 4, 6, 29, 37
Real Musgrave	2
Victoria Poyser	50
David Wenzel	17, 62
Photography	
T. Charles Erickson	36
Paul Gagne	31
Video Services	73, 74
Janny Wurts	40

## ADVERTISERS

Altemities	59
Avon Books	41
Bantam Books	65-67
Barry Levin	18
Bar Sinister	ibc
Berkley/Putnam/Ace	33-35
The Bookie	75
Boris Vallejo/Mirage	60, 61
Carl Lundgren	32
DAW Books	26, 27
Del Rey	22, 23
Doubleday	39
Fantasy Archives	ifc
Fantasy Book	19
Fantasy Macabre	18
Fantasy Newsletter	71
Knopf	7
Mike Eagle	3
Pendragon Graphics	43
Philadelphia in '86	43
SF Chronicle	58
Tales by Moonlight	76, 77
Timescape	20, 21
TOR Books	49, 51, 53, 55
Underwood/Miller	68

Warner Books	5
Whispers Press	70

## COLOPHON

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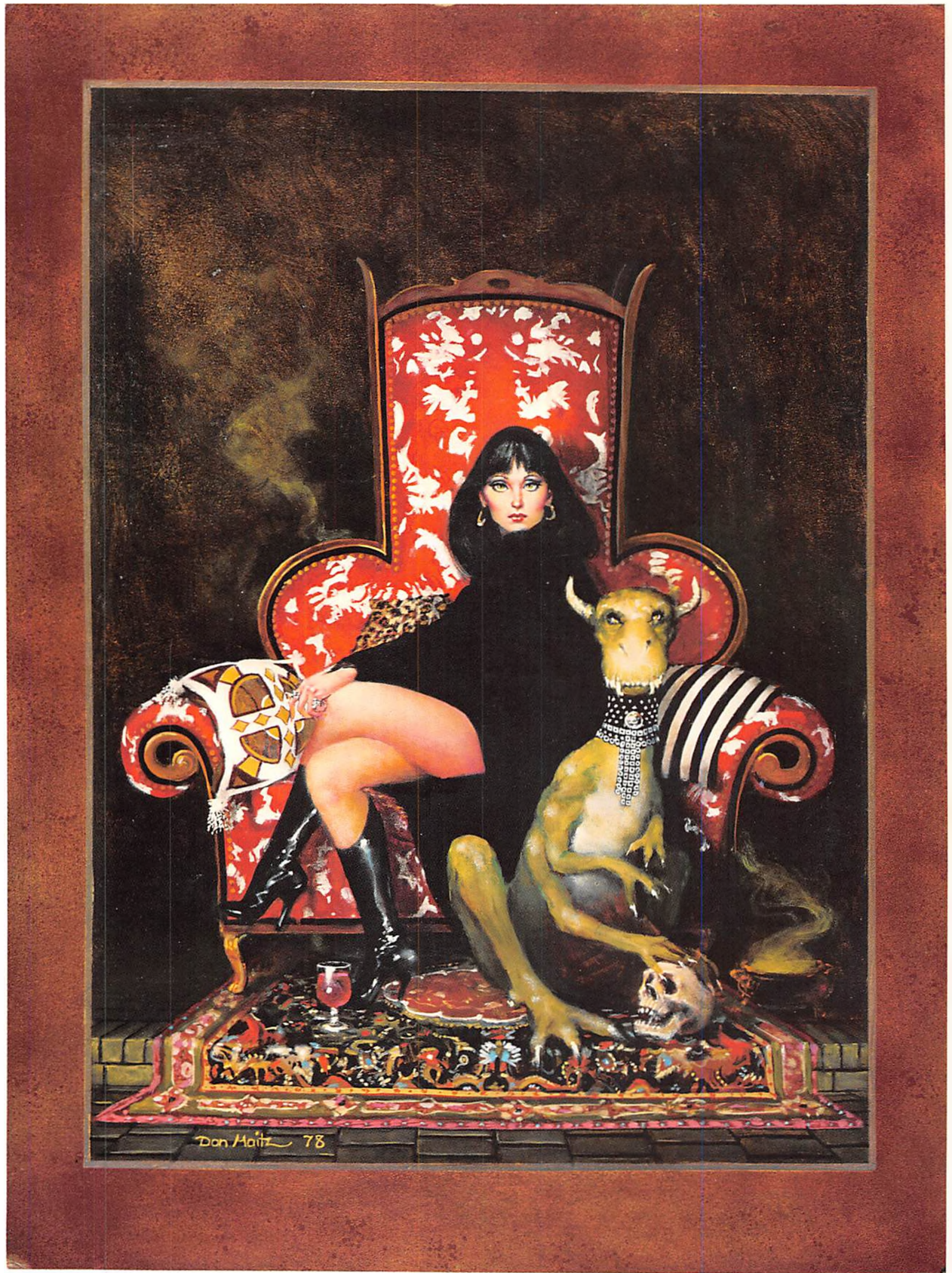
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