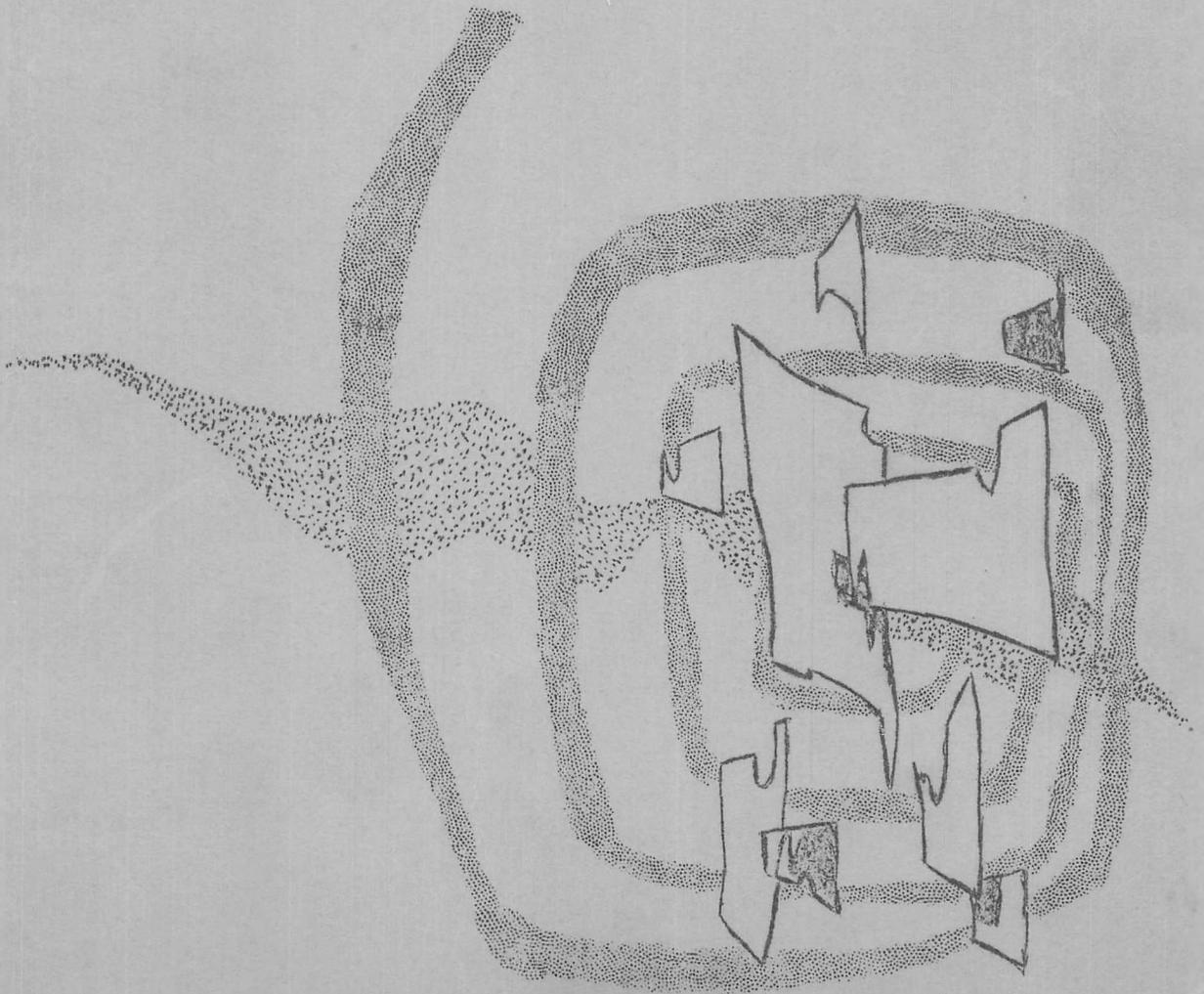


Harlequin





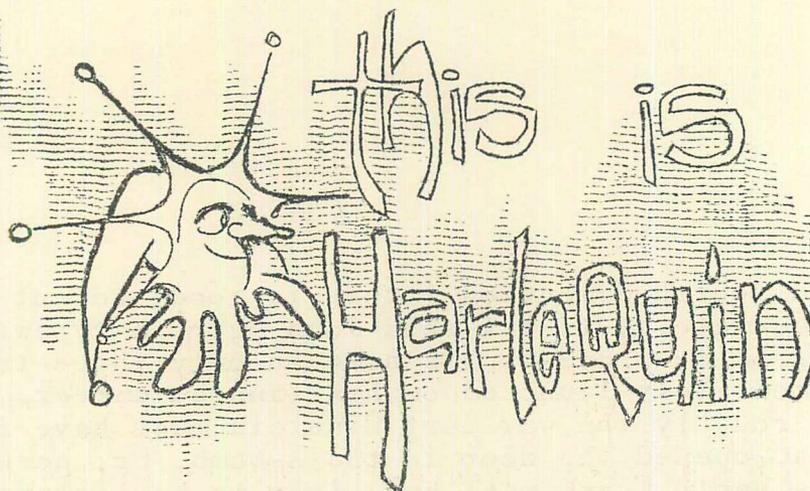
Once upon a fourth dimension ( this is good, scientifically accurate stuff ) I sold John Berry a typewriter. He got it from my place to his home in only three trips, and was immediately launched on his fannish career. Today I feel roughly the way Bert Einstein must have felt after he had opened the door to the A-bomb. Or, perhaps, the way his Uncle Frank must have felt as he listened to the clumping footsteps recede in the general direction of Hollywood, U.S.A.

The truth is that I no longer have any control over John Berry. Sometimes I think he no longer has any control over himself. He has got away from the rest of Irish Fandom, leaving us in the position of my Cousin Fred who was a successful doctor until, one day, he lost a patient. The patient didn't die or anything like that - Fred just lost him. It was a great pity, too, because Fred had the hands of a surgeon. He kept them in a trunk in the attic.

Anyway, I just wanted to make it clear that, although I am doing this introduction, once you plunge on into the book you are on your own. Happily, though, you won't feel lonely. You'll be able to read about John's days in the army, a couple of his adventures with Arthur Thomson, a fan fiction item and a spy story or two. You've also got the wonderful ATOM illustrations to ponder over, I had a sneak preview a couple of months ago, and I think they're fabulous.

And if you come out of it all feeling different, a bit Goon-like, zany, disorientated - don't say you haven't been warned.

Bob Shaw  
1964



It's been years, hasn't it, since an Atom-Berry publication appeared? So, working together for the past few months, Arthur Thomson and I have produced this thick oneshot specifically to boost the current 1964 TAFF campaign to send a British Fan to America for the Worldcon. For my part, I'm certain that Arthur will top the poll, but it should be made quite clear here and now that whoever does win the campaign will get whatever sum accrues from the sale of 75 copies. All the cash we hope to collect will be profit...there are no overheads, except perhaps postage. So even if you don't overly like my prose, there's oodles of ATOM illoes (including four experimental full-pagers run off by a new multilith technique) for you to gurgle over, and you can always use HARLEQUIN as a doorstop. So that's the mercenary aspect dealt with..... except to say we'd like you to pay half a crown for this, but we don't want to tie you down, pay more if you like, remember it all goes to TAFF.

Another personal note. This summer, ten years ago in 1954, I first saw the Light of TruFandom (as did Arthur.) Looking back over the last decade fills me with a Sense of Wonder...I never thought about it at the time, but I was checking up the other day on my complete output over this period, and I nearly had a fit. For I've had a story, feature or article published once every six days for the last ten years. The enormity of this crime shook me to the marrow. I didn't have the heart to bring out my book of logs and work out how many stencils, staples, reams of paper and cranks of the elbow this has meant. So with such a considerable selection to choose from, it wasn't easy to decide which stories to include in HARLEQUIN. It would be presumptuous of me to say the features are the best I've written...I didn't even consider the features from that point of view. Instead, I've striven to give a variety of styles...humour, serconism, light science fiction, nostalgia, etc. There are also a couple of stories about Arthur and myself...this is the nostalgia I mentioned...

I mentioned the four experimental ATOM illoes. They each look as though they are originals, don't they? The process is complicated...the illo is styloed on yellow carbon, on plastic, and every line drawn is faithfully reproduced on Multilith with amazing clarity. ATOM's complaint was that he couldn't see what he was drawing, he daren't lift up the yellow

carbon because he wouldn't be able to replace it exactly on the same spot. Worse, every time he leaned a tired hand on the carbon, it contacted the plastic and left a mark. One of the illos has a few vagrant marks on it. This is where ATOM coughed. Actually, Arthur wasn't too pleased with the results of this Multilith experiment, and did four other full page illos on normal stencil to replace them, but I've decided to include the Multiliths as well...they are magnificent, and are to be appreciated even more when you realise, as you do now, how difficult they were to execute.

THE LICHTENSTEIN WONDER I just had to write. Purists who struggle to the fourteenth page will possibly conclude that the ending isn't satisfactory, so in self-defence I have to state that the sequel is written and will appear without fail in HARLEQUIN #2 in 1974.

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It is interesting to ponder over developments since 1954 ...from a scientific angle. Then, we of science fiction fandom were mostly regarded as being members of a microcosm pandering to a childlike faith in the possibility of space travel. Our cult was further degraded by certain fan fiction writers who maintained a persistent level of exaggeration, and wrote some hundreds of thousands of words frequently mentioning the mystic words 'zap' and 'plonker gun'. The propellor beanie, our official badge of identification, was worn proudly aloft, and segregated us from mundane thinkers, including the then Astronomer Royal, who asserted that space flight was impossible.

On October the 4th 1957 we were, to use a common cliché, 'made'. The sudden surprise orbit of Sputnik 1 was the greatest thing ever to happen to fandom. We didn't really need a boost, because we knew it would come...each of us, in our own circle of friends, suddenly became the centre of that circle; gone was the slight downward curl of the lips, the significant tap to the head with the rampant forefinger when we turned our backs...we were, indeed, prophets. What we had always asserted had come to pass. The bewildering 'bleep bleep' from outer space was our status symbol. We were MADE...

The Americans, of course, were caught on the hop. They should have paid more attention to Willy Ley. Naturally, they took immediate steps to boost their own space programme, the race was on...Russia and America each striving to do more outrageous things than the other...hitting the centre of the Moon, sending the odd shot to Mars, Venus, Saturn...even past the Sun and away to the infinit...a man in space, men in space, WOMEN IN SPACE. And so it will go on. More and more of what used to be science fiction lore will assume reality. In secluded research stations, billions of dollars and roubles are being poured into frenzied experiments to make positron pistols, anti-gravity machines and snitch groove waffle flanges. It seems too simple to suggest that all they require to do is to study the complete Vargo Statten file....

The British Government, of course, with fanzines of repute such as TRIODE and PLOY to guide them, ignored the space race. True, they knocked up Blue Streak, but due to a miscalculation, they presumed the dreaded nuclear deterrent would eventually depend on Skybolt, and not an ICBM. Skybolt was cancelled, and Blue Streak (which could and should have put a British satellite in orbit years ago) was dragged from storage and carted off to Woomera, where, with a dozen European nations to assist, it is hoped to whip up a satellite a decade after Sputnik 1.

A new science-fictional hobby has sprung up since Sputnik 1 ...that of astro-philately. Seriously, I would have thought that all fans

would almost have regarded it as their sacred duty to collect these wonderfully detailed postage stamps ( most of them, ironically, from behind the Iron Curtain)...there have been some four hundred issued to date, making a most revealing file, showing that the early Atom rocket and space craft illos were not merely cartoons but accurate predictions. I wonder, does von Braun get HYPHEM ?

Apropos this uncanny anticipation of Atom regarding space craft, is it just possible that the same things applies regarding his BEMS ?

This possibility occurred to me before, to be honest. One day, when a deadline was a couple of days away in the wrong direction, it suddenly struck me it would be a good idea to write a 'Space Manuel of Aliens' - a humorous resume of the varied types of BEM which could confront one when blasting down on some remote spot in the galaxy. Accompanying the illos ( all Atom BEMS ) would be various details of their physical peculiarities, concluding with the Official Classification which would be, appropriately enough, the fanzine in which the prototype BEM appeared...such as 'CRY131p17'.

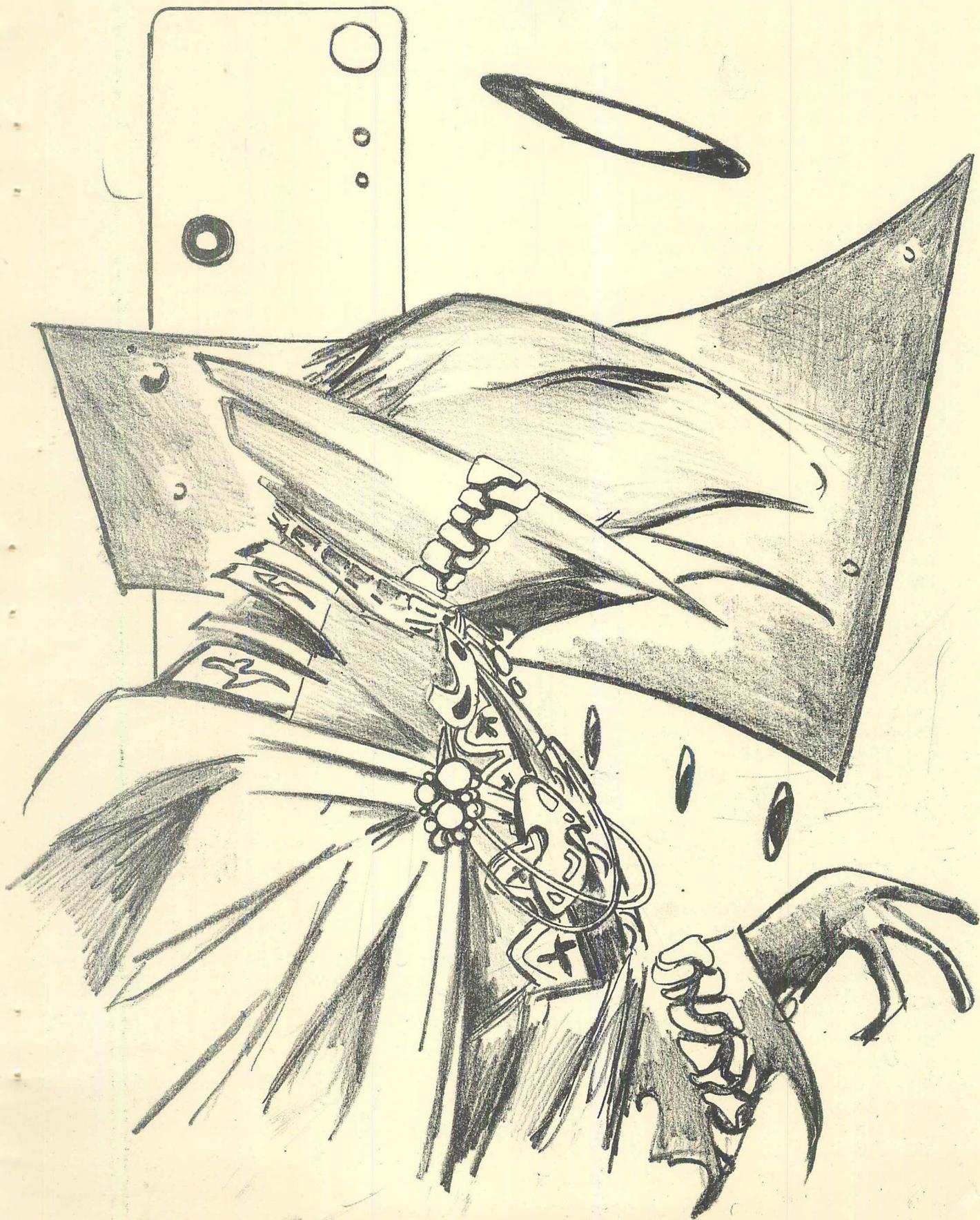
I did develop the idea further, but it rapidly became clear that such is the diversification of the surpreme artistic talent of this boy that it would require a major research programme to efficiently catalogue all his BEMS, and I have a wife and family to support, and cannot afford the time.

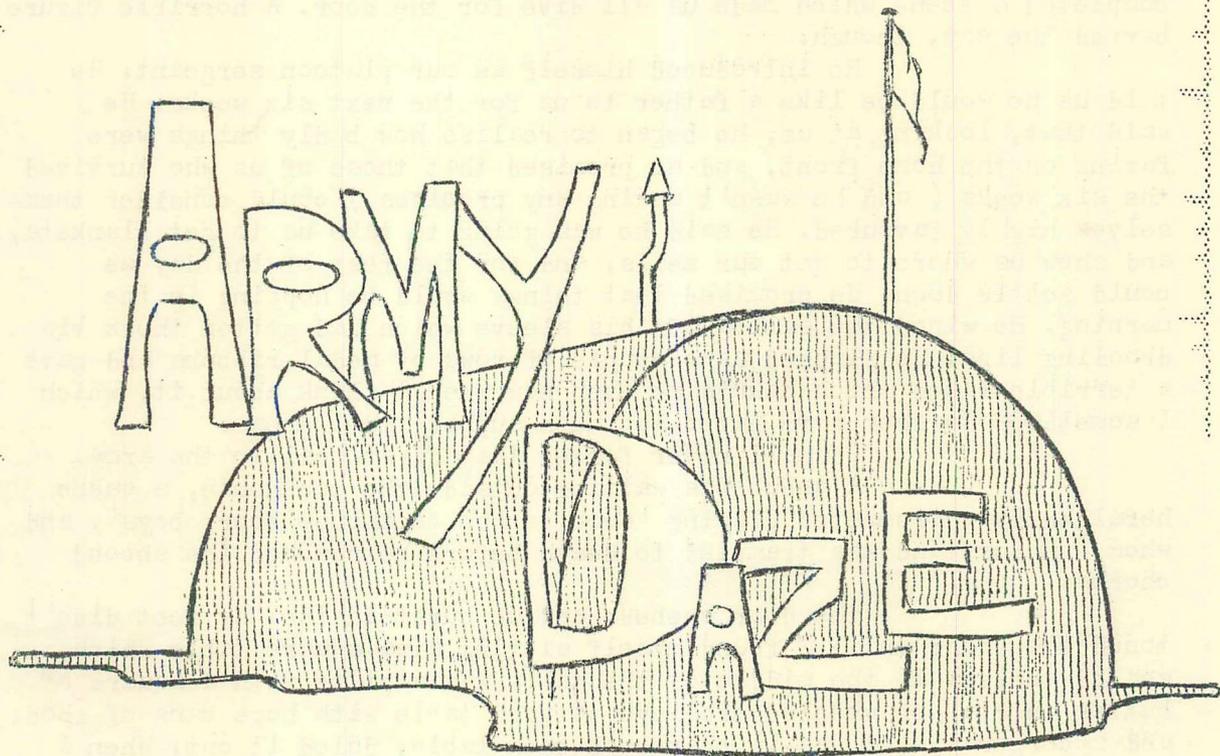
I would not presume to suggest that Atom has accurately forecast individual species - but he has most definitely covered every possible physical permutation, and I would seriously refer the matter to the NASA, with the suggestion that a couple of hundred qualified technicians ( complete with computers) set to examine every fanzine published since 1954 featuring Atom illos, could eventually come up with a comprehensive BEMish tome, without which, in the centuries ahead, no self-respecting astronaut would feel efficiently equipped for his job.

(If NASA are interested, I would append a rider to the effect that Atom has also drawn hundreds of cartoons of myself. Some people have attested to the fact that they accurately portray my physical characteristics - but not wishing to detract from their warped sense of humour, or Atom's puckish wit, I would ask that NASA be selective when perusing these fanzines, and not, by some mischance, inadvertantly include illos of the Goon in their final BEM tabulation.)

Another most fascinating aspect of the space age is satellite spotting. This absorbing hobby, besides fullfilling a most praise-worthy scientific perchant, also provides the ardent spotter with the facilities for a most entertaining sideline. Providing one has in ones possession a current newspaper with the pertinent times of satellite observations, the spotter has a perfect legal right to be in possession of a powerful set of binoculars during the hours of darkness, and if, by some uncanny sixth sense, the lens linger on the un-curtained bedroom window of a female teenager with an urge for exhibitionism, no jury could possibly convict. I say with some degree of pride that I have been a full-time satellite spotter since 1957, and although my sightings have been confined to Sputnik 1 and Echo 11, I feel my time has not been wasted. And that reminds me, it's dark again...oh well, back to the salt mines... just to say that Arthur and I hope you like this.....yeah...this IS HARLEQUIN.

John Berry  
1964.





I had to report in 1944 to a basic training camp in Worcester, about twenty five miles or so from my home town of Birmingham. Following directions, I had with me a small amount of money, about two pounds, a change of underwear, my shaving kit, etc.

I remember my initiation vividly. A couple of hundred of us had to report that day...we went to a room where our names were ticked off a long list. An 'old soldier' sat supping tea, and we asked him what the army was like. He shuddered. He waved a hand in the direction of the window. He said the squad performing on the barrack square had arrived two weeks previously. To me, they looked like old campaigners, and I ardently wished I'd been in the army for two weeks. The boys on the barrack square had sticking plaster on their right arms, were stripped off in merely vests and blue shorts, and were performing incredible physical feats with rifles. From their bewildered expressions, and by the way they looked at their sadistic instructor, it was obvious that a couple more of the befuddled ones would have given their left arm for a live round of .303 ammunition.

Now remember that although I wouldn't go so far as to say I'd been delicately reared, I was somewhat sheltered. All I'd been interested in was aeroplanes. I never swore, or had base ideas (weell, no more so than the average person) and was used to eat my meals with a knife, fork and spoon in that order .

As soon as thirty of us gathered together, the soldier took us to a barrack room. It was bare...double-bunk type bods round the walls. When I say 'beds' I'm using the word in its broadest sense. They

were merely wooden frames with three very hard square things called 'biscuits' dumped on them. In the middle of the wooden floor were two high black stoves, and a couple of crossed brooms on the far gable completed a scene which made us all dive for the door. A horrible figure barred the way, though.

He introduced himself as our platoon sergeant. He told us he would be like a father to us for the next six weeks. He said that, looking at us, he began to realise how badly things were faring on the home front, and he promised that those of us who survived the six weeks ( and he wasn't making any promises ) could consider themselves highly favoured. He said he was going to take us to get blankets, and show us where to get our meals, and for the rest of the day we could settle down. He promised that things would be hopping in the morning. He wiped the saliva off his sleeve which had gotten there via drooling lips. He flashed us a couple of rows of medal ribbons and gave a terrible laugh which haunts me even now when I think about it, which I sometimes do when I've eaten too much supper and I dream.

I shall never forget that first meal in the army.

A queue was waiting outside the cookhouse, a queue heralded by a trumpeter playing 'Come to the cookhouse door, boys', and whom I understand was trampled to death before he reached the second chorus.

The door opened, and we burst inside. My feet didn't touch the floor until I found myself sitting at a square table which seated twelve. In the middle of the table was a plate with a square of butter on it. Men wheeled trolleys to each table with huge cans of food, and a corporal, who was in charge of each table, doled it out. When I had noticed the corporal sitting there, I presumed his duty to be concerned with our table manners, making sure that when we held the knife in our left hand, the little finger was rampant just so. But I had miscalculated. The corporal bared his teeth like a bear who can smell honey but can't find it, and he handed out the bread. Naturally, when you've got bread you want butter, so with something resembling a simper, I reached out my knife like a perfect gentleman.

The corporal grinned, and took a first aid kit out of his breast pocket and bandaged my lacerated fingers. He said he'd make sure I had a double ration of butter next time. He chided the boys somewhat. He said he admired the speed and dexterity with which they got their share of butter, but there was no need to cut the plate into eleven sections too.

I never did get to taste my first army meal. I coughed, and had the decency to put my hand to my mouth and say 'sorry' ...and in a thrice my dinner was three tables away.

The tea tasted real funny. The corporal grinned and said stuff was put in the tea for our own good. He said it would make us behave ourselves. He gave a leer, and said he didn't drink it, because he had a girl friend in Worcester. So help me, I had no idea what he was talking about. It took me a year to find out.

That night, the men in my hut talked about the prospects. Such language. I'd heard some of the words before, I admit, but never in such never-ending sequence. My ears turned red, then did their best to disappear down their own orifices.

I lay on my biscuits that night, and wandered if shooting was still the penalty for desertion....

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Next morning, I heard the door open. The room was still in darkness. I've always been able to judge the time accurately, and I surmised it was on the wrong side of six am. A torch-light flashed, and seeing me move, a mad man came over and pulled me out of bed. I remonstrated with as much dignity as I could muster, considering the fact that I'd only just reached the stage where I thought I'd be able to sleep...but the mad man was pulling everyone else out of bed, too.

"Breakfast in half an hour, and you've got to shave and have your room scintillating," he roared, before embarking on a safari in the next hut, from which screams of pure terror shortly emanated from.

I gibbered in sheer fright.

I wanted to sleep. I had to sleep. I was a physical wreck. So I climbed back into my wet blankets again and shivered. Most everyone got back in bed, too. One sucker picked up his shaving gear and moved towards the door. He peered out into the blackness, and said, in a horrified voice, "He's coming back."

Second chap trampled to death in less than a day. Shocking it was, the only consolation was the thought that it might have been the mad man trampled to death instead.

I was only just turned eighteen years old, and didn't need to shave every day. When I did shave, it was in lovely warm water, with bags of soap suds and bubbles and things. But this was different. It was six am....the water was as cold as ice...and there was no light. I don't know who I shaved, but the shaking hand that did me left a couple of memorable scars. It was precisely then that I decided to grow a moustache...I sorta liked my nose, big though it was...and what's more, I wanted to keep it.

The trumpeter, with four men with fixed bayonets round him, sounded the cookhouse call, and I was third in the queue...which wasn't so bad considering the two in front of me eventually shared the army 100 yard sprint championship...

This time I had my knife ready, and when the sparks had cleared over the butter plate I saw I'd triumphed. True, my portion melted with the speed with which I'd whipped it away, but it's the principle which counts.

I remarked to the corporal that it was rather unique having clear soup for breakfast, and he told me it was porridge. The slice of bacon on my plate looked like a worm which had stepped out into the sun during a heat wave...and the tea tasted funny again.

Back in the hut, we arranged our biscuits and blankets as well as we knew how, and quaked in apprehension as we heard our Sergeant's voice three barrack rooms away saying 'good morning' to us.

"First of all come with me to get your kit," he yelled. He got us outside, and then tried to get us into three ranks. He did everything except a multiple permutation. He closed his eyes, and sank to the ground in terror. He cried for his mother. Then he seemed to take a grip on himself. He pointed a gnarled hand..."That big building over there...GO"...and then stood out of the way.

We queued up outside the door, which was open.

"Tunic" a disembodied voice yelled.

A sergeant looked at us, did a rapid mental calculation, and shouted out a size. He shouted out many different sizes, but what perplexed me was the fact that all the tunics came from the same pile.

So did the hats.

I wouldn't say my head was any more queerly shaped than average.

True, a phrenologist once wrote a thesis about it for his degree, but never did I get such praise as the sergeant gave me. You see, mine was the only head on which a hat fitted perfectly. He said that the hats were not supposed to fit. He said that the whole feature behind the unorthodox material and peculiar shape was to ensure that it didn't fit. He said that if my tunic and trousers fitted too he'd get me out of the army on medical grounds. I wasn't that lucky, though...

The rifle I was issued with shook me most. It seemed so heavy I could hardly carry it...of course, I was carrying masses of equipment besides, including two of the biggest pairs of hobnail boots I ever did see. Like landing barges they were.

We crawled back to our hut and dumped the stuff on our beds. It was a pretty horrible moment. The woollen vests looked as though they'd originally been made for beaver hunters in the Rockies, they seemed about half an inch thick. The army 'drawers, woollen' came almost down to my ankles, and when I put my tunic and trousers on I looked like a sack of potatoes waiting to be thrown on a lorry. There were also masses of green-coloured straps and packs, which, in some inexplicable way, were supposed to fit together.

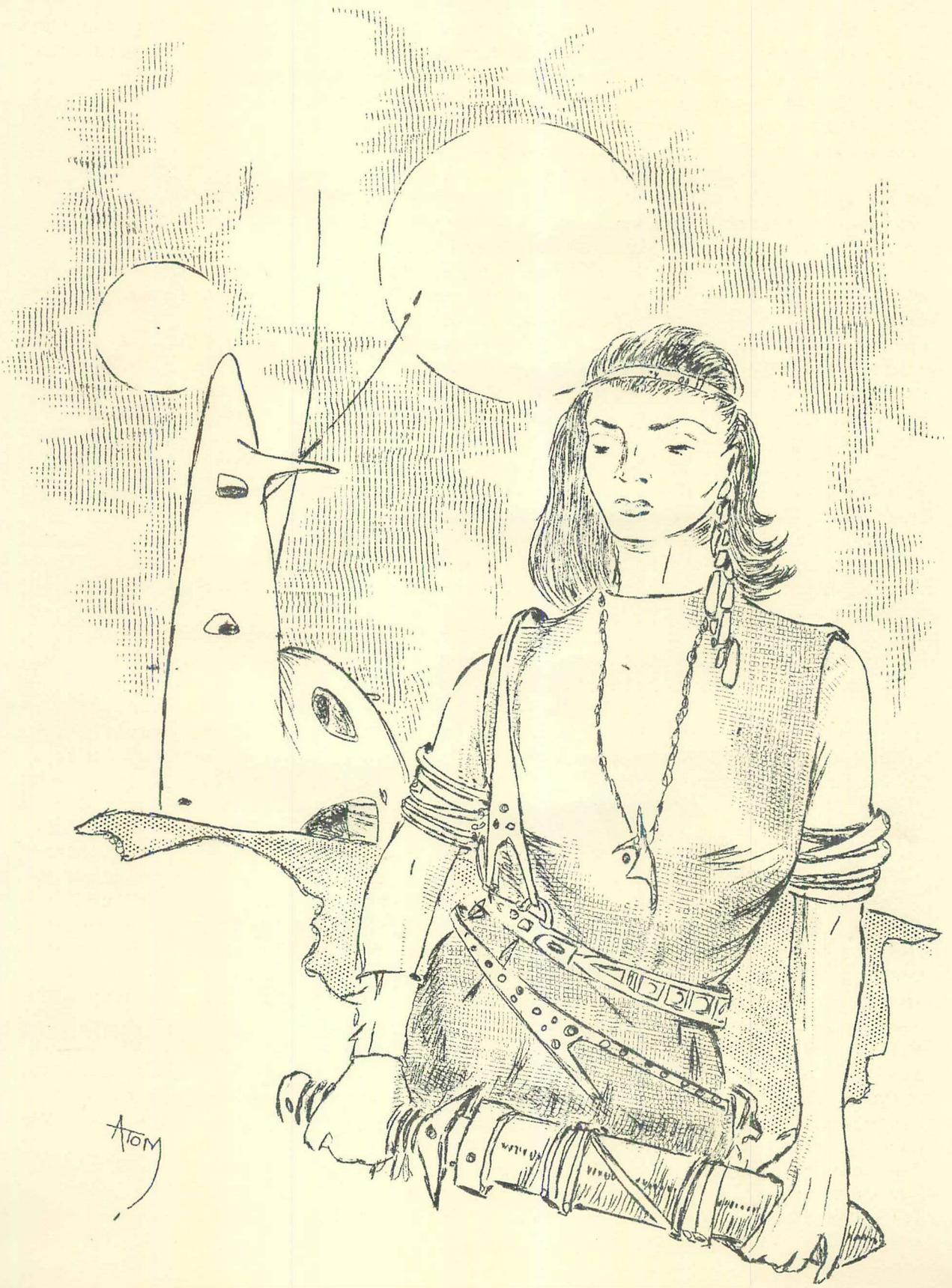
But we were rushed out again for our inoculations. We stripped off to the waist, to reveal thirty white bodies curled up like in-growing toenails...en masse, we looked like white termites huddled together in bewilderment, after someone had picked up a flat stone. The sergeant searched hurriedly for his hip flask when he saw us come out, clutching our upper arms and looking like the survivors of a couple of dozen illegal operations.

We all thought that what we'd gone through was the utter end, and I'll never forget the look of sheer sadistic delight as the sergeant led us for a haircut.

I wouldn't go so far as to say that my hair style was effeminate in any way, but I was particularly proud of my long waves which crowned my head like a halo. Some people had made remarks about my 'mane', but it was nice and warm to have my hair hanging over my collar.

I couldn't understand how the sergeant imagined that thirty men could have a hair cut in ten minutes, and actually, I was the first in the queue. I sat down in the chair and said coily "Short back and sides, please." I'll always remember that racous guffaw as the hairdresser (a soldier, who, it transpired, relegated his duties between cutting hair and cleaning out the officers ablutions) selected a pair of scissors which looked as though they would have been more at home in a carpet factory. I was soon ankle-deep in waves and curls, which my mother had treasured for years. His encore was effected with a pair of electric clippers which had previously been used in a sheep station in New South Wales. He dragged me out of the chair, and pushed me through the opposite doorway. Heck, it was coooollldd. I put my hands to my head instinctively and it felt as though I was massaging a chrystal ball. I was saved from spontaneous insanity by the appearance of the second customer. He burst out laughing when he saw my head, and I shook with pure unadulterated bliss when I saw his shiny pate. I'll never forget the next few moments, as the rest of the squad was ejected. We were at our lowest ebb, our arms cut to ribbons, masses of equipment to clean, completely bald, and late for dinner. Not that we could have eaten much, our slashing arms were out of action for a couple of days.....

John Berry  
1961.



ATOM



# Seagull Over Ballyvester

Arthur Thomson has rightly gained fame in the fannish field as probably the most gifted artist fandom has ever known. Particularly so in the field of true cartoons. Several fen are adept stylo virtuoso's, and although their semi-sercon illo's are executed with originality, the basic artistic format remains static. ATOM alone has the ability to inject authenticity into his cartoons...most especially in his character studies of James White, Ken Bulmer, Steve Schulthies, Chuck Harris, Eric Bentcliffe and George Charters, to name but three. This is the ATOM famed everywhere, the artist with the cultured and prolific stylo and the unbounded imagination.

But those of us who know him well, really well, realise that there is something much deeper in his personality. Those of us who have had the fortunate experience to listen to Arthur making most perceptive remarks during a taper session fully understand the machinations of this brilliant mind. I recall a taper session at Walt's, we were making a tape for Jean and Andy Young...it was one of those taper sessions when everything went right...conversation flowed merrily along like a rippling mountain stream. Merry quip followed closely on the heel of merry quip. Then Arthur, who had been strangely quiet, raised a hand, and with a refined accent, composed of a mixture of broad Glaswegian and subtle cockney, made a most revealing remark, and we all sank back in our chairs, struggling to get the full significance of the profound observation. Even Willis, with

his great mind, found it necessary to reflect on the astute Thomson comment. I am sure that Jean and Andy derived some considerable benefit from the sage remarks.

Arthur also has the rare ability to repeat incidents with a superlative zest...the necessary qualifications for the gifted raconteur, which ATOM undoubtedly is. You haven't lived until you've heard him give the full story of the time he was approached in Picadilly by a woman of uncertain virtue. "Of course," explained Arthur philosophically puffing a cloud of smoke towards the ceiling, "it's not so bad a woman coming up to you and saying 'Hello, dearie', but when a male comes up and says it, weeeell...." With righteous indignation, Arthur vigorously tapped the end of his cigarette, and ground the ash into the carpet. It's the proud significance of his gestures which combine to make his story-telling so wonderful an experience.

However, it wasn't until we visited Ballyvester, on the County Down coast, on the Irish Sea, that I had the distinction of seeing Arthur make with a superb example of his genius. It has never been my privilege to witness better. Others, since that memorable date, have had occasion to hear a replica of the first spontaneous flash of consummate skill. It has even been set to tape, but those who hear it will only shrug and say it's a hoax, or a recording of the real thing, and assert that no human being could possibly have done it. If I had not been a witness, I would have agreed with them, but I stake everything I possess that Arthur did it. Alone and unaided he did it. And quite magnificent it was, too.

Of course, environment had a great deal to do with it. One can't expect to work up much enthusiasm, for example, if one was sitting on top of an iceberg in the Antarctic with Jayne Mansfield. I probably could, but as I said, one can't expect it. So in this case it was the atmosphere of the surroundings that constituted the back-cloth, as it were, for the fantastic incident.

I can see the vista as if it was happening now.

It was almost ten o'clock at night. Four of us were walking along the sandy beach at Ballyvester. The sky was overcast, although it was quite warm. Just the four of us on the whole deserted beach...Olive (Arthur's wife), Diane (my wife), Arthur and myself. Conversation wafted along as conversation usually does. Stories, jokes, anecdotes, mostly all tinged with a fannish reference, but, for the sake of the two neofen, set up in such a manner that they couldn't really object to what we were saying as being too esoteric.

Then the great moment arrived.

Arthur stopped, a look of celestial bliss on his face. He was obviously in a trance...completely on a different plane altogether...

His eyes flickered once or twice, and a coy grin interrupted the thin line of his lips. The rest of us stepped backwards, awed by this strange behaviour, yet somehow exulted with what we sensed, we knew, was to be something utterly out of this world.

Then Arthur did it.

He ran a couple of fingers through his hair, knocking it over his face, as any well-bred Irish fan would normally do. Slowly, oh so slowly, a transition took place...his features assumed an awful transfixion, as if he was reading an expurgated chapter of James White's memoirs. His arms rose slowly to shoulder height, and stayed at the accepted scarecrow angle. His fingers spread out like an Open Mizere. Then, with a measured movement, he slowly tilted his head to one side.

For some seconds he stayed like that, and Diane put a comforting arm around Olive, as she appeared to be taking the thing far too seriously. I peered between their heads, gauging the distance to the nearest cover. I knew Arthur was fooling, but, well, frankly, I've learned never to take a chance.

And so occurred the climax to the whole uncanny performance. I don't profess to know how he did it. My mind can only accept so much, and even though he did it before my very own eyes, and I know it happened, I still feel a little befuddled. Wouldn't you ?

With his eyes half closed, he opened his mouth slightly. "Squarrrrrk...quarrrrk."

He gave a superb oral rendering of a seagull. It was the last word. The performers on the B.B.C. who make a living by giving bird impersonations have never reached the peak of perfection which Arthur displayed. It wasn't so much the noise, although it was authentic seagull. No, the realistic part of the performance was the way he almost willed us to see a seagull. At each squark, he raised himself on tiptoe, and the way I was rooted to the spot in bewilderment, I quite expected to see him taxi forward, flap gloriously towards the horizon, and disappear into the infinit.

I've often thought about the incident, since.

I feel that in his own way, Arthur, for one brief moment, had reached the fundamental Truth...had plumbed the mysteries of the Universe...had shown us a fleeting glimpse of something ethereal and wonderful, which the human mind is only capable of comprehending on very rare occasions.

When we finally walked home, we were silent in the presence of this uncanny media. Arthur was ashen of face, like a soul who had touched the unknown. Once or twice, as if in silent experimentation, he did a sporadic flap of the hands, and emitted a tentative squark, but it was nothing by comparison with his climax of a few moments previously.

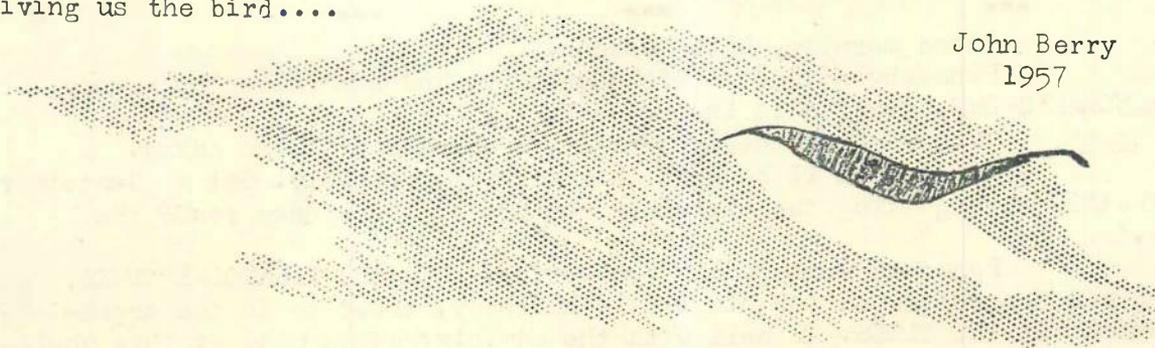
As I say, a poor facsimile of the original noise has been recorded for posterity on tape, but us three who heard the real Thomson-inspired seagull, will always remember it as one of those unexplained phenomena that can only be discussed in whispers.

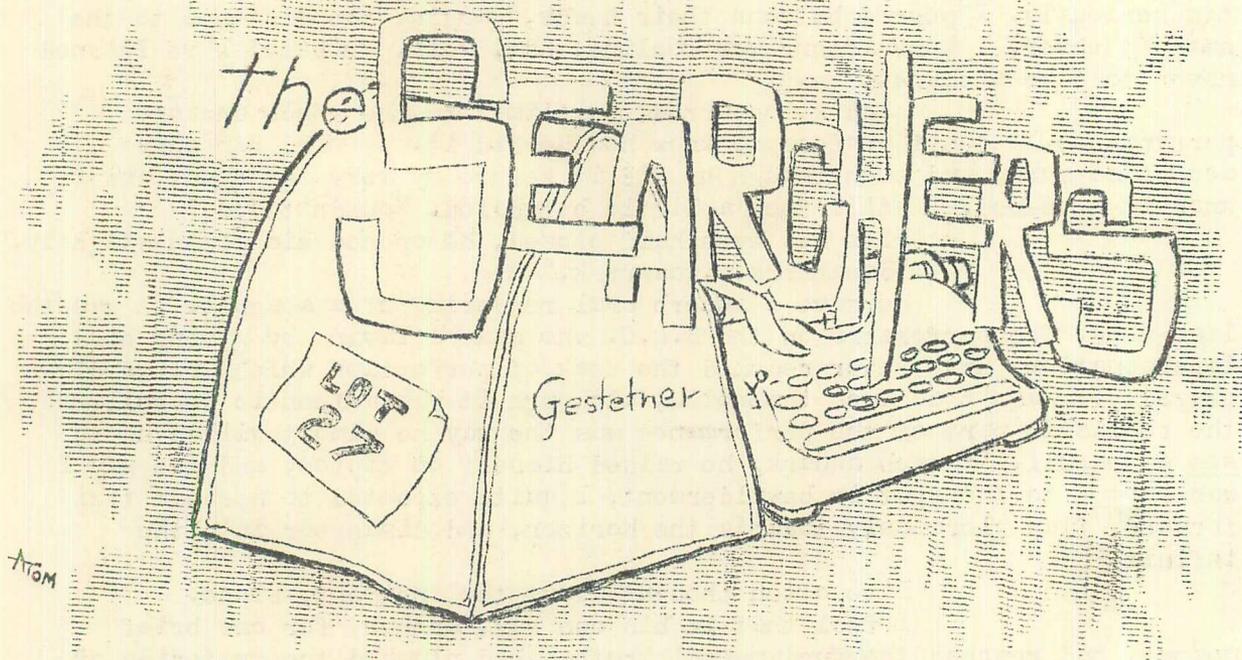
Some readers may think it a waste of time to spend so much space on the description of a mere vocal impersonation...but I am satisfied in my own mind that I couldn't do justice to the subject by taking up less words.

Of course, there is one other explanation.

In his own philosophical way, Arthur could have been giving us the bird....

John Berry  
1957





"Fifteen pounds....going...going...gone. Lot 27 sold to the gentleman with the green scarf."

The gavel pounded harshly on the knotted desk top, and the auctioneer took the butt from his ear, lit it, and puffed furiously whilst the two aproned men dragged forward Lot 28, a mahogany hat stand, with a gnome's face above a bevelled mirror.

Justin C. Ponsonby opened his wallet, took out three five pound notes, and went across to a girl sitting in the corner.

"I've just got Lot 27," he said.

She freed a vagrant curl, and looked down a typewritten list.

"A typewriter and a Gestetner," she said, and ticked the appropriate place on the list. "If you want them delivered, that'll be fifteen shillings extra."

Ponsonby sorted out the silver, folded up the receipt and put it in his wallet where the five pound notes had been.

He gave the girl his office address, was assured they'd be delivered the following morning, and walked home...rather pleased with the transaction....

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"Good morning, Miss Jackson."

Ponsonby nodded to his secretary, and she folded up a copy of the WOMAN'S OWN, stuffed it in her desk.

"Did you get the typewriter, Mr. Ponsonby?" she asked.

"I did, it'll be here this morning, probably. Got a Gestetner, too. That'll save getting the circulars run off at the agency round the corner."

Ponsonby went to his own office, read the FINANCIAL TIMES, ordered a dozen red roses for his wife's birthday, tried to do the cross-word puzzle in the TIMES. To hell with the administrative side of this wholesale boot and shoe business. It wasn't his forte at all. He liked to drive around the country getting orders...he'd been doing it for years...everyone

knew him for miles around, and then of course, the ginger-haired waitress in the Carlton Cafe in Bolton...she'd wonder what had happened to him... pity his partner was ill...this blasted paper work. He had been in the office three weeks, and it was possible that he'd be there another month or so before his partner was fit to resume. He wondered what Kirkwood would say, when he came back, to the changes of routine that he, Ponsonby, had introduced. The Gestetner, that would save three pounds a week, which was the average account due to the agency which had been doing the duplicating of price and advice circulars for years. And the typewriter...the one Miss Jackson had to use was about fifty years old...at least...Kirkwood's father had introduced it when the business had started...that Kirkwood, he was in a rut for sure...this typewriter he'd brought at the auction, it was a bit tarnished, admittedly, but it worked well, he'd tried it, and, incidentally, he was rather pleased with his speed, even with two fingers.

He buzzed for Miss Jackson.

She sat down opposite him, pencil poised over angled notebook, and he started :-

Dear Sir,

We are sorry to announce that we are unable to fill your respected order for 75 pairs of Continental football boots, but....

She left his office in three quarters of an hour with pages to type. Back in her office, she fingered the typewriter experimentally, and then inserted a crested sheet of paper under the platten.

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Ponsonby turned over the page. He was halfway through LADY CHATTERLY'S LOVER...hmmm...it reminded him of that ginger-haired waitress, he didn't know quite why, and he allowed himself a wry grin...

"Excuse me, Mr. Ponsonby?"

He looked up, and pushed the book in a drawer at the same time.

"You look white, very white, Miss Jackson," he began.

She closed her eyes tightly, and ran tensed fingers across her forehead.

"Something...something funny has happened to me," she said, with a suggestion of pending hysterics.

"Sit down here, my dear," he said. He hoped she wouldn't faint in his office, surprising how his wife got to hear of such things...he circled the desk, took her arm and led her to a chair. She looked up at him with frightened eyes.

"Read this," she said. The hand trembled as she gave him the sheet of notepaper.

He read :-

Dear Sir,

We are sorry to announce that we are unable to fill your respected order for a copy of FANAC...

Ponsonby froze for a second. He felt something undefinable in the closeness and warmth of his office....a sliver of ice running down his back, that's what it felt like, and a prickle of hair behind his ears.

"Er, Miss Jackson, that should read '75 pairs of Continental football boots.'"

"I know, sir, but even though I wanted to type that, I typed that funny word instead. Not once, but five times..."

"Do you feel alright, Miss Jackson, er...?"

"Oh yes, sir...at least, I did until I started to use that

typewriter...I felt kind of shivery, and my fingers seemed to be separate from my hands...I know that sounds strange, sir..."

Ponsonby crossed to her office. He sat down in her chair, flexed his fingers, and typed on the notepaper :-

Dear Bob,

I would very much like to feature a humorous story by you in my next pair of Continental football boots...

Ponsonby ripped the paper out, crushed it into a ball, and flung it over his shoulder. He closed his eyes for a moment, and made sure he was who he was, and what he was. Satisfied, he put another sheet of paper into the machine, concentrated fiercely, and typed :-

Dear Dick,

Sorry to say I shall not be able to maintain the minimum page requirement in SAPS, and therefore, reluctantly, I wish to resign as from the 56th mailing... Tears welled in Ponsonby's eyes, tears he couldn't account

for, and hell, it did seem cold...

"Miss Jackson, let's go across the road for a cup of coffee, black coffee, and maybe into the pub next door for something stronger..."

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The typewriter with a mind of its own was placed in a corner of the office. The uncomfortable feeling of...uneasiness...which seemed to pervade the atmosphere whilst it was being used, disappeared as soon as the cover was closed.

The secretary cut several stencils on the old typewriter, checked them for errors, dabbed a spot of correcting fluid here and there, and took one of the stencils in for Ponsonby to sign with the stylo, which he did with a flourish.

"Hope the Gestetner isn't haunted too," quipped Ponsonby with a forced smile of hilarity he certainly didn't feel.

Miss Jackson took the slightly rusted case off the duplicator and placed it on the floor. She pulled both ends out of the machine, rammed a thick wad of foolscap in the recess, put the stencil in place, ran a smear of ink across the roller, and slowly turned the handle. A pack of foolscap came through the machine with a black vertical stripe across the upper one.

Perplexed, Miss Jackson took all the foolscap out, tapped it square on her desk, and flipped the pages over so as to make them more amenable to the rubber-based attachments which were supposed to force just one sheet through at a time.

Didn't do any good, though, at least twenty sheets came through as soon as she turned the handle, and the stripe was even more pronounced.

Ponsonby looked over her shoulder.

"Here, let me have a go at it," he smiled.

He looked the machine over with an experienced eye...he was more than a fair mechanic, and he was satisfied with what he saw. He turned the handle, and only one sheet came through, but it came through at an angle of forty five degrees, with the words crosswise.

"Damn."

He tried again, and no sheet came through this time, and when the next one did ( at an angle of forty five degrees the opposite side) the page was completely black where the inked roller had carressed it.

"It shouldn't do that," frowned Ponsonby. "I've got an idea.

I wont be a moment, Miss Jackson."

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He came back in ten minutes with the man who ran the duplicating agency round the corner.

The man looked at the machine. He produced a small oil can and attended to the inner works. He tapped here, screwed there, then smiled.

"I guarantee it'll work now," he grinned. He worked the handle and there was a sharp click somewhere inside one of the rollers, and the handle hung loosely.

The man cursed, didn't even bother to apologise to the girl. He took his jacket off, grabbed a chair, sat on it heavily and looked at the Gestetner. He looked at it intently for ten minutes. He took a screw-driver from his pocket, tapped it against his finger, and put it back in his pocket again.

"Honestly, Mr. Ponsonby," he said. "I'm not saying this just because I've lost your trade, but I've never been baffled by a Gestetner before. There is nothing mechanically wrong with this machine. It should work, but it will not. You've no alternative but to send it away for a complete overhaul, although, dammit, there is nothing wrong with it... I tell you, I know it."

He went out. His footsteps stopped outside the door for a moment, then tapped quickly as he hurried away.

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"Fifteen pounds you paid for 'em, that's right, I remember", said the auctioneer. "And you want me to buy 'em back again? Well, business is business, and I can't offer you anything like that amount for them. Let's say, er, seven pounds ten."

Ponsonby breathed hard, and compressed his lips. But after all...

He folded the notes into his wallet, and the auctioneer turned to his assistant as Ponsonby left the store.

"Funny thing, ain't it, Joe? Fifth client to bring 'em back. Best investment I ever did make when I got them for three quid last year. Must have made almost fifty quid on the deal altogether...put 'em up for auction again, Joe....tomorrow night, isn't it?"

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"Lot 36...one typewriter and one Gestetner, both overhauled by my own mechanic last night...they work perfectly, I guarantee it...now be sports, gentlemen, what am I bid? Who'll start at ten pounds?"

"Three pounds ten," said a pimply-faced youth at the front of the crowd...his eyes were sort of shining...

"Four pounds ten," said a man in a bowler hat.

"Er, four pounds eleven shillings," said the youth.

"Five pounds ten," said the man in the bowler hat.

"Five pounds ten shillings and sixpence," said the youth.

"Six pounds ten," said the man, smirking.

The youth looked down, he turned to go...then waited at the back of the crowd. The auctioneer tried to raise the bid, but typers and dupers didn't seem to rate highly amongst the crowd, so he raised his gavel and said :-

"Going....going..." and the sweat seemed to break out on his forehead. The gavel wavered in mid air, and it seemed as though its user was trying to stop it banging down on the table in front of him...it was

eerie...as though the gavel was a live thing, and was dictating to the man holding it...rather like a schizophrenic ventriloquist who thinks that the dummy controls him...

"...gone to the young man who offered five pounds ten shillings and sixpence," panted the auctioneer. His face was twisted, contorted.

The man in the bowler hat raised a fist indignantly, and a big broad-shouldered attendant ushered him out of the premises.

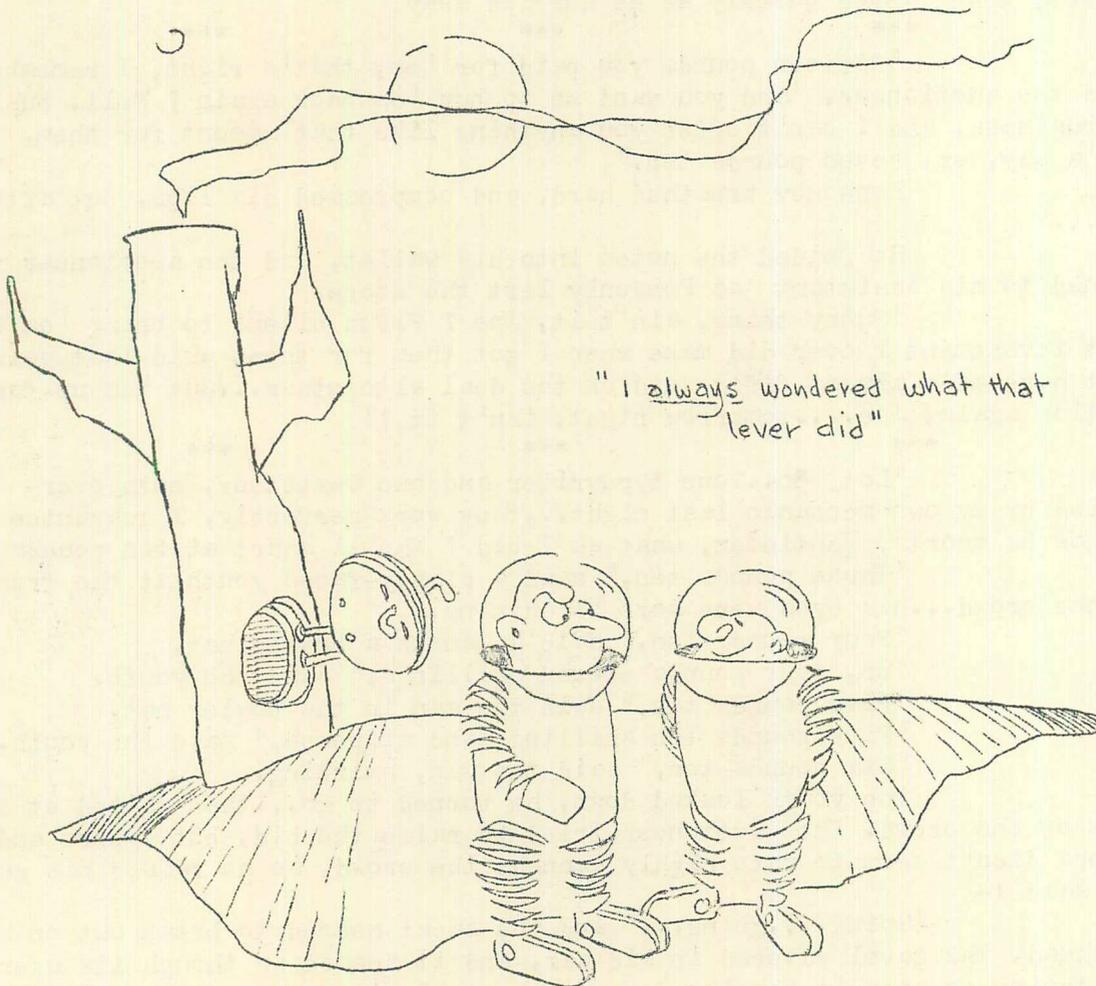
The youth paid over the money, and fondled the worn handles of the typer and the duper cases.

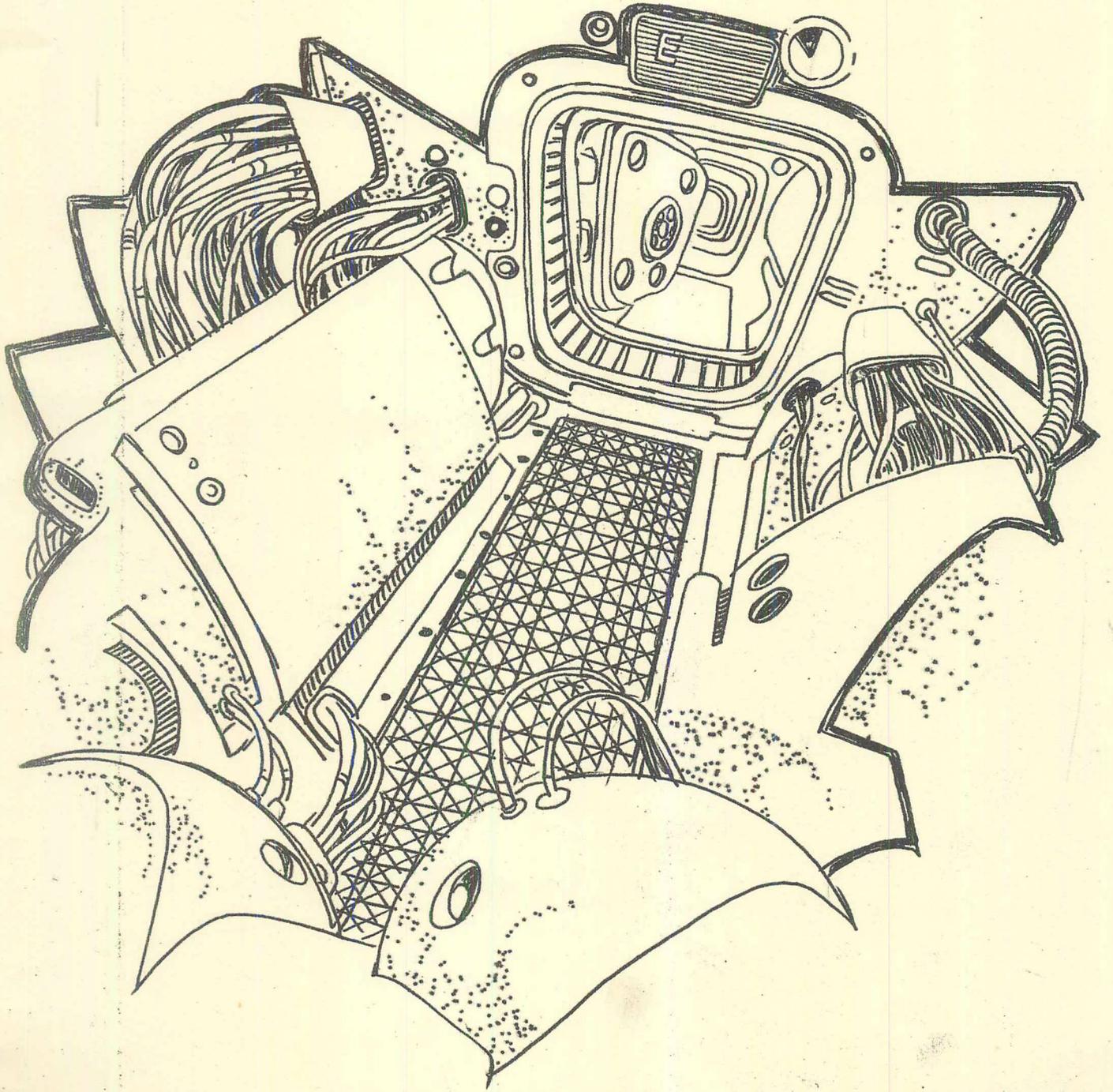
"It's a miracle," he said softly, "now I can get out my first issue..."

He staggered out, the typer in his left hand, the duper in the other. The auctioneer's fingers trembled as he pulled a cigarette out of the packet. He looked at the two machines as they were dragged out of the door...he looked at them as smoke wafted upwards past his half-closed eyes.

He had an idea that he wouldn't be seeing those machines again....

John Berry  
1960







The Apricot Liqueur isn't important...not at all. I mention it only because it serves to give me a fairly accurate time for his arrival. I have had the habit for several years, a fifth of a brandy glass of Apricot Liqueur after dinner....dinner at 7.30pm...finish at 8pm...pour the glass at 8.5pm, after lighting the cigar...and I'd just savoured the first sip when he was announced.

I looked out of the window, his taxi turned and went back down the street...in the direction of the airport. Maybe this will help to suggest which 'plane he arrived on. I'm certainly not going to all the trouble to find out.

I liked the look of him immediately. He introduced himself as Alan B.Schuster...very rich parents, lived just north of Albany...he was 31 years old, and had read back home that I'd discovered several wonderfully clear ARCHAEOPTERYX fossils. He had had several books published in America, one, a masterly treatise, summarised everything yet discovered (and with several bright new theories of his own) about fossil insects of the PALAEOZOIC beds. I had the book myself, which he modestly albeit proudly autographed.

Money, he told me, was no object. He was Professor of Palaeontology at Washington University, St.Louis...he wanted, he 'just wanted' to obtain several specimens as good as he imagined mine were, for the university collection. He'd casts of the German specimens of ARCHAEOPTERYX, but he wanted originals, which were damned rare. In his brash American way, without preamble, he offered me \$10,000 for my specimens, sight unseen. I informed him with as much dignity as I could muster that I was under contract to the British Museum, and that I'd already sent my specimens by air directly to the museum. I showed him photographs I'd taken with the Nikkon, and I've rarely seen such enthusiasm. Nothing could deter him, he 'just had' to be taken to the site I'd discovered, near Sarikamis.

I told him that I had to return to London in two days. He

seemed surprised at this. He asked if the Jurassic limestone was fossiliferous insofar as ARCHAEPTERYX was concerned. He queried the possibility of being able to find the site without my being there. Of course, I told him this was impossible. It had taken me three months, I'd employed ten men, and I'd only obtained five specimens, only one of which was, to use a word of my own 'flawless'. I pointed to the whole-plate enlargement of the long tail...the detail on the fine-grained limestone was incredibly fine.

"You must take me, professor," he panted impatiently. "Send a telegram to the British Museum. I'll give you \$5,000 to spend just two weeks with me...I'll employ more men than you used, and for every specimen we find I'll pay you another \$1,000."

I had no reason to refuse. I knew that our chances of getting a further specimen were slight, but my contract with the British Museum had expired...I knew they wouldn't like me to be the means of giving another university an item as priceless as theirs, but I've explained that the chance was slight, and I had the \$5,000 guarantee no matter whether we found anything or not. I think you'll agree I took the right course. I hope so, anyway...

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I looked north eastwards, towards the frontier of the U.S.S.R.

A workman, without a word of English at his command, communicated to me that he'd found a promising site. He'd been with me previously...knew all the signs and had been instrumental in guiding me to the sill where I'd found the most perfect specimen yet discovered.

The sun was hot...the workman gesticulated...the broken teeth, badly stained a yellowish-green, yammered on his cracked lips...it was way up...three thousand feet of hard climbing, with a cravasse to navigate...

Schuster was thrilled. He asked me to refrain from taking any workmen because he wanted the discovery, if there was one, to be 'his' moment.

The climb, in the boiling sun, was hell. I'm 43, as you know...and you made sure I was fit before I came to Turkey, but I've got to hand it to Schuster, he scrambled ahead of me like an excited schoolboy about to take his first puff of a cigarette.

"This is the spot, Alan," I said quietly, much later. I took a couple of shots of the view with the Nikkon. The limestone sloped gently...say about 20 degrees downwards. It was only about seven feet wide. The drop, at the end of the ledge, was about one thousand feet. At the top of the slope was a sort of three feet high 'wall' of cracked limestone. We both peered over the edge.

The air was keen now, and we had both been sweating heavily. I wriggled slightly forward, and asked Schuster to pass his hammer. I prised the narrow end into a crack, and lifted. The layer above came away...about a nine inch square of it. I lifted the limestone, saw the faint outline of a beak, with teeth...

"No good, but definitely ARCHAEOPTERYX," I said, and he seemed terribly pleased about it all. I dusted the limestone carefully, the dusting made the impression, together with the shafting sunlight, almost leap out of the incredibly fine grain.

"I'll try," he breathed "Look, even if we can get a

moderate specimen, something as good as from the German Jurassic, I'll make it a \$5000 bonus...pass me the hammer...suppose you go along the slope and assist, I'll clip your rope to my harness."

I laughed.

"Good idea, Alan. I know you'll not let me drop, especially when I'm holding a hundred per cent specimen for you. The British Museum insurance policy terminated when my contract expired, you know."

We laughed together. Rarely have I known such a spirit of comradeship. I pointed out to Schuster how an illiterate tribesman was able to differentiate between different rock strata...nevertheless, an illiterate tribesman who thought I was mad to risk my neck ( and his) scrambling up mountains looking for bits of rock with faint impressions of birds on them. I sucked a fruit drop, gave one to Alan.

"Wait until we definitely trace a specimen before you go over the edge," said Schuster. I nodded. He lay down again, his head and neck jutting over the ledge. He reached over, and prodded the end of the hammer into a minute crevice. A small chunk of limestone rolled in a half circle down the slope, and over the edge. A thousand feet drop, at least. I bit hard on the fruit drop.

I knelt down, grabbed Schuster's feet, and heaved, with all my strength...

He didn't even have time to scream...I just recall the gritty scraping noise as the metal of his equipment scored its way down the seven foot ledge...his legs were wide apart as he went over, out of sight. A kind of mashy thud carried up to me in the silence seemingly seconds later.

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Whoever he was, he wasn't Alan P.Schuster. I'd met him in Capetown two years previously, the real Schuster. Nice chap. Asked me to collaborate with him on a book about the so-called 'missing link' between reptile and bird, which ARCHAEOPTERYX personifies. Most certainly, the signature the bogus Schuster wrote in the book was an excellent forgery. He also knew his specialised palaeontology. I was a little hurt at his almost childish ( didn't I use the word 'school-boyish?') excitement at the chase, even if I hadn't ever met the real Schuster. It was patently obvious from his books that Schuster was quite the opposite. He was methodical, but calm, studied but steady. The false Schuster definitely exaggerated his role in that respect. A sound, thorough training, probably in that new Czechoslovakian school...academic, as always, but again, as we've noticed before, personalities overstressed, as if to ram home a fact already digested, like an apprentice carpenter still hitting a nail on the head when it was as far into the wood as it could go. Know what I mean?

It worries me, though, as to how they got on to me? Admittedly I've got the Code Number 334/70, but only you and I know that, and the girl who works on my file. There's nothing false about me except that I am, let's confess it, a damn good secret agent. I am a foremost palaeontologist. I have obtained the world's most perfect ARCHAEOPTERYX fossil. I have written ten books on the subject, several of them reference books in use in every university this side of the Iron Curtain, and possibly, nay, probably beyond.

But am I doing too much clandestine work? Have they discovered that I was at Leibnitz when Colonel Nyragin defected...do they know it wasn't just coincidence that I was in Afghanistan questing for ICHTHOSAURUS two days after the U-2 crashed ( my most successful coup, getting those films, I think? )...can it be that the burglary in my flat at Oxford wasn't

merely one of an outbreak ? Perhaps the outbreak was designed so that the burglary at my place wouldn't look suspicious. Recall I sent a memo to that effect ?

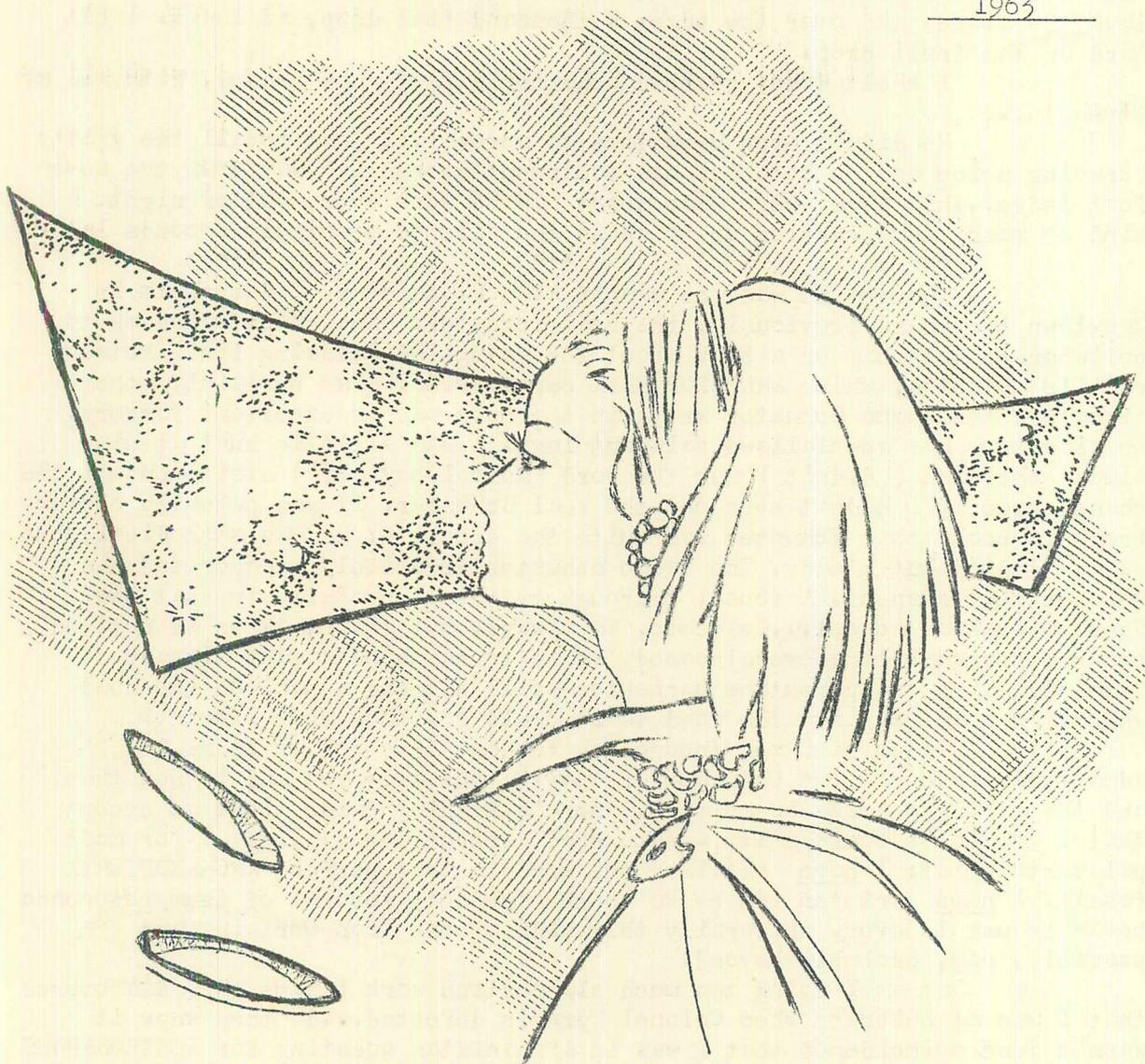
By the way, don't forget to check on which 'plane he arrived in....you might get a clue there, though I doubt it. Photographs of him attached...before he had the accident, of course. Someone may know him, try some of the recent defectors. That's your job, though, as you've often told me. Also attached are photographs of his fingerprints on the brandy glass, there is nothing on his clothing or effects which will help, save the number of his camera, which is appended in the, er, Appendix.

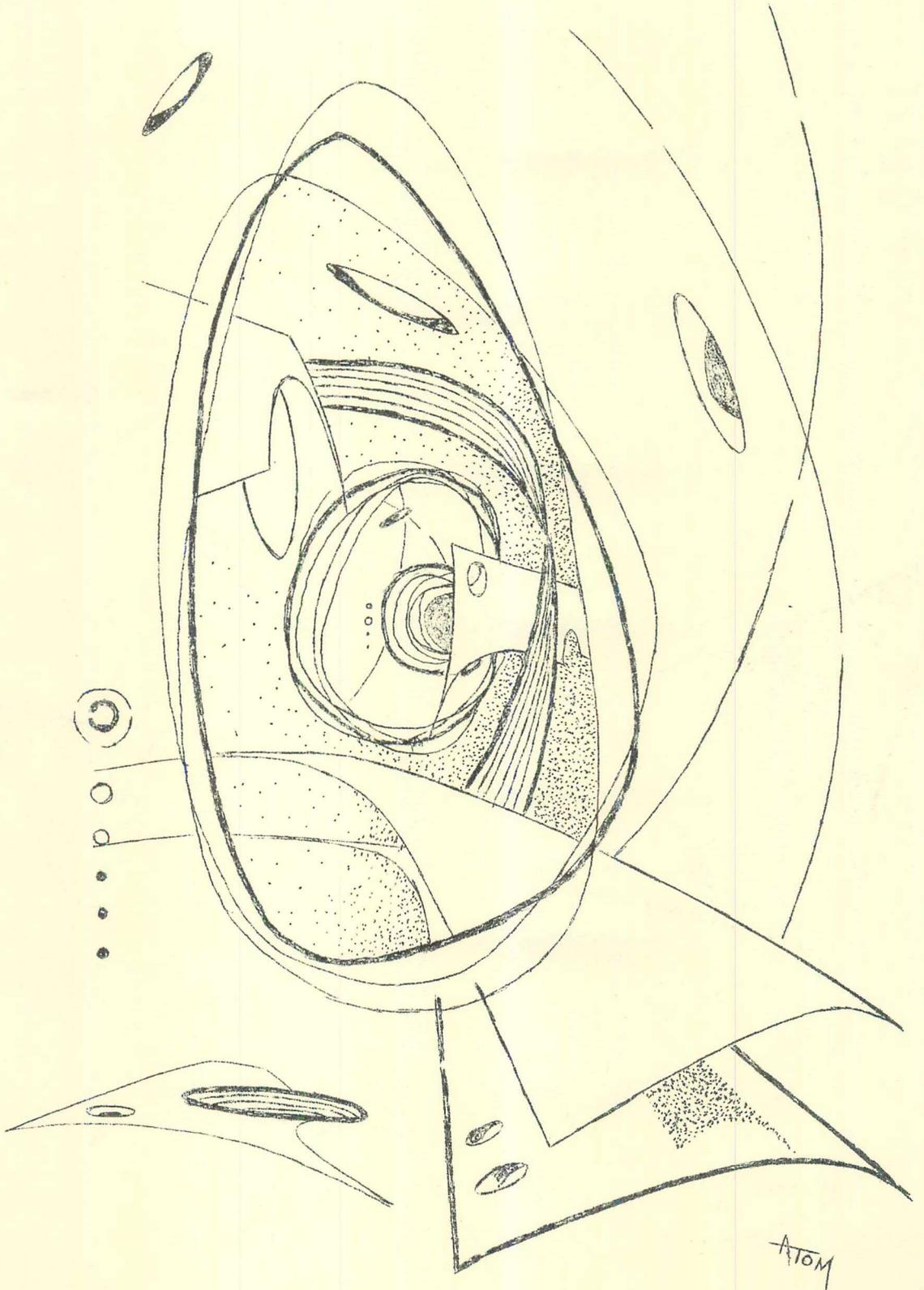
In conclusion, I might add that I cabled confirmation by code, but to keep this report comprehensive, I hereby state that the Radarac Mk.IIIa I.C.B.M. Detector is in place as specified, just three miles past Sarikamis, almost on the U.S.S.R.frontier.

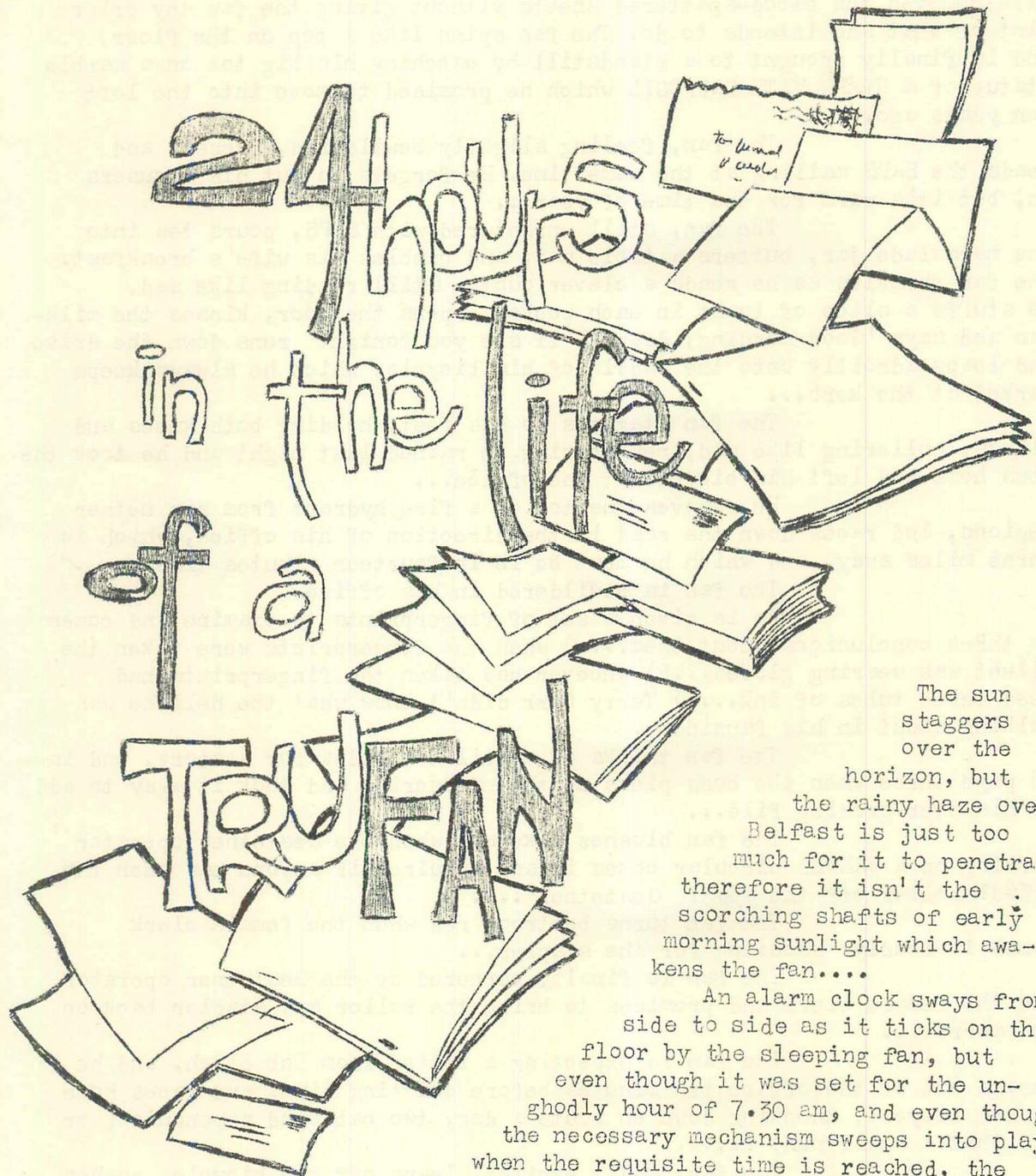
Thank you, and out.

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John Berry.  
1963







The sun staggers over the horizon, but the rainy haze over Belfast is just too much for it to penetrate, therefore it isn't the scorching shafts of early morning sunlight which awakens the fan....

An alarm clock sways from side to side as it ticks on the floor by the sleeping fan, but even though it was set for the ungodly hour of 7.30 am, and even though the necessary mechanism sweeps into play when the requisite time is reached, the fan still sleeps on. Everything works except the alarm bell; the fan abstracted it for his automatic slip-sheeter years ago.

But the fan is eventually woken.

The whispering words of his dearly-loved wife do not move him; merely the latest S&P's mailing ( all 760 pages of it ) propelled across the bedroom with uncanny accuracy by his ten year old son which lands heavily on the fan's face. The heavy cord tying the bundle together catches on the end of the fan's nose as the parcel sails past to rebound off the wall onto the back of the fan's head.

The fan applies a tourniquet to his nose, and the wife removes the blood-spattered sheets without giving the fan any prior hint of what she intends to do. The fan spins like a top on the floor, and is finally brought to a standstill by catching his big toe on a marble statue of a NYMPH WITH DAFFODIL which he promised to move into the loft ten years ago.

The fan, feeling slightly bewildered, dresses and reads the SAPS mailing at the same time. He forgets to put his trousers on, but it's warm for the time of year...

The fan, still enraptured with SAPS, pours tea into the marmalade jar, butters a table mat, and nibbles his wife's breakfast. The fan chuckles as he reads a clever quote. Still reading like mad, he stuffs a slice of toast in each pocket, opens the door, kisses the milkman and says 'Good morning, dear, I'll see you tonight' runs down the drive and leaps adroitly onto the saddle of his bicycle, which he always keeps parked at the kerb...

The fan staggers to his feet, holding both knees and elbows, hollering like mad, remembering it rained last night and he took the 'bus home and left his bicycle at the office...

He removes the top of a fire hydrant from his nether regions, and races down the road in the direction of his office, which is three miles away, and which he must be in in fourteen minutes time...

The fan is bewildered in his office.

He is given a set of fingerprints to examine and comes to three conclusions about them...a) when the fingerprints were taken the client was wearing gloves...b) whoever had taken the fingerprints had used three tubes of ink...c) Terry Carr didn't know what the hell he was talking about in his fanzine...

The fan thinks of a brilliant idea for a story, and is on page three when the boss picks up the manuscript and took it away to add to his ever-growing file...

The fan blushes like mad when the Gestetner operator working on a WANTED circular comes in and enquires if anyone has seen the '&#3?' roller off the '&#3?' Gestetner'....

The fan turns beetroot red when the female clerk comes in loudly shouting for the stapler...

The fan is finally cornered by the Gestetner operator and the female clerk and promises to bring the roller and stapler back on the morrow...

The fan is expecting a letter from Bob Bloch, and he sneaks out of the office ten minutes before quitting time, and races home on his bicycle, knocking down en route a dog, two cats and a penguin ( or was that a small nun) ?.....

The fan, madly excited, leaps off the bicycle, rushes up the drive, pushes the door open and sees a couple making love, recognises the postman's trousers over chair...realizes he is either in the wrong house or is going to shoot the postman...rushes to house next door and breathes a sigh of relief...

The fan sees a pile of correspondence, masses of it, and screeches to a halt. He kisses wife ( or was it her sister ?) and sits down and opens mail in a feverish excitement. Writes out fifteen cheques and attaches them to 'pay or else' accounts, then looks at what is left, the latest PILIKIA. Perhaps Bloch will write tomorrow...

The fan decides to have a change and goes out to play

with his children in the garden. Kicks football through greenhouse next door, knocking down two beehives en route, and is last seen disappearing over the horizon with two neighbours and three million bees in hot pursuit....

The fan spends five priceless hours ( when he could be fanning ) watching TV. He likes Cheyenne, Lawman, Laramie and Bronco Layne, hates the short films about soap powder, thinks they are shown too frequently, and that's why they've grown monotonous...

Fan puts children to bed, after trying to explain to inquisitive son about birds and bees. Son knows all about males and females and the facts of life, but is very curious about birds and bees. Fan, in bewilderment, expresses similar ignornace, and arranges provis-  
ional safari for the weekend...

The fan thinks of a wonderful plot, and rushes down and types three pages before discovering that the typewriter ribbon is missing...blows remains of platten off table and decides to borrow office typer next day...

The fan tells wife it's time to go to bed.

Fan's wife tries to get him to go first, but he wins in the end, chases wife upstairs and catches other big toe in carpet, turns double somerseult and lands upsidedown with head in linen box...

The fan is carried to bed by wife, and the fan thinks of another wonderful plot, but by the time he crawls out of bed, puts light on and finds paper and pencil, he has forgotten it...

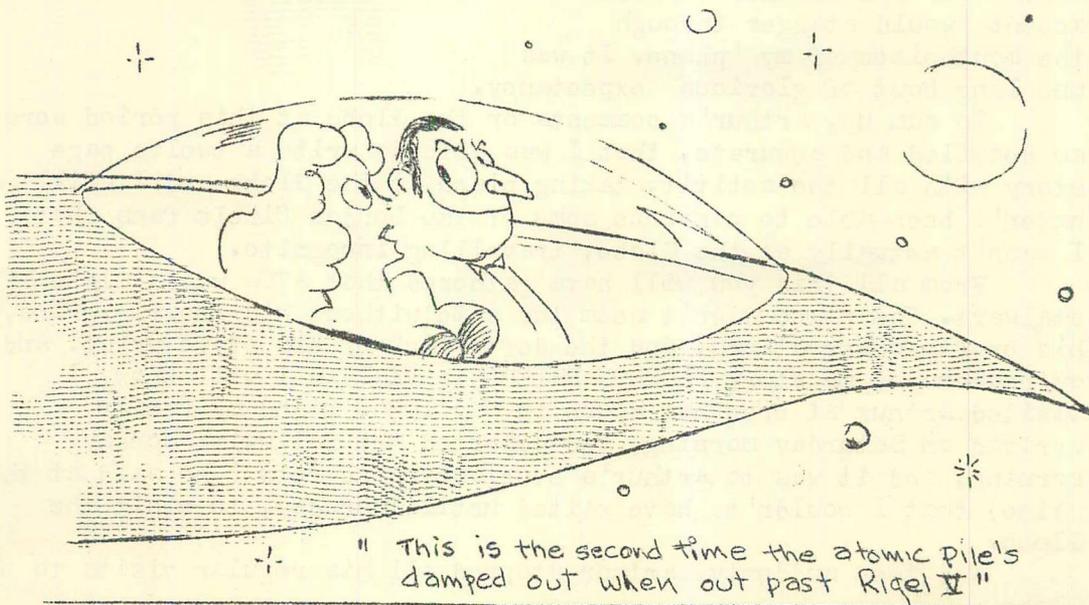
The fan gets into bed, and wonders if he will get a letter from Bob Bloch on the morrow....

The fans yawns, pokes out a provocative toe, but wife is asleep....

The fan turns over....smiles to himself, closes eyes..

The sun staggers over the horizon, but the rainy haze....

John Berry  
1961.



I've no need to refer to my correspondence files. Frankly, I wouldn't know where to look, anyway. But how well I remember the letters I used to get from Arthur Thomson way back in '55 and early '56. They all contained long paragraphs describing the activities of the Globe. Being a most skillful cartoonist, Arthur embellished his letters with small thumb-nail portraits of the famous fans he met there.. Chuck Harris, Ted Carnell, John Wyndham, Ken and Pam Bulmer, Brian Burgess, etc. Although I had never met any of these fens at the time, reading his letters and noting his illos of them, made them become living personalities to me. In fact, when I finally did meet some of them, it was like meeting old friends.

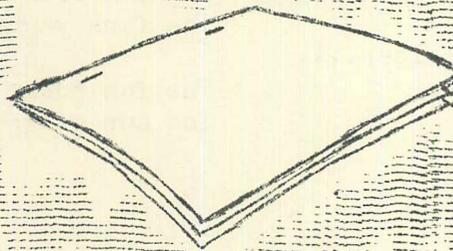
Another nice thing happened at this time. Arthur would telephone me on Thursday nights from the Globe. From London to Belfast, some considerable distance. He would introduce fans to me over the 'phone. Many a strange alcoholic-ridden accent would stagger through the mouthpiece of my 'phone. It was one long bout of glorious expectancy.

To sum up, Arthur's comments on the Globe at this period were so detailed and accurate, that I was able to write a twelve page story with all the activity taking place at the Globe and I still haven't been able to convince some of the London Circle fans that I wasn't actually at the Globe, travelling incognito.

From all this you will have gathered that ATOM was a Globe stalwart. The place didn't seem the same without his knowing grins, his crafty observations, and the deft flick of his stylo wrist. And as readers of my story 'LONDON PRIED' in VERITAS 1 will know, I visited Arthur at Brockham House in May 1956. I and my family arrived on Saturday morning, and departed the following Monday morning, and it was to Arthur's everlasting regrets ( he said at the time) that I couldn't have waited until Thursday, to visit the Globe.

And then suddenly, Arthur stopped all his regular visits to the Globe.

# VALLEY OF THE SHADOW



I didn't hear it from Arthur himself. His letters, at least, the parts of them usually filled with Globe Gossip, seemed to be cut off with a knife. But Ethel Lindsay wrote me a most harrowing letter. She seemed completely heart-broken. She said she simply couldn't understand what had happened to Arthur. It wasn't so much the fact that he had stopped going to the Globe, Ethel pointed out. That happened to other people, too. But she had personally travelled across London to Brockham House, and knocked at number 17. She said that...wait, let me quote from her letter :-

'And I knocked the door, and after a pause it opened about half an inch. A bleary eye sneaked a surreptitious glance through the crack. 'Arthur, it's me, Ethel,' I said, and the door moved forward a quarter of an inch, so that I could see nothing of him at all. 'I'm not in,' he said, and the door closed with a click. This was most un\*Thomson-like behaviour. At the Globe he had always been friendly and popular. His eyes used to literally waft good-humour and spritely wit. A complete metamorphosis seems to have overtaken him in a few short days.'

This letter from Ethel is one of my most treasured possessions, as, in some poignant way, it reveals a rarely seen fannish heart feeling for the misfortunes of a sorely afflicted faan. But then, of course, there was the Ken Bulmer letter:-

'Have you any idea what is wrong with Arthur these days? It seems so strange not to see him propping up the bar at the Globe, a mug of foaming bhoer in one hand, his stylo in the other. I know he was worried about his Income Tax Assessment Form, but I told him to write down that he was a Science Fiction writer, a professional, that is, and they wouldn't expect him to be able to pay income tax. He insisted that he was a trufan, and wouldn't stoop to such a deception. But, on second thoughts, it couldn't be that. What is wrong with Arthur? He hasn't gafiated. He is still acti-fanning, as per all the current fanzines with his illo's in them. He refused to answer the door when I went to Brockham House last night. John, as you know him so very well, can you offer any explanation?'

But I couldn't. And frankly, to give a true picture, a factual sequence of events, I must say I was a trifle hurt. It was like this. After my visit to Arthur in London in 1956, I pubbed a special issue of VERITAS termed the ARTHUR THOMSON APPRECIATION ISSUE. It was commented on most favourably in current fanzines. But Arthur didn't seem over enthusiastic. True, he said my LONDON PRIED was pretty good, and the foto sheet was brilliant, and it was terribly kind of Walt Willis to write an appreciation of him. But I felt that Arthur was holding something back. Was, somehow, reticent.

I must point out, however, that his letters to me were still detailed and full of fannish interest. But there was no more talk of the Globe or of his meeting with prominent London fen. It seemed to a lot of London fen, as Ethel wrote and told me at the time, that he was afraid to be seen.

Anyway, during the last few months of 1956, the strange behaviour of Arthur Thomson seemed to die down....

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Came 1957.

Arthur was still corresponding with me as vigorously as ever, and agreed to come over to stay at my house in June of that year. His wife, Olive, was coming with him.

I felt that when I was able to actually speak to Arthur in private, I might be able to draw from him the reasons for his hermit-like existence in London.

And the Great Day dawned. The Day Arthur Thomson came to visit MON DEBRIS. Now I must point out at this stage that my mundane occupation as a member of the local constabulary meant that every few days, although not on duty, I had to stay in my own house, in case my dactyloscopic duties were urgently needed. The Saturday morning that Arthur and Olive were due to arrive was one of these days, so I asked my wife Diane to go to Belfast to meet the boat from England. I vividly recall the resulting conversation.

"But I haven't seen Arthur for a long time," said Diane, "and I shall never recognise him."

I went upstairs and found a photograph of Arthur. It was one of him taken in London during our visit in '56. It showed him holding my young daughter in his arms, in Trafalgar Square.

"Ah yes," smiled Diane. "I remember now...I'd recognise him anywhere."

She rushed out of the house to be in time to meet the boat. This was quite early in the morning, about seven fifteen am.

At eight fifteen the door was rapped. I opened it, and saw a man and a woman confronting me. The woman I recognised.

"Ah, Olive, how are you?" I enthused. Then, "Why couldn't Arthur come?"

"This is me," said the man, who, up to that moment I had presumed to be an Insurance Inspector or a middle-aged American film star travelling incognito.

"Er...Arthur Thomson?" I asked.

The man whipped off his dark glasses, and, yeees...yes...some-how, in some way, I could just discern the dashing, exuberant, youthful faaan of a year previously.

It was obvious that he was recovering from a severe nervous breakdown. Olive picked up the suitcases, and I gripped Arthur's arm and helped him to a chair. I was just handing him a glass of water, when Diane arrived, looking rather pensive...nay, apprehensive.

"I saw a girl resembling Olive, whom I actually thought to be Olive," began Diane, "but when I saw her father with her, I knew it could not be Olive. I wonder why they didn't..." and then she saw Arthur. "Quick, there's some blankets in the airing cupboard, and I'll put some water on the boil for the hot water bottle. The doctor's 'phone number is on that piece of paper..."

Arthur stood up. He rolled up his sleeves and flexed the famed Thomson biceps. He closed a ham-like fist and brushed my moustache with it. He took off the dark glasses once more, and put them in his breast pocket.

"I've never been in better health," he said.

"But why the disguise?" asked Diane. I've thought about that question quite a lot since, and I feel that Diane should have been more tactful. The question seemed to irritate Arthur. In some way, I felt he didn't appreciate her inquiry.

He stood upright. His face was set. His jaw was like the front view of an aircraft carrier. His shoulders squared backwards, and he was as

broad as a garage door. He had a superior tilt to his head, like Sir Laurence Olivier offering his kingdom for a horse, His breast rose and fell as if he had just recieved a postcard from Dean Grennell. He was as solid as Gibraltar. As enduring as the pyramids. As inspiring at the Statue of Liberty. And then he screamed.

"It's all your fault," he screamed. "You did it to me." He pointed at me.

Diane gave him a shot of brandy. Arthur sobbed, and she gave him some more brandy. Then the full impact of the situation struck me, and I sobbed, too, but there was no brandy left.

Diane served breakfast, and Arthur seemed to recover his composure. He became his old self once more. In the space of twenty short minutes the grim wrinkles of age erased themselves from his brow...the dull shadows under his eyes vanished as if they were made of grease-paint. He became youthful again, and fresh, and elated, as if a horrible dream had gone with the first light of dawn. This was the ~~ATOM~~ of old...

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Two or three days later, when the two of us were sitting quietly in my den, I broached the subject once more. For a fleeting second he became grim, but with evident masterly self-control he took his hands away from my lapels, and with a firm voice said :-

"Pass me the VERITAS file."

I did so, and as he opened VERITAS #1, his face became white. A vein on his forehead asserted itself.

He opened it to the first page...a full page illo I had executed myself, showing my depiction of Arthur Thomson on a shaded background, around which were enumerated the various fanzines which had contained Arthur's works.

"Understand, John," he said slowly, his teeth unnaturally clenched, " that this issue of VERITAS was a truly wonderful thing...the story was one of the best things you've ever done. But that illo of me. THAT ILLO OF ME. AAARRRRGGGGHHH."

I opened the windows, and helped him back to his chair.

"I shall never be able to tell you the torture I suffered when I saw your illo of me...especially when you mentioned elsewhere in the issue that prominent fen had recognised it as being the perfect image of me. At first, I thought I was biased. I took the illo to a chap at work, and asked him what he thought of the character so revealed. Ghod. He used words like ' an erotic glint in the eyes' ...' the gilded lips of an importuner' ... ' the suave glance of the confidence trickster' ...' the aquiline features of a ballet dancer' ...and so on. I went home again, and read the paragraph where you printed "two identified it as Arthur without a flicker of indecision", you'll never know the torment I suffered. By the way, how many copies did you send out ?"

I peered out from behind the armchair and whispered.."Eighty!"

"How many have you got left ?"

"About half a dozen."

"I'll buy 'em all," he said, and unfolded a pound note.

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As I was the cause of Arthur's hermitation( and if there isn't such a word as that, there should be) I think I should take some of the credit for his re-appearance as a prominent member of London Fandom. He blasts his way all over London on his motor cycle, his hair blowing wildly in the slip-stream...he visits the Bulmers, the Clarkes, Ethel Lindsay,

etc, and once again he regales me with brilliant and witty letters about London faaans and their little problems.

There may be a moral to this story. I don't know, really. But come here...pssst...pssst, a mite closer. I do actually have one or two copies of VERITAS #1 left...but...ssshhhhh... not a word to Arthur.

John Berry.

1957.

For my readers who presume this to be one of my more exaggerated flights of fancy ( although I still maintain that most of my stories are based on fact) I'd like to reprint the letter Arthur sent me way back in February 1958, when I sent him the mss. to read before sending it on to the faned in America. I felt that I must let him see what I'd written, in case the shock might be too great a second time. This is his letter, verbatim:-

17, Brockham House,  
Brockham Drive,  
LONDON S.W.2.

20th February 1958.

Dear John,

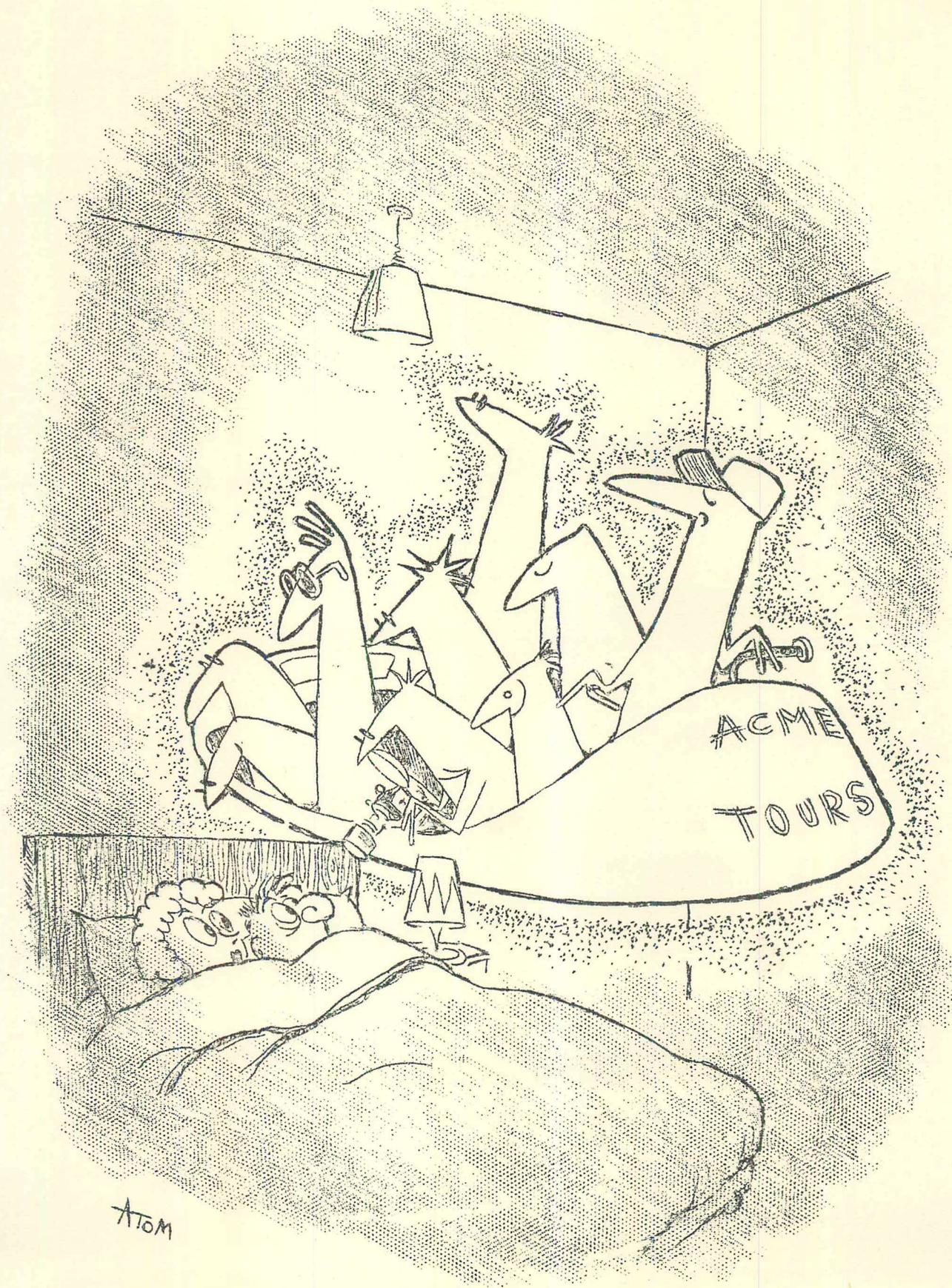
Yes, I like the story very much. Of the story itself I've only one suggestion. That's about the end part...whilst a lot of people who read the story will have read VERITAS #1, a lot won't, and it would help bring the impact of the ghastly illo of me and my reaction to it... if you could make clearer my horror at seeing it. And that it was head and shoulders.

I thought that somehow a 'WANTED POSTER' of some dangerous criminal - from your office - had somehow gotten slipped in by mistake - then I saw that it was supposed to be me.

I mean, somehow you've got to put it in that the illo, though well executed---was horrible. ((Myghod, I'm still shuddering.)) All those lines on the face- the unshaven sinister look. By George---maybe I do look like that, but I refuse to believe that I look like it all the time. It is something like the picture of Dorian Grey---

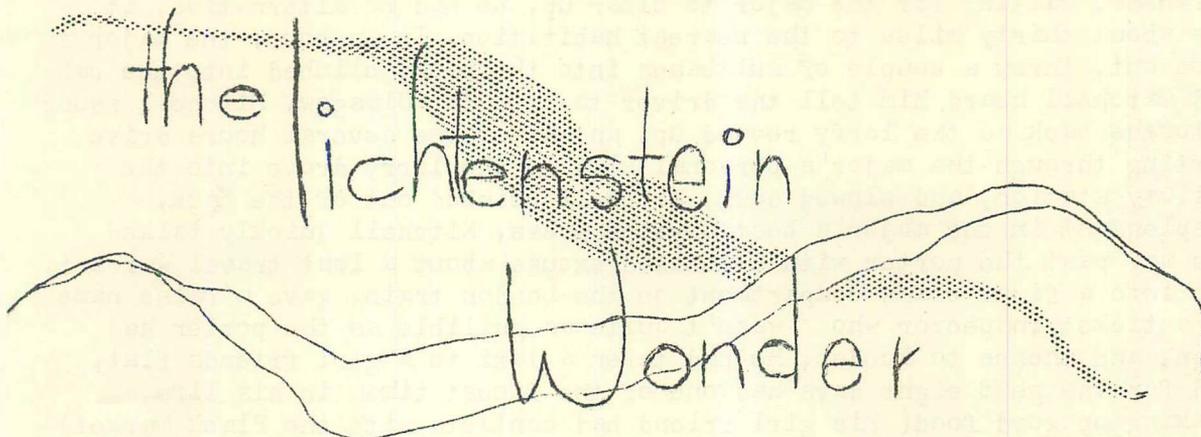
bestest,

Arthur.



ATOM

Two stories of my fictional spy hero Larry Mitchell have been published so far...NIGHT SHIFT in POT POURRI and BREAKOUT in CRY OF THE NAMELESS. The stories were contemporary, but now I've dug into the past to reveal Mitchell's first operation, in April 1944.....



Mitchell placed his expensive suitcase on the purple carpet of the METROPOLE. There was a sort of subdued clang as the steel head of his geologists hammer in the suitcase came into contact with a section of the carpet where the pile had worn down to the backing. 'To hell with the bloody hammer,' he thought. He was about to kick the suitcase, just to give vent to his feelings, but halted himself in case there was a hidden peephole, or a surreptitious microphone. Emminent palaentologists didn't kick their suitcase. But of course, there was the joke, he just wasn't an emminent palaentologist. Three weeks previously he didn't even know what the word meant...in fact, to tell the truth, he still wasn't sure.....

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The Commandant of the 14th Special Service Training Unit, in Sussex, stated in his final report, re. Mitchell :-

' This officer is an enigma, notwithstanding a youthful ebullition, there is, beneath his facade of affected nonchalance, a grim determination unusual because of its ferocity. I would suggest that Mitchell be used for operations entirely by himself. Not because he is anti-social. My own personal experience of his type in the field leads me to this conclusion.'

Mitchell hadn't seen the report, and possibly didn't deserve such a severe pscho-analysis, compiled as it was by an aging senior officer who lived in the past, and wanted his superiors at the War Office to be kept permanently aware that he'd served behind the enemy lines. Principally, if he had read it, Mitchell would have been rather surprised and disappointed that there'd been no mention of his initiative. Take the Ten Day Initiative Test...twelve of them were flown to Leuchars, just south of Dundee. They were driven in closed 15cwt lorries to somewhere in the North West Highlands of Scotland. In a hut all their money was taken from them, they were given a couple of corned beef sandwiches and a full water bottle and told to report back to their base at Sussex, in the south of England, as soon as they could, but within ten days. The lorries were

then driven even further northwards, dropping an agent every ten miles or so. Mitchell was the last to go. The major laughed as he strode back to the 15cwt lorry and told the driver to get back to the hut as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, Mitchell had nipped into the rear of the lorry, and had a cold and uncomfortable drive back to the hut. He hung about in the darkness, waiting for the major to clear up. He had no alternative, it was about thirty miles to the nearest habitation. In an hour, the major came out, threw a couple of suitcases into the back, climbed into the cab and Mitchell heard him tell the driver to make for Glasgow. Mitchell swung into the back as the lorry revved up, and spent the several hours drive sorting through the major's personal kit. As the lorry drove into the railway station, and slowed down, Mitchell climbed out of the back, resplendent in the major's best service dress. Mitchell quickly talked his way past the porter with a mumbled excuse about a lost travel warrant, got into a first class compartment on the London train, gave a false name to a ticket inspector who 'wasn't quite as gullible as the porter had been, and thence to London. He had taken a taxi to a girl friend's flat, and for the next eight days had one of the finest times in his life, soaking up good food (his girl friend had contacts with the Black Market) cigarettes, whiskey, and, let's face it, women. His return to Sussex had been a triumph... when you compared it with the others. One man, a Pole, swore he'd walked the whole way. Several others were exceeding emaciated. Another was eventually invalidated out because of his experiences when lost in the Highlands. Mitchell, for effect, had waited until the last moment. He was attired in evening lounge suit. (He'd sent the major's uniform to the War Office with a terse unsigned note saying he'd found it in a brothel in Cardiff.) He handed out bottles of whiskey, and mopped his forehead affectedly with a red-spotted handkerchief. The only slight drawback from the superb physical specimen he represented were the badly bloodshot eyes.

Mitchell had got the highest marks at the school for marksmanship with the .38 and .45 Webley revolvers, the sten, .303 rifle, several German, French and Russian fire arms, all the various American infantry weapons. He'd also crocked an instructor. 'I'm your unarmed combat instructor. Now then, er, Mr. Mitchell, come here, sir, and try and kick me as hard as you can in the groin.' It had been an object lesson to Mitchell (and the rest of his squad), revealing the utter potency of the kick, especially when delivered with size 12 heavily studded army boots. The Court of Inquiry had exonerated Mitchell, mostly on the sporting evidence of the instructor, who, after being carried in, stated it was his fault, he'd told Mr. Mitchell to do it, intending to apply a counter which would make the said Mr. Mitchell look something of an idiot. He added a rider to the effect that in future all instructors of unarmed combat should be informed as to whether any of their pupils had ever had previous training. It wasn't until Mr. Mitchell had visited him in hospital that Mitchell had told him he'd been unarmed combat instructor to his paratroop battalion.

The only low marks Mitchell had got (all pass marks, but below average) had been for all aspects of radio work, especially coding and decoding.

Then, in February 1944, Mitchell, promoted to captain, had presented himself to Dept 38A at the War Office. He spoke German and French fluently, and it came as no surprise to him when he found he was posted to Chile... the only Spanish he knew being 'Olay'. The only person on the course who could speak Spanish, and had travelled in South America, was

parachuted into Poland. That's the way it went.....

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Preparatory to flying out to America ( via a U.S.A.F. B.17, part of a reciprocal deal between the British and American secret services ) and thence to Chile, Mitchell had spent a week at the British Museum; the Department of Palaeontology, Cromwell Road, London S.W.7.

Fossils. Nothing could have been more boring for him. They were kind and patient, and tried to impart some of their enthusiasm to him. He had, in effect, to learn sufficient about fossils to impress anyone other than an expert that he knew what he was talking about. Slowly and laboriously he worked up the geologic time scale, from Cambrian to Cenozoic...geologic distribution of species...latin names, terrors such as *ventriculites infundibuliformis* and *neomicrorbis crenatostratus*...he had to try and memorize the rock strata and fossiliferous areas of Chile and the rest of South America...he had to know the names and personalities of the world's leading palaeontologists. He refused point blank a suggestion that they introduce a Spanish linguist to teach him the important words and phrases in Spanish...after all, he'd been told he'd only be in Chile for three days.

When he'd finished each night, it took almost a quarter of a bottle of whiskey to bring himself back to normality. He was almost tempted to mention to the M.O. about how his eyes seemed to want to cross all the time...and there was that nasty twitch at the corner of his mouth....

At the conclusion of the last day, he knew a hell of a lot of words, could describe a few basic types of fossils, and combining latin phraseology with a glib manner could discourse at length, sounding to the layman very learned, but liable to be torn asunder by Jones Minor of the Lower Vth.

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Some critics who don't know anything about the British Secret Service, the real Secret Service, as opposed to the enthusiastic amateurs blowing up bridges and themselves in France, always seek to make out that it's administration is inefficient. Admittedly, trying to make a man an expert palaeontologist in six days couldn't be cited as an example of sheer blinding efficiency, but the Colonel in charge of Mitchell, an awfully nice chap, appeared to work on the assumption that the more fantastic a cover story was, the more it would be believed. Failing this, the more complicated it was, the more difficult to prove it untrue. Every cover could eventually be broken, but a good cover story was one which gave an agent an element of time to play with. If it took three hours to get a Spanish-speaking palaeontologist ( or even an English-speaking one ) to check the facts, that was three hours for the agent to play with, to plan an escape, re-plan a new cover...or swallow the cyanide tablet ( cunningly incorporated into a false tooth)...

But when Mitchell turned up in Basel, Switzerland, in March 1944, he had a superb tan, a Chilean passport naming him Antonio Dupla, duly franked with stamps from most of the South American countries; a knowledge of Chile from the 18th to the 55th parallel...the main streets and buildings of Santiago...the universities and all its professors, the political set-up...when the next revolution was due...the history of the Spanish intrusion into South America...the price of gold on the Stock Exchange, all the peaks of the Andes. He even had a black straggly moustache. He still didn't know much about fossils, but he carried sketch books and reference

books, and except for the nervous twitch looked like a Chilean fossil hunter. He also had with him a geologists hammer, suitably encrusted with a dab of mud.

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Within twelve hours, the Swiss Secret Service had Mitchell docketed as 'English' with the word 'mad' after it, in brackets. This really didn't matter. Switzerland was a veritable ant's nest of spies. They rubbed shoulder to shoulder...hordes of British, American, German, French, Russian, Norwegian, Swedish, Polish and Czech spies...spies from everywhere except Mince. The Swiss didn't really object, so long as they were able to tabulate them all. It was all good clean fun. The only thing they didn't like was finding such and such a spy with a knife in his neck in some back street...the corpse having a bewildered expression on its face. The Swiss police, with energetic action, let it be known that this wasn't playing the game. It wasn't cricket to rub out a spy in Switzerland. Lisbon was the place for that.

Mitchell made certain that he was seen by everyone in Basel that mattered. He sidled all over the place with his hammer in his hand, taking elegant swipes at every piece of rock he saw. His hotel, the INTERNAZIONALE, was comfortable, and this absolute peach was in the next room. She'd asked to use his bathroom, her closet made a funny noise. He hoped she wasn't looking for the radio transmitter he'd hidden in the cistern. Actually she was an American spy trying to find out if he was a Russian. He thought possibly she was a Swede, and tried to give her the impression that he was English, hoping this would make her think he wasn't. It was all very complicated, but fun, and as the days passed, he wasn't given any specific task to do, except send a short 'I'm O.K, folks' type of message every day at 2.47 pm.

At 2.48 pm on the 29th April 1944 Mitchell received, to his chagrin, a very long message in code from London.

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It was 3.am on the 30th before he'd worked it all out.

The code came in sequences of ten figures and letters. Mostly letters. The fact that they were in tens didn't matter, because later on he had to put the sequences together, row upon row, until three pages were full. The date was important, the 29th. Therefore the first 29 letters and figures were discarded. The remainder were arranged, in order, in squares of twenty five...i.e...five letters or figures per line. Then a line was drawn across each square from top right to bottom left. The letters or figures thusly crossed out were also eliminated. The remainder were once again written out, then he had to write down his date of birth 15th March 1924. He had to add 15 to 3 ( March) and take the total from 24. Then he had to cross out every sixth letter ( the result of the little subtraction.) Next, he had to cross out all the figures and re-write the remaining letters back to front. It didn't quite take twelve hours with these preliminaries. It's what he had to do with the result which worried him. This is what he finished with :-

OPERATION LICHTENS TEIN WUNDER MI IOGDBDORFRADEQ TSURGFOT  
IMBEWOKWKASHETWOSEVENREPBWOKW.

Mitchell sent for a bottle of whiskey and a large glass. He locked the door, refusing even to open it for the girl. He hoped she hadn't got diarrhea...

Some of it was easy enough. The first bit was, anyway.  
OPERATION LICHTENS TEIN WUNDER. He worked through with a pencil, crossing off

the letters as he identified them. OKW was the German Counter-espionage organisation. BEW obviously meant beware. KASHE 27...that was secret terminology for Cache 27...whatever he had to do, he had to give the result to the representative of Cache 27, whom he knew to be a prominent banker. The results of what? Obviously the Lichtenstein Wonder...whatever that code word (if it was a code word) signified....URG FOT IM....that surely meant Urgent, photograph immediately...but photograph what? TS was also obvious-Top Secret. That left MIIODBDORFRADEQ.

The girl knocked the door round about 11 pm, but he ignored it. He pushed his mind back to the lessons on codes and cypher... he wished he'd paid more attention. But even his subconscious hadn't registered anything like MIIODBDORFRADEQ. Strange thoughts came into his mind...was it a coincidence that the two pupils at the school who showed a marked aptitude for code work were also the two crossword experts, who could do the TIMES crossword in about ten minutes? Something clicked in his mind, at least, he felt that for a second he'd been on to something, but what? Now his mind became numbed...vacant, then part of it suddenly came to him, and he knew he'd been stupid not to see it before. RADEQ....how about radiolocation equipment?

He went through it all again, trying to seek inspiration. Somewhere (MIIODBDORF) there was some top secret radiolocation equipment which he had to photograph immediately and give the result to the contact at Cache 27. The German counter-espionage boys were in there pitching somewhere, and he had to be careful of them. Where?

It occurred to him much later, when he'd become desperate, that his colonel in London would know that if code abbreviations hadn't been taught at the school, the agents own intelligence should be a guide. Mitchell should be able to work it out for himself, if he was up to the job. He wasn't psychic, therefore it would depend upon, perhaps, his routine timetable....jobs he had to do everyday, jobs which in themselves were mundane, but which a secret agent in another country had to do to keep in touch....and it was thoughts along these lines which made him jump to his feet in triumph at close to 3.am 30th April.....

The local newspaper...he pulled it from under a chair...it was front page news, which he'd read but didn't associate.... early am on 29th April a German nightfighter, trying to shoot down a British bomber attacking Friedrichshafen, had had one of its own engines put out of action. The fighter had entered Swiss air space, as the bomber had done, had lost height and had been forced to land at Dübendorf. The newspaper hadn't specified the type of fighter, but if you took DBDORF away (Dübendorf) you had MIIOG left, the Messerschmitt MIIOG...a twin engined German 'plane used as a nightfighter. That was where the OKW came in. They would protect the 'plane from Allied spies, who obviously would be anxious to get details of the radiolocation gear. Meanwhile, the Germans would put pressure on the Swiss for the return of the 'plane immediately.....then a horrible thought struck Mitchell.

The big broad-shouldered blonde chap at the same hotel...the naturalist who'd said he was from South Africa, who was seen furtively creeping about the outskirts of Basel with a big butterfly net in his hand. Mitchell had thought he was a German...and the man had booked out at lunch time on the 29th.....

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So, Mitchell placed his expensive suitcase on the purple carpet of the METROPOLE, in Dübendorf. Dübendorf. He'd looked it up in a directory back at Basel. It was a small town, with a 5,000 population. The airport on which the Messerschmitt IIOG had landed served Zurich, which was about four miles from it. Main industries, metal, woodworking ( those little cookoo clocks ?) and chemicals.

It was about 45 miles almost due east of Basel, he decided to hire a taxi, which he did, and loudly, for the hall porter to hear, directed it to Luzern. Never could tell. At Luzern, stopping for a snack, he hired another taxi to Dübendorf. He'd taken the precaution of putting LISBON tags on his luggage. So, he hoped, no one would know he was going to stay at Dübendorf.

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Deciding not to kick the suitcase, he dropped on the bed. He lit a cigarette, looked up at the off-white, almost yellowish alabaster cherubs which looked inwards from the four corners of the ceiling towards him. Now then, the Messerschmitt was in a closely guarded hanger at the airport a couple of miles away...all he had to do was to get into the hanger and photograph the radiolocation gear...he'd seen silhouettes of British aeroplanes, the Beaufighter, Mosquito, even the Sunderland, with big aerials and wires criss-crossing them...rods poking out all over the place. As Britain was then way ahead of the world in radiolocation ( later called radar) it was reasonable to assume that the German equipment would be much cruder, but, judging from the results of a day or two ago, it worked. The British Government would be extremely keen to know what advances the Germans had made. Mitchell pulled a newspaper from his pocket, looked at the Stop Press. The Germans had demanded the return of the 'plane. The Swiss, unwilling to contravene their strict neutrality, had refused. The situation was tense. What would happen next ? The Swiss would guard the 'plane carefully, not wishing to irritate the Germans who were daily flying purposely over Swiss territory, taunting them to attack the Luftwaffe, which they had indeed done with good effect. Mitchell reasoned that if the Swiss wouldn't return it, the OKW would have no alternative but to destroy it. Mitchell lit another cigarette, looked at his watch....almost 3 pm.

His first assignment, and it was a cracker. If there had been time, there were all sorts of plans he could have utilised. But time was at a premium. At that moment many things could be happening. An ultimatum from the Germans...sabotage by the OKW...maybe if pressure was severe enough the Swiss would return it...all the time the Germans and Swiss would realise that Allied spies were planning to get at it.

Mitchell sat up...he grinned...winked at one of the cherubs....what was the name of the theatre in Zurich ?

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Mitchell explained to the manager of the opera house that he was an American, and was going to a party at the Russian Embassy that night. What he specifically wanted was a suggestion for fancy dress. Money was no object. Mitchell explained with some animation that the different embassy staffs were vying with each other for originality. No disrespect intended, but perhaps a local theatre would have something unusual...a Hussars uniform, or....

Opening his wallet, Mitchell peeled off a roll of American dollars. He'd send the costume back in a few days. The wardrobe mistress came at the Managers order, rubbed her hands, was keen to please.

Mitchell allowed her to talk him into taking the policeman's uniform. He noticed that it was much too light in colour...and all that gold braid? But he said it would do perfectly.

Before he returned to the METROPOLE, he also purchased a chunk of bloody meat...

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It was dark and drizzling. It was also unfortunate, because he'd soon have to take the heavy overcoat off, which hung damp and heavy across his shoulders. To make matters worse, the alsation was trying like mad to get away from the rope round its neck... a rope cast with accuracy by Mitchell an hour previously as, passing through a high class residential district, he'd spotted it sniffing round a tree, and had dangled the meat seductively before its nose. It had been quite a fight, but a kick in the ribs had silenced it, although Mitchell had to admit to himself that the dog was more than a handful, and if things got rough it would probably side with any potential aggressor. It just didn't like him.

Well, this was it. Reluctantly, Mitchell flung away the heavy overcoat, he somehow didn't feel that the ostentatious fur collar would suit his disguise as a Swiss policeman. He climbed over the railings at a dark and deserted part of the airfield. He savagely pulled the alsation after him, it had thrust its fore paws forward, like a stubborn mule. Mitchell pondered. Was there anything to the widely held theory that animals could foretell pending disaster? He jerked the rope, and with a most unalsationlike yelp, its long red tongue hanging down, the dog sidled forward, its stomach barely touching the short grass. Mitchell gave it another kick, looked towards the distant lights illuminating the hangers. He took a rapid inventory...heavy duty torch.....38 Webley...a small but expensive Kodak camera which he'd signed for back in London and didn't want to lose because he didn't have enough money in the bank to pay for it.... the dog, yeah...everything was where it should be, and despite the cold he almost relished the next few hours...

Looking ( he hoped ) rather efficient, and blatantly shining his torch in the hedge bordering the airfield, he patrolled northwards, towards the hanger a mile away. The alsation became suddenly keen. It started to strain at the rope...started to sniff excitedly...the rope pulling at Mitchell's chafed wrist.

Ah ha. The dog had seen someone in the hedge. Mitchell felt his heart thump wildly, and his mouth became strangely dry as, in German, he ordered the person to come out...would it...would it be the butterfly-hunting German?

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"I'm a student at Zurich University. I'm writing a thesis on glowworms, and I'm carrying out investigations in the field."

It was a girl...the girl...the one whose toilet wouldn't supposedly flush. She spoke flawless German, as Mitchell had done. She hadn't recognised him, she couldn't, because he flashed the beam in her eyes, and also she'd never heard him speak German. She was wearing an unshapely macintosh. Mitchell had liked the look of her back in Basel, but still fresh from training school, and trying to closely following its dictums, he'd refrained from anything other than conventional chatter.

Hell. He was in a good mood, exhilarated almost. He decided to shake her.

"You in the OKW?" he hissed in English.

Her eyes shone wildly in the torch beam.

"Ich verstehe sie leider nicht."

"Oh hell, come off it. I'm the chap whose toilet you used. I'm in the British Secret Service." He grinned in the darkness. She looked confused. The alsation had lost interest, and chewed at the rope.

Then Mitchell thought Christ...suppose she is in the OKW ?

"Hands up," he said in English. She put them up before she realised she wasn't supposed to verstehe.

"I won't tickle," he said, biting his lips as he pressed his hands all over her mac. No revolver, just a small camera, dammit, the same model as his own. The latest thing for the up-to-date agent, he mused. He handed the camera back.

"You after the Lichtenstein Wonder too ?" he said. He'd nothing to lose by being so blatant. If she was in the OKW ( and he was positive she wasn't ) she'd know all about it. If she wasn't in the OKW, she still obviously knew all about it.

She was silent. He could see she was thinking....hard.

"Look," said Mitchell. "I want to photograph it, too. You'll never get near that hanger by yourself. There's likely to be both Swiss and Germans there. And we haven't any time. The OKW will soon blow it up."

"Actually, I'm in the Australian Secret Service," she said. She looked serious, too. "Yes, I have instructions to photograph the radiolocation gear. The OKW wont blow it up, not yet, anyway. The Germans have promised to supply the latest model of the Messerschmitt 109 for the Swiss Air Force if the Swiss destroy the IIO. I've been told it's to be destroyed at noon tomorrow. "

She could be right. The Swiss did fly Messerschmitt 109's as their standard fighter. She reached her left hand forward and gripped his sleeve. He moved round slightly so that the drizzle hit his back, and protected her. Actually, she should have protected him from the elements, she had the mac. But it seemed the masculine thing to do. She put her cheek to his, it was cold and wet. The alsation sat down, looking miserable.

"Tell you what," said Mitchell. "Let's work together. If I caused a diversion, you could get inside the hanger, photograph it, maybe take a couple of shots with my camera, nip out again, and I'll see you back here. Hang your hankie on the hedge."

She agreed. She opined that she'd realised she would never be able to do it herself. She took his camera. "Go on ahead and cause the diversion," she hissed. She pressed his hand. He felt embarrassed. Perhaps he should have kissed her.

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It was quite obvious in which hanger the 110G was parked. Two Swiss policemen stood at the wide hanger door, one end of which was slightly open. They looked at Mitchell, saw the dog, now sniffing happily, and returned to their conversation. True, Mitchell was about fifty feet away, and felt hellish conspicuous under the arc lights, especially as he hadn't got a coat, and it was still drizzling. But he was happy. There was no reason why they shouldn't accept him when he was so far away. The fact that they'd seen him was all that mattered. Mitchell passed the end of the hanger, turned right, walked along the side of it, where it was dark.

A broad trench-coated man came out of the shadows.

"Police." Mitchell smiled grimly. He hoped it wasn't a Swiss plainclothesman. He deftly applied the kick he'd used on the instructor, this time much harder. He swung his fist at the back of the hairy neck. Mitchell

left him, dragging the alsation away from affectionately licking the mans upturned face. He tip-toed to the end of the hanger. He peered round the corner. Two more trench-coated men and a Swiss policeman were standing in a huddle at the rear entrance, which was closed. Sounds of hammering and talking from from inside the hanger, where presumably mechanics were working. What would happen when they spotted the girl ?

Mitchell returned to the unconscious man. He peeled back an eyelid. Didn't look too good. Mitchell grabbed his shoes, dragged him into view of the two policemen at the front of the hanger.

"Quickly," he shouted.

They both ran across.

"I found him like this at the side of the hanger. Know him ?"

They stood back so that the sickly glow of an arclight played over the wet and stoney face.

"Yes. He's a security guard from the German Embassy."

One of them ripped open the trench-coat collar, took off the tie underneath, ripped open the shirt and felt for a heartbeat. The other policeman didn't show much interest in the German. Mitchell looked at him out of the corner of his eye. The policeman seemed more interested in the alsation, knelt down to pat it. But he wasn't looking at the dog; he was looking at the frayed rope round the dog's neck. The Swiss police are a proud force, and although there was a certain amount of austerity, with Europe aflame and at war, it certainly wasn't in keeping with the finer traditions of the force to go on patrol in the immediate vicinity of a high international drama with an alsation ( and not a very fierce one) at the end of a lump of old rope. Mitchell could almost hear the man's mind ticking over.....

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Another trench-coated man came running from the side of the hanger. Mitchell, without much surprise, saw it was the butterfly hunter.

"What's wrong ?" he shouted. He knelt down by the still form, the face now an unpleasant greyish-green. "What's all the shouting about ?"

Well, there hadn't been much shouting from their intimate little group. The girl must have been in action in the hanger. The blonde German also felt for a heartbeat. He swore in German, then looked up at Mitchell. His eyes were creased in query. At the same time, the policeman who had been grappling with the problem of the rope-shackled alsation suddenly came up with the solution, as Mitchell guessed he probably would.

"That's not a police-dog, and he's not a policeman."

Mitchell kicked the kneeling German in the face, and at the same time pulled out the .38 and let off three shots at the nearest arclight. One policeman fell to his knees, holding his face. Mitchell guessed it was the flash of a round, he felt sorry, even as he ran, for he definitely did not want to injure a Swiss policeman. The other policeman gave chase, but the alsation ( Mitchell had let go the rope ) suddenly came back into the spirit of the thing and ran alongside the policeman, trying to grip his greatcoat. The policeman fell, the alsation snarling over him. Turning, Mitchell let off the other three rounds over the heads of the group of men, both civil and militia, who rushed to the hanger to see what was going on. Mitchell saw, before he started running again, that one of the figures slipped the leash off a dog, a smaller dog, possibly a Chapman-Pincher.

It seemed to be homing on him like an arrow.

It was dark again outside the range of the lights. He could hear shouting and sirens, and someone had switched on a search light which cut the darkness like a knife. Mitchell's breathe almost seemed to burst his lungs as he drew air in and expelled it like a steam hammer...he wondered what had happened to the Chapman-Pincher, then heard snarling and yelping behind him. The drizzle had stopped, the moon appeared. Soon he saw the handkerchief tied in the hedge.

"Quickly, into the car," the girl whispered hoarsely. He burst through the hedge, and dived head first into the opened door, and then there was a heavy thud in his back, and heavy panting. The alsation clambered over into the back seat, and the car shot away.

"Circuit the aerodrome and get back to town," hissed Mitchell. "They'll hardly have road blocks set up yet." In a few moments they were in town. They stopped at an intersection.

"Hell, I can't walk into the METROPOLE dressed like this," grinned Mitchell. "Where the hell will I get clothes to fit me to-night?"

He leaned over and patted the alsation. "I hate to do this, old son," he said, opening the door and pushing the reluctant animal out. It stood looking at him, head to one side.

"Tell you what," said the girl, changing gears as the car moved forward. "Come to my place. I've some clothes that will fit you ...not mine, stupid....men's clothes. We can maybe also fix up an alibi."

In ten minutes they arrived at a high class residential district. Mitchell thought it looked like the street where he'd got the alsation, but coincidences like that didn't happen, did they?

Mitchell furtively followed the girl to the back of the house, she looking around several feet in front, beckoning when the coast was clear. All very secret service like. Her flat was superbly furnished, and he refrained from expressing the surprise he felt when she came from the bedroom with shirt, trousers, jacket, and a heavy black leather topcoat.

She poured burbon, and told Mitchell how she'd openly walked into the hanger, crossed to the twin-engined aeroplane with German markings, and photographed the strange antenna which protruded from the nose. How, first of all, blue-overalled men working on civil aeroplanes had watched, and actually whistled, then, when she'd taken a few shots with both camera's, one of them started to cross to her. How she'd ran out, crossed the tarmac whilst she heard two lots of three shots, onto to grass then diagonally to the right until she'd hit the hedge.

"I can hear someone coming up the stairs," she hissed. She slung his camera round his neck, pushed the coat over his arm and dragged him to the door. She opened it, and flung herself into Mitchell's arms.

"Good night, darling," she said in German, kissing him as though she was three minutes from hearing the convent door clang.

Uncrossing his eyes as he pulled away, Mitchell saw a jealous backwards glance from a bald man going into the room opposite.

Outside, as he walked into the night, he felt it was all too easy...much too easy. He'd got an alibi, photographs of the radiolocation equipment in his camera...he'd had a go at a couple of OK! men....a 100 per cent job in fact.

Was it always so easy?

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Back in Basel, Mitchell, who was still highly elated, and who'd already sent a success signal back to London, whistled as he went in to see the banker, ostensibly about his account.

Mitchell didn't know whether the banker was Swiss or English. But in the seclusion of his private office, once they'd confirmed identities (Mitchell liked that bit. He had half a Chilean railway ticket...the banker had the other half, both fitted perfectly together...the simplest and yet the safest method of meeting a contact and knowing it was the contact. Much better than those complicated and esoteric passwords ) the banker became a generous host, poured out brandy, handed over a cigar, then took the film off Mitchell to develop it.

Mitchell looked out of the window at the traffic below. He thought how wonderful it was to be a successful secret agent. There most certainly was a touch of glamour about it all. Possibly he could hope for an assignment in Germany when he returned triumphantly.

Minutes later he was in the depths of despair. The banker looked really grim.

"Nothing. Absolutely nothing. The film was obviously exposed to the light before it was put in the camera...."

"I think not," snarled Mitchell. "It was put in by an expert in London. No, it was someone in my hotel. They took the film out there, held it up to the light, then fed it in again. And I think I know who it is."

Obviously the blonde German. The girl couldn't possibly have done it. Could she ?

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It took Mitchell fifteen minutes to get back to his room at the INTERNAZIONALE. Ten seconds later he knew he'd have to move...quickly. His room had been searched, expertly. Admittedly it was embarrassing to have a tin of talc in your ablution kit, but when you took out the top drawer of your dresser, and sprinkled talc around the frame inside, and pushed the drawer back again, the next time the drawer was opened, there would be talc on top of the articles in the drawer underneath. There was talc on his thick blue pullover.

He packed, left his suitcase inside his room, went next door, to the girls room, and knocked. No answer, as he'd suspected. He tried the door, it was closed. He knew he should have gone back to his room, but there was no time for finesse and elementary precautions. He knelt down, gripped the small metal tag on the end of a shoe lace. He pulled hard. A length of blue steel snaked out. He inserted an end into the lock, and twisted suddenly. He turned the handle, went into her room. He searched it quickly, wondering what trap she'd set to discover a search. All her clothes were there, even, and this was most unfeminine...even her handbag. The camera was there, too. But no film. Her handbag, that's what worried him.

Downstairs, at the reception desk, a female clerk was surprised that Senor Dupla hadn't heard...the young lady from 244 had been taken to hospital. She'd been found unconscious on her bed by a maid. Mitchell wrote down the names of all the hospitals in Basel, went back to his room and telephoned them. No one knew anything about a Miss St. John. No one knew anything about an unconscious girl at the INTERNAZIONALE.

Mitchell sighed. It was the end for him. It was obvious the OKW had struck. It was the simplest thing, slip her a drug, get a van with a red cross on it, send up a couple of men in uniform, and carry her away. How did they know about her ? Maybe the blonde German had spotted her in Dübendorf. Maybe the OKW had shown photographs to the civilian staff at the aerodrome, and

someone had recognised her. After all, it was standard secret service procedure to photograph anyone you thought was an enemy spy.

The blonde German hadn't returned to Basel. Mitchell fervently hoped he was in hospital, having one or more teeth straightened. The other one, the one he'd kicked in the groin, well, the papers were reticent, but they mentioned a severe injury. The papers also said it was unofficially rumoured that the Swiss were about to destroy the 'plane in return for Messerschmitt 109's for their air force, as the girl had said.

Well, as he'd said to himself several times, this was it. Mitchell smoked a cigarette until 2.47 pm. Then, he radioed that things were hot, and he'd be leaving on the Lisbon flight that night. He was instructed to stand by for a long message in code, but, with a wry grin he switched off. He rolled up the aerial, returned to the girl's room and dropped it in her cistern. He'd half expected to see one there.

Where the hell was the girl? Had she 'arranged' a disappearance? Had the OKW got her, or the Swiss police? But that decided him. He knew the Swiss police weren't fools. Maybe they were favourably disposed towards the Allies, but Germany was next door, frequently provoking her...and he knew that the Swiss were probably on to him. He'd made several bad mistakes. The dollars, for example. He'd paid for the uniform with them, and he'd got them from the bank, the Cache 27 bank. The heavy coat he'd thrown away before the sortie on the aerodrome. That was a clue for them.

So...complete and utter disaster. He knew he'd be lucky if the Swiss let him leave the country that night.

He picked up his luggage, took the lift down, crossed to the desk to pay his account. A man sitting reading a newspaper. Mitchell had seen him before....where....the bank that morning. Christ. He'd led them (either the OKW or the Swiss) to Cache 27 twice. There was much more to being a spy than he'd thought. Every move, every thought, every action had to be studied....balanced, to test its ultimate result. He'd learned a lot the hard way, by bitter experience, but he guessed that this fiasco would probably rate him being posted to Iceland as a 2nd lieutenant in the Catering Corps.

The clerk, a different one, gave him his bill and change. "Oh, Senor Dupla. Miss St. John left this for you early this morning."

Mitchell took it. His trained eye (well, he had spent a day at the GPO watching them opening mail, he knew what to look for) it had been opened, or at least the letter had been taken out and replaced, probably by a split length of wood. He left his luggage near the swing doors, went to the bar, ordered a whiskey, opened the envelope. The pseudo newspaper reader was a few feet away. Mitchell read:-

Dear Antonio (or whatever your name is)

Darling, this will no doubt make you flush with embarrassment, but I love you so very much. One day I'll meet you again. Till then,  
fondest love,

Vivienne St. JOHN.

In a spirit of sarcasm, Mitchell passed the letter along to the man who'd been watching him. To hell with you, Mitchell thought. The man gulped his drink and left. Mitchell retrieved the note. It was idiotic, fantastic...unbelievable...and then, no, it couldn't be.

He grinned. He flipped the bartender a note, didn't wait for the change. Controlling his desire to burst into a trot, he left the bar.

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At the airport lounge at Zurich, the newspaper reader, the man who'd been following him, came across.

"Herr Dupla," he said in German.

Mitchell smiled, offered the man a seat next to him.

"Yeah?" he said. He used a broad American accent.

"Herr...er...Dupla...please don't come back to Switzerland...at least, not until after the war has ended."

Mitchell raised a hand in mock acknowledgement. The man stood up, pulled his coat collar up, stuffed his hands into his pockets and walked away.

When he was called to his 'plane, Mitchell was elated. He really didn't think they'd let him go...

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There were certain things he didn't put in his report. He wasn't stupid. He knew that somewhere, in the War Office, a group of Senior Officers would read it, and know that he hadn't given the full facts. But he was in the happy position of having delivered exactly what he'd been told to get.

When he'd been 'interviewed' (a much nicer word than interrogated) by his colonel on return, he'd been severely castigated for inefficient radio procedure, and ignoring wireless instructions. Mitchell gave an exciting and entirely fictitious story of Swiss police hammering at his door at 2.47 pm, and giving him just time to send his own message before breaking contact. Then he was told that five photographs of the radiolocation equipment had turned out clearly, that they'd be 'very useful', and shaking his hand warmly, the colonel gave him one weeks leave.

This later gave him chance to think about the girl.... about the enigma which surrounded her disappearance. Where was she? She knew she wouldn't be coming back, else she wouldn't have left the film. Why did she know she wouldn't be coming back? If the OKW had got her, that meant by implication that she knew beforehand, and had left the film for him in a place that only he and she in the whole world would know about. What was on her mind when she'd written it? Was her whole action a great unselfish gesture? Or was there some other reason? You could never tell with women. He knew there were authentic cases of female spies falling for handsome Gestapo men cleverly introduced to them, and when the truth was revealed, the women, for love, serving the Germans. In such a case the film would be no use to her anyway, and it would be presumed that the Swiss police would pick Mitchell up, especially if they were tipped off. And the clothes she'd given him. They were of German manufacture. But all that was only conjecture. Women were, well, just funny. They did unreasonable things. Then, of course, there was the hiding place.

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Perchance it was indelicate of the girl to select a lavatory chain for secreting the film, but it would possibly never be discovered except by a most thorough and prolonged search. Even Mitchell had had preliminary misgivings. He'd taken out the chrome end of the chain handle, and saw unpainted wood underneath. He'd attacked this with the point of the penknife blade, saw that it was hardened chewing gum. He was

almost certain that an examiner, not knowing for certain that there was anything there, would have presumed that the handle was solid. But Mitchell had the incentive to explore further. Every second, as he worked, he expected the OKW or Swiss police to burst in, and he curced as he scraped the hard chewing gum out. When it eventually did, the film, developed, was wrapped in silver paper.

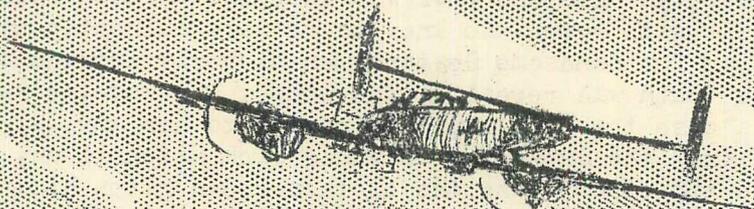
Only the two of them would know...especially as the message the girl had left was written in English. Presumably to keep a permanent check on Mitchell, maybe even to form a closer association, she'd used the excuse of bad plumbing to use his bathroom. The word 'flush' should have given him the clue quicker that it did...but her surname St. JOHN, with the 'JOHN' in capitals, that was the clincher, the 'john' of course being the American colloquialism for the lavatory.

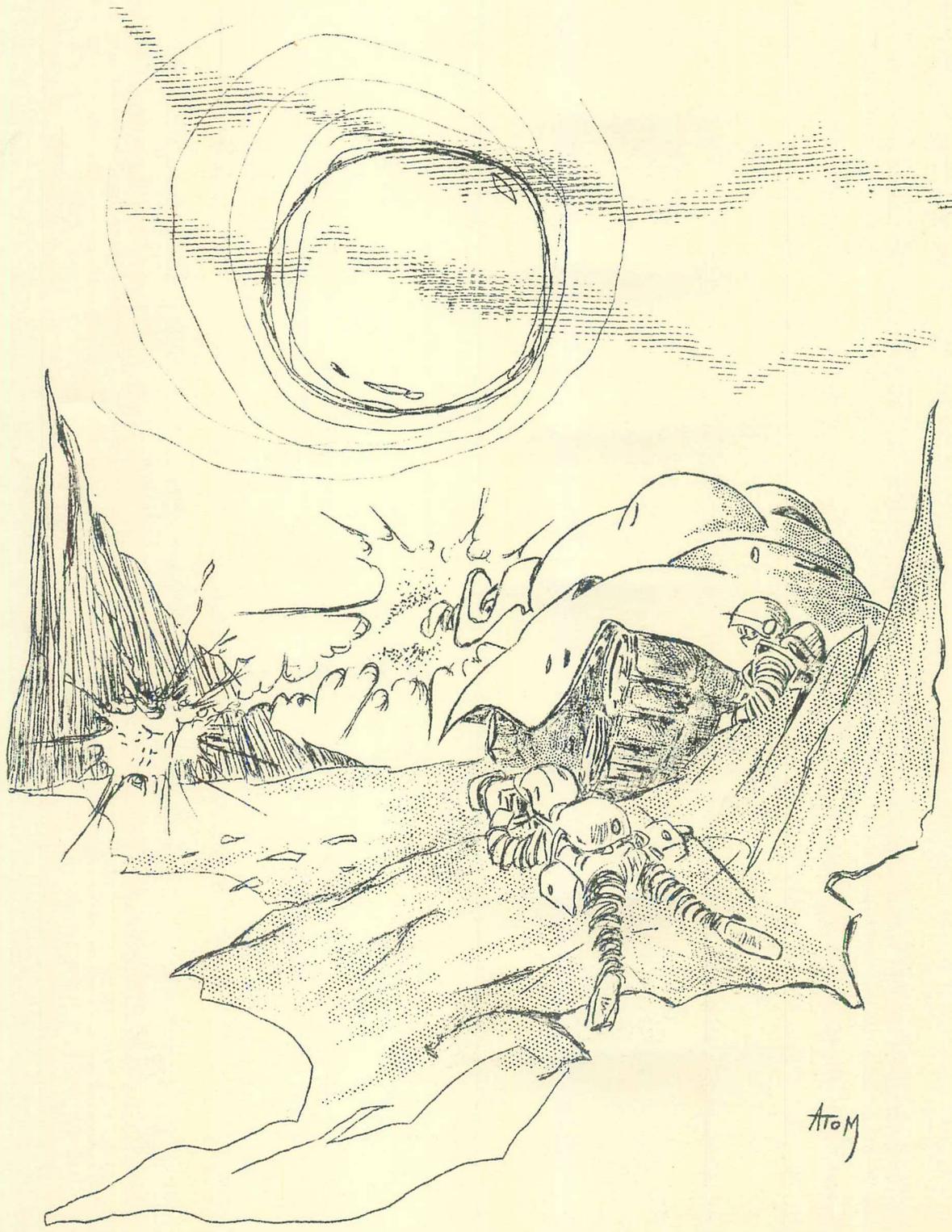
What...just what the hell had happened to her ?

John Berry  
1963.

NOTE.

It might be of interest to know that on the night of 28/29th April 1944 a Messerschmitt 110G night-fighter did pursue a British bomber over Swiss territory. The German 'plane's starboard engine was put out of commission by the tail gunner of the Lancaster bomber. The Messerschmitt 110G did make a forced landing at Dübendorf, and the Allied Secret Services did endeavour to obtain details and photographs of the secret FuG 220 Lichtenstein SN-2 radar and FuG Naxos Z equipment which the 'plane was equipped with. The OKW was detailed to guard the 'plane, and actually planned to destroy it in the hanger should urgent negotiations with the Swiss fail. The Swiss did destroy it for numbers of Messerschmitt 109 G single seat fighters, which arrived in May 1944.





ATOM

More in  
Sorrow  
than in  
hanger

To get you in the proper perspective, so to speak, I must sidetrack a little, and tell you about another of my hobbies, once an important one, now, unfortunately, relegated to an hour or so every week.

From the age of fifteen I acquired an interest in aviation, pretty well all aspects of it. As the years progressed, I formulated a large collection of aeronautical periodicals, papers, drawings and magazines. So when fandom struck me in 1954, I was obsessed with its ramifications and possibilities, and selfishly cast my life-long hobby to one side. I still continued to purchase several periodicals, but beyond scanning them and reading one or two items of major aviation interest, I filed them away, referring to them but little.

Several months ago, quite by accident, I discovered that a youth down the avenue, aged about 14, was interested in aeroplanes. I gave him the freedom of my collection, and soon he brought a friend along, then another. All were terribly enthusiastic, embryos of my former self. I eventually arranged for them to come to my house one night a week, and as I nostalgically regaled them with my accumulated knowledge of facts and figures, which had miraculously hibernated in my brain over the years, I realized that these boys regarded me as an authority. I was to them what Willis is to fandom.

So when, a few short months ago, the local aircraft factory in Belfast announced that they were building a completely new top-secret prototype, a true vertical take-off jet 'plane, these boys announced that they were going to discover the dimensions, engines, span, estimated top speed, etc, whilst the 'plane was still on the secret list.

To maintain my prestige, I was forced to undertake a similar promise. I chuckled to myself after they had departed. For I had an inside

contact actually working in the factory.

George Charters.

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George Charters isn't quite as advanced in years as I sometimes make out in my stories. I hope you haven't gotten the idea that he's really old. He is, in fact, still working. He has a semi-clerical appointment at the aircraft factory, and works during the night shift. Naturally he doesn't get a big wage, because he's getting his old age pension as well. I realized like a flash that George was in a very favourable position to carry out a little espionage for me, and one day I broached the subject.

"George," I said. "Your aircraft factory is building a new secret aeroplane. It takes off vertically, and has a lot of unusual features. Know anything about it?"

He ruminated pensively.

"I've heard tell of it," he gnashed cautiously.

"Have you seen it?" I asked eagerly.

His eyelids creaked as he shook his head.

"Do you work near where it's being constructed?" I pressed.

"Not too far away," he admitted.

"Well, see if you can find out anything about it for me," I said. "Any little details. If you do, I'll give you a few Max Brand books I've got at home—old they are, most certainly first editions."

This was true to a point. I had been browsing 'round a second hand bookshop, where James White gets his old Astoundings, and had purchased a bundle of books for a few coppers. The Max Brands were certainly old, but they weren't first editions. But that was George's worry.

He nodded his head sagely, promised to do his best, and staggered off.

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The next few weeks were particularly frustrating. Fruitful, to a degree, but frustrating. Every time I saw George ( every Tuesday and Sunday at Walt Willis's ) he gave me a little snippet of information, and then grabbed my inducement.

I'd sidle up to him and murmur furtively, "Anything to report, George?"

He'd look carefully 'round the room, and twist his mouth into an inscrutable prune. A wrinkled corner of his mouth would then lift, and he'd mutter a stealthy phrase, such as ( on April 7th last )

"...the waffle flange has oscillating flick-jubes..." or, on the 27th of May last )..."the clod retainers are bent at an angle of 73 degrees."

When I asked him about necessary dimension, he'd open his hands like a boastful angler, or stare at a fixed spot on the wall, as if mentally guageing the height...or length...or span.

I found these rough calculations rather disconcerting, because, in the privacy of my father-in-law's garage, I was trying to build a third size scale model, utilizing only the details George had been able to give me. As I progressed, I became more and more frustrated, because the object, as it grew, looked less and less like an aeroplane, even a unconventional aeroplane.

But as I knew, and as George frequently stressed....

"...this aeroplane is revolutionary in design, see, it's unorthodox, and.." ( in a whisper ).." it's got seven intertwined snitch-tags."

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there is a large meadow at the back of my father-in-law's house. I chose this field as the site for the first flight of my large scale model of the new secret aircraft. I had quite a few spectators, the three young aviation enthusiasts, my wife's family and a few sundry neighbours who had no doubt heard the strange noises emanating from the garage over a period of time, and, knowing I was concerned, wanted to see what it was all about.

I ignored the crowd, and commenced to lecture to my three pupils as they gazed in mingled wonder and awe at my tarpaulin-covered creation.

"When I was your age," I said, "during the early years of the war, my chief interest was attempting to discover whatever details I could about the many secret types of aeroplanes that were then flying. This I did in a number of ways. Now, as you know, a new secret aircraft is being constructed in Belfast. It is a new design, and nothing like it has ever been seen before."

Their eyes flickered to the peculiar bulges jutting out at all angles from the tarpaulin.

"Now", I continued, "I have a contact actually in the factory, and as a result of what he has told me, I have been able to construct an exact replica of it, to demonstrate to you what can be done by a combination of knowledge, intelligence, skill, patience and endeavour."

I strode up to my model, and the crowd edged backwards in the long grass as I took off the cover.

I looked at my machine, and turned proudly to the spectators. It's funny, being the centre of attraction, being on the inside looking out. The crowd acted as though they were marionettes...controlled by one set of wires.

Their eyes grew and grew...as one, they shook their heads...took several paces backwards, and gulped.

I was rather perplexed.

"You see," I said to the three students, who seemed to be hypnotized, "you see, my contact told me this aeroplane is unconventional."

I looked at the machine.

"That's right," I said slowly, ".....unconventional."

"Which is the front?" asked one of the pupils.

"Hmmm?" I walked round it a couple of times.

"I'll just start the engine," I said, "and you'll see how it rises vertically, until it reaches operational height, when it will commence to fly around in a circle...leastways, that's the way I've planned it."

I lifted the dustbin lid, and rapidly turned the crank. The engine (off my retired mechanically-propelled pedal cycle...all 49 cc's of it) staggered into life, and the machine strained at the leash. It did more than strain. It hopped up and down like an impatient child. The noise was frightful, and I didn't like the way the dirty black smoke burst out of the drumbuckle switch-back glotto, in which I happened to be peering at the time, thinking it was the observation gasket.

I turned towards the crowd, shouting for a towel to wipe my face, but they all swivelled round and rapidly disappeared over the horizon, leaping hedges like racehorses. I knew my appearance may have been somewhat alarming, but after all, they knew who I was....

I was attracted to the rear by something pulling at my coat. I turned round. My scale model was about to devour me. I could see straight away that something was amiss. Contrary to my expectations, the wing

flippets were whirling round and round, something like the action of a dredger. The black smoke had now developed gigantic proportions, and was gushing out of three places, including the adjustable snap-tockle.

I caught up with the others three fields away, and did a circular tour of the county before returning home.

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I must confess that it is the first, and probably the last patent I shall ever take out.

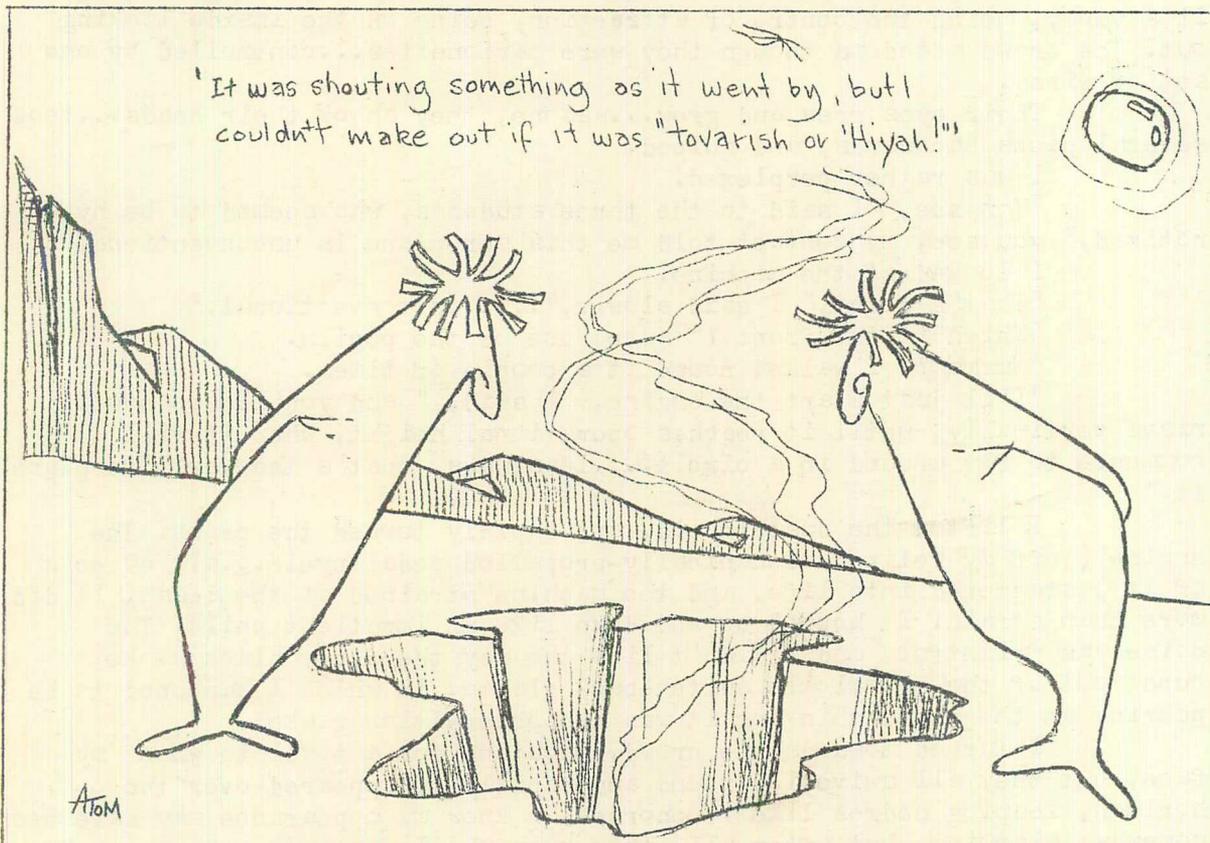
The futuristic Berry Combine Harvester is now in mass production, and should revolutionize farming methods.

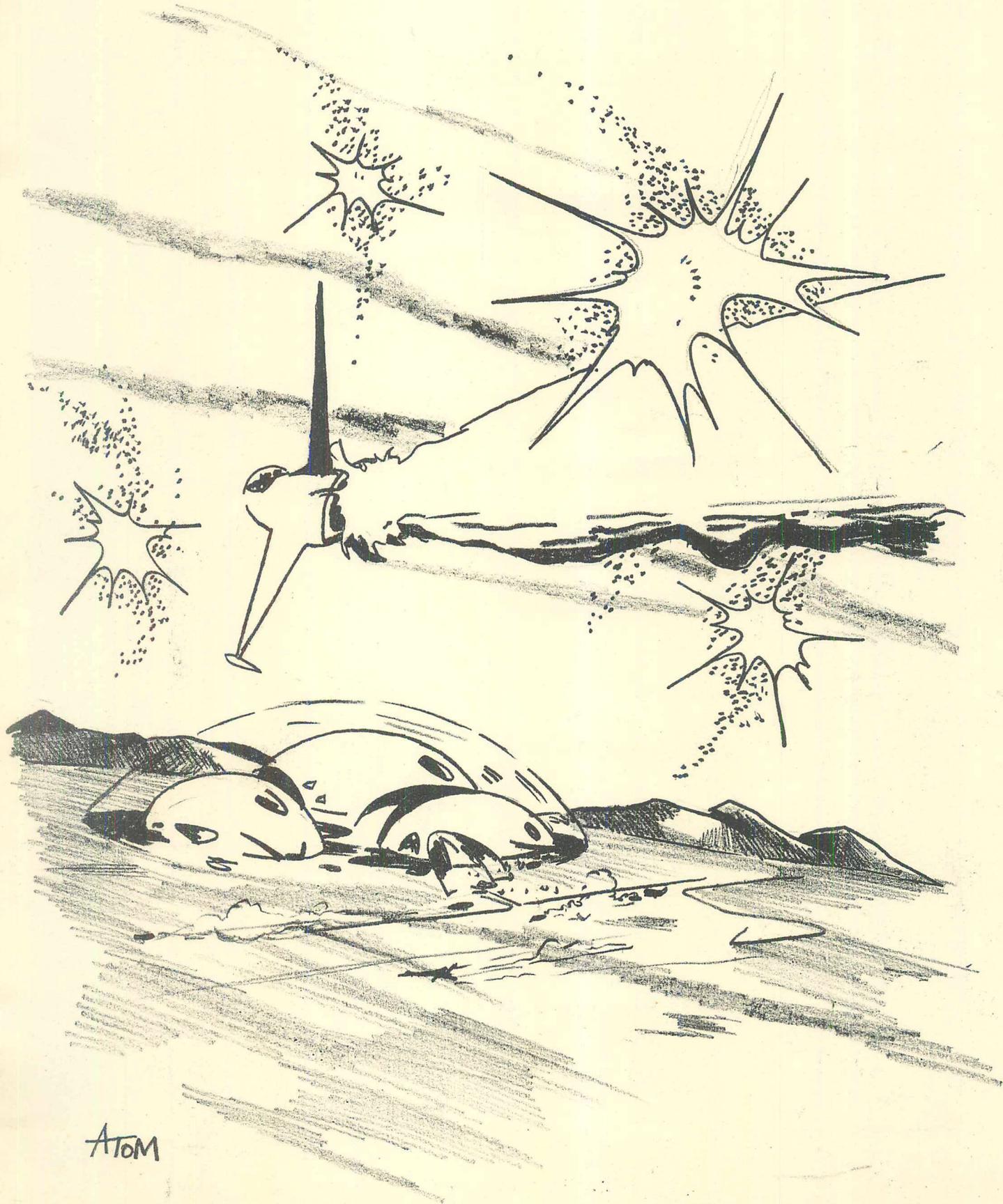
As the owner of the field told me, my machine cut, reaped and stacked his hay in three quarters of an hour. True, it also stacked two and a half miles of his hedgerow ( but as he philosophically put it, he intended enlarging his fields, anyway) before admitting defeat at the base of a big elm. A couple of things still worry me, though.

Did I make a slight miscalculation, or misunderstand George ? Is the factory really working on a combine harvester, and this nonsense about secret vertical take-off jet 'planes propaganda for the Reds ? Or has George Charters been compiling his Max Brand library at the expense of his imagination and my gullibility ?

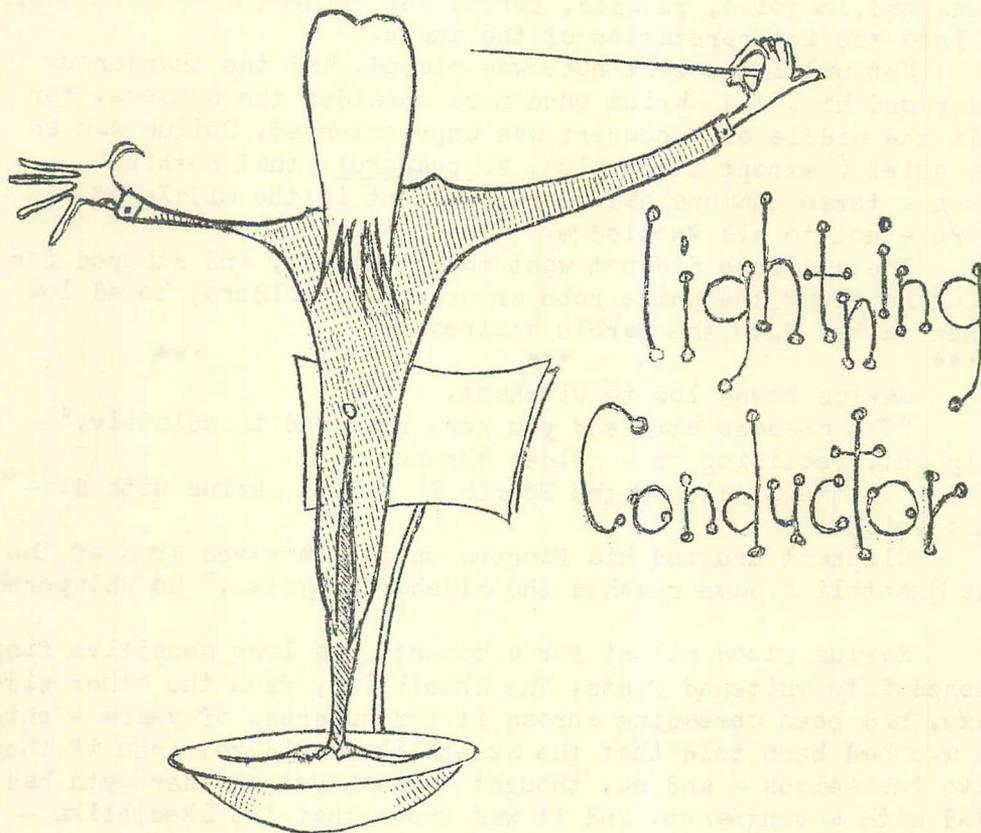
If you ever hear that the Short S.C.1 has actually flown, you'll know the answer.....

John Berry  
1957.





ATOM



Delius, third moon of Fleeter, seventh planet of Aldebaran ( the one orbiting in the opposite direction to the other twenty-three) was celebrating the Annual Tchaikovsky Concert. The great auditorium in Stral held upwards of 250,000 white-robed citizens, sitting in silent bliss as the strings of the 257-piece orchestra played the pizzicato movement of the Fourth Symphony. The Conductor, Marius, stood pensively on the gold rostrum, his eyes closed, a chill running up and down his vertebrae as his mind, completely and utterly filled with a glorious appreciation of the liquid notes, reached the heights of its power of musical understanding.

A delicate chime shattered his concentration, and he almost cursed out loud. He looked at the illuminated message on top of the rostrum...**MOST URGENT. REPORT TO OLIPHANT IMMEDIATELY. REPEAT. IMMEDIATELY.** He sighed as the pizzicato movement came to an end. He raised his baton, paused, and guided the orchestra into the last movement. His whole being tingled with the emotional experience involved in being the means of providing the citizens of Delius with the one factor uppermost in their minds all the time. Music...

Wealthy people came from all over the civilised parts of the galaxy to spend their last days listening to music : or sent their children if they showed any aptitude at all for playing instruments; or maybe just came for a vacation. For on Delius there was a Grand Concert every day - the Annual Tchaikovsky Concert, as on this day, or the Annual

Beethoven Concert the day before, or the Annual Xemplützper Concert the day following.

Marius, tears smarting his eyes at the extreme ecstasy of the music, charmed, cajoled, pleaded, forced the orchestra to give their whole being into the interpretation of the music.

Not until the last note was played, and the thunderous applause died around him, did Marius once more consider the summons. For it to come in the middle of a concert was unprecedented. Delius was so cultured, so quiet (except for music), so peaceful that nothing requiring such a terse summons had ever been sent in the middle of a concert before - not to his knowledge.

The audience did not want to let him go, and stamped for an encore, but he flung the white robe around his shoulders, bowed low and long, then walked down the marble staircase.

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Marius bowed low to Oliphant.

"The message stressed you were required immediately," observed Oliphant, reclining on a golden throne.

"In the middle of the Fourth?" gasped Marius with disbelief in his voice.

Oliphant drummed his fingers on the engraved arms of the throne. "The Skeetblikks have reached the Aldebaran System," he whispered softly.

Marius stood silent for a moment. His long sensitive fingers slowly clenched into whitened fists. The Skeetblikks, from the other side of the galaxy, had been spreading across it for hundreds of years - children decades ago had been told that the Skeetblikks would get them if they didn't behave themselves - and so, thought Marius, yet another myth had been exploded with a vengeance. And it was known that the Skeetblikks - yellow reptiles with eight legs - besides being war-like, cruel and destructive, had one outstanding fault as far as the citizens of Delius were concerned. They were tone-deaf...

"Have they taken any planets?" Marius asked, biting his lips.

Oliphant threw out his hands in a hopeless gesture.

"Sixteen are overrun," he replied. It seemed strange to Marius that the Assessor was so complacent. For Delius, the centre of culture in the galaxy, to be in dire peril of extermination was so overpowering that - and then he understood. It was indeed so overpowering, so fantastic, so incredible that it just couldn't be true. Yet.....

"There is no defence," said Marius softly. He didn't ask the question. He knew it was ancient folklore - the myth of the unconquerable hydrogen-breathing Skeetblikks; their invisible gravity shields, ruthless cruelty, grim progression of extermination carried on for centuries. And now Delius was on the threshold of such a fate - after almost three thousand years of culture behind it.

"What shall we do?" asked Oliphant quietly. "I thought perhaps a Great Concert tonight - I've written a requiem I'd like you to play - shall we say the Pathétique, Crantooner's Air on a Venusian Wind-piper, Bragteesser's Sketches of the Spiral Nebulæ, Beethoven's Pastoral, your own Triumphant Trumpet, and, finally, my Requiem."

Marius didn't answer. His eyes, somewhat glazed, stared through Oliphant. His chin, which some people thought delicate, was clenched tightly and the muscles at the side of his jaw worked as he gritted his teeth.

"There is no defence?" he said again, but this time he seemed to be asking himself the question.

Olyphant stared at the conductor.

"Marius, there is nothing we can do - " but the Conductor turned round slowly without speaking, and strode purposefully past the scarlet curtains.

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When the parent sun was high overhead, the Skeetblikhs landed on the outskirts of Stral. The operation had been carried out so many thousands of times before that it almost amounted to a reflex action. Twenty or thirty long yellow ships, some of them half an Earth mile long, hovered over the city, their blasters trained on important targets, ready for action. Fat troop carriers landed, and warrior Skeetblikhs crawled out, their transparent head-covers gleaming in the sun. The Skeetblikhs spread out in every direction, awaiting the signal to raze everything to the ground. It had been many years since they had been opposed, but nevertheless each expedition was treated as if opposing action was imminent.

At a signal, the advancing Skeetblikhs stopped, and they fanned out into a pre-arranged offensive pattern, blasters ready, facing an approaching enemy.

Marius was at the head of the militia as they advanced along the wide marble roadway, and never before in the history of galactic warfare had such a fantastic band of militants prepared to give battle.

Four hundred and twenty six citizens of Delius, most of them wearing white robes, tied round their waists with red cord, and with long hair flowing down their shoulders, carried violins over their right shoulders, bows in their left hands at the port position. They were singing a song stolen from the Ancients, a "Give me some men who are stout-hearted men -" sort of thing, although it must be admitted that the singing was but a facade to cloak their inner feelings. Many eyes flitted towards Marius, wondering perhaps if he was mentally afflicted. "All trained violinists to meet outside the Concert Hall at 12 Sands, by order of Olyphant" they were instructed, and parade they did. "Follow me," cried Marius in a ringing voice, and they followed him, even when the ships were poised overhead with blasters loaded and aimed. They turned the wide corner and saw rows of repulsive-looking Skeetblikhs completely immobile, waiting for the final order. Many citizens were tempted to run, but somehow, although it would have seemed strange to an outsider, they had been almost nurtured on 'the coming of the Skeetblikhs' and they were mentally reconciled to it. If it had been any other form of alien life, the citizens would have scattered in disorder.

Marius stopped, and the violinists shuffled into position on either flank of him for some 50 yards, probably 50 yards from the silent Skeetblikhs.

He commenced to tune his violin, and, satisfied, he played a trill - something demonical, a veritable cascade of primitive sound - devoid of melody - as if he were vainly seeking a vagrant semi-quaver. For perhaps thirty seconds he lashed his strings unmercifully - and then he stopped.

"Middle 'C'" he shouted in a strident voice, and as one, four hundred and twenty-six bows raced across the strings.

"Faster," shouted Marius, although he knew they couldn't hear him. He took several paces forward and waved encouragement.

Nothing like the cacophony of Middle C's played to the limit

had ever been heard since music originated in the jungle. It made the climax of Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture sound as if the piccolo player had pipped a wrong note.

And the SkeetblikS wavered - 10 -20 --100 ---200 at least rolled over on their backs, yellow stubby legs waving in the air, their bodies heaving unmercifully. The remainder thumped across to the waiting ships, blasters thrown aside in order to speed their retreat.

One or two of the hovering ships fired salvoes as a last defiant gesture, before they raced away to dwindle rapidly, frustrated little specks, over the horizon.

The violinist stood silently - in awe - looking first at Marius, his locks blowing nonchalantly in the breeze - then at the corpses of a goodly portion of the Skeetblik contingent sent to obliterate Delius.

Was this a manifestation of the ultimate power of music ?

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".....so for the Thanksgiving Concert this evening, I shall allow you to select whatever music you like, so long as you play my 'Tribute to our valiant Conductor!', beamed Oliphant.

Marius bowed low.

"I shall be delighted," he purred, and lowered his head respectfully before leaving the assessor.

Marius smiled to himself as he walked along the marble corridor to his Reverie Room. He lay down on the couch, put his fingertips together, and thanked the Great Lord of Melody that in just a few seconds that afternoon he had managed to achieve the exact resonant frequency - Middle C - to shatter the transparent headpieces of the hydrogen-breathing SkeetblikS. He thought about that - hmmm- how about 'Variations on a Correct Resonant Frequency.'

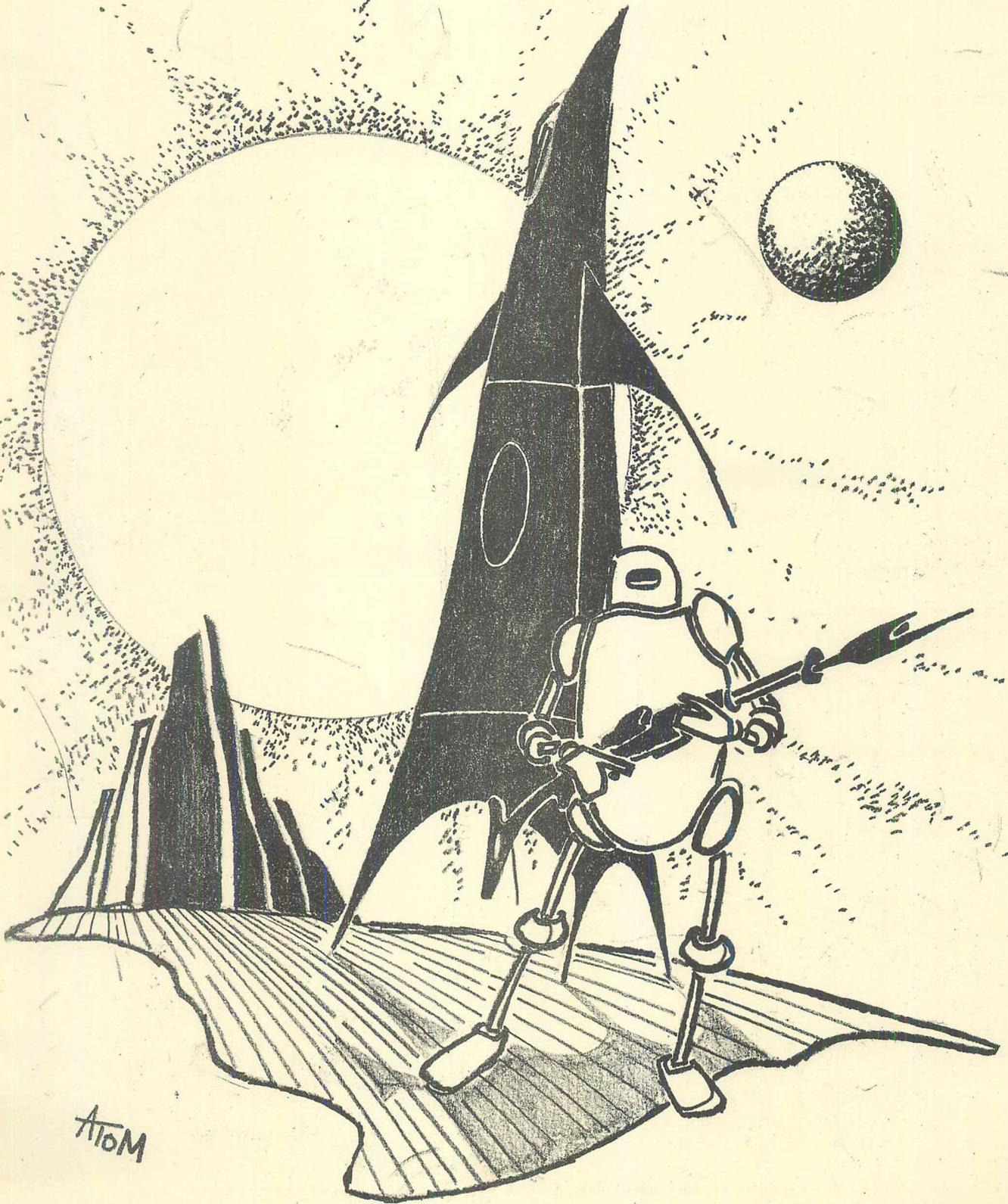
He started to scribble.

John Berry  
1958.

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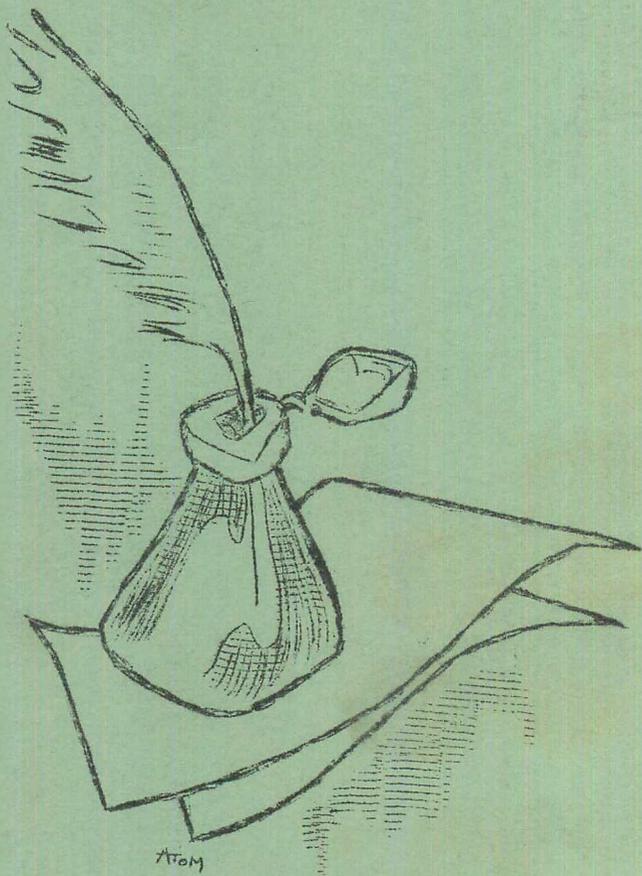
Now we come to the bizarre side of the business. You have just read or flipped through HARLEQUIN, published during May 1964 by John Berry, number 31, Campbell Park Avenue, Belmont, Belfast 4, Northern Ireland. All the proceeds will definitely go to the 1964 TAFF campaign to send a British fan to the World Science Fiction Convention in America later this year. Personally, I hope it's Arthur Thomson, (ATOM to you) but as I said earlier, whoever wins the ballot will get all the cash which accrues. Therefore, this issue will have cost you half a crown at least. Copies obtainable from Ella Parker, 43, William Dunbar House, Albert Road, Kilburn, West London, N.W.6. Just room now to sincerely thank Arthur Thomson for all this wonderful artwork, and same to my compadre Bob Shaw for the short but succinct introduction.....JB.

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