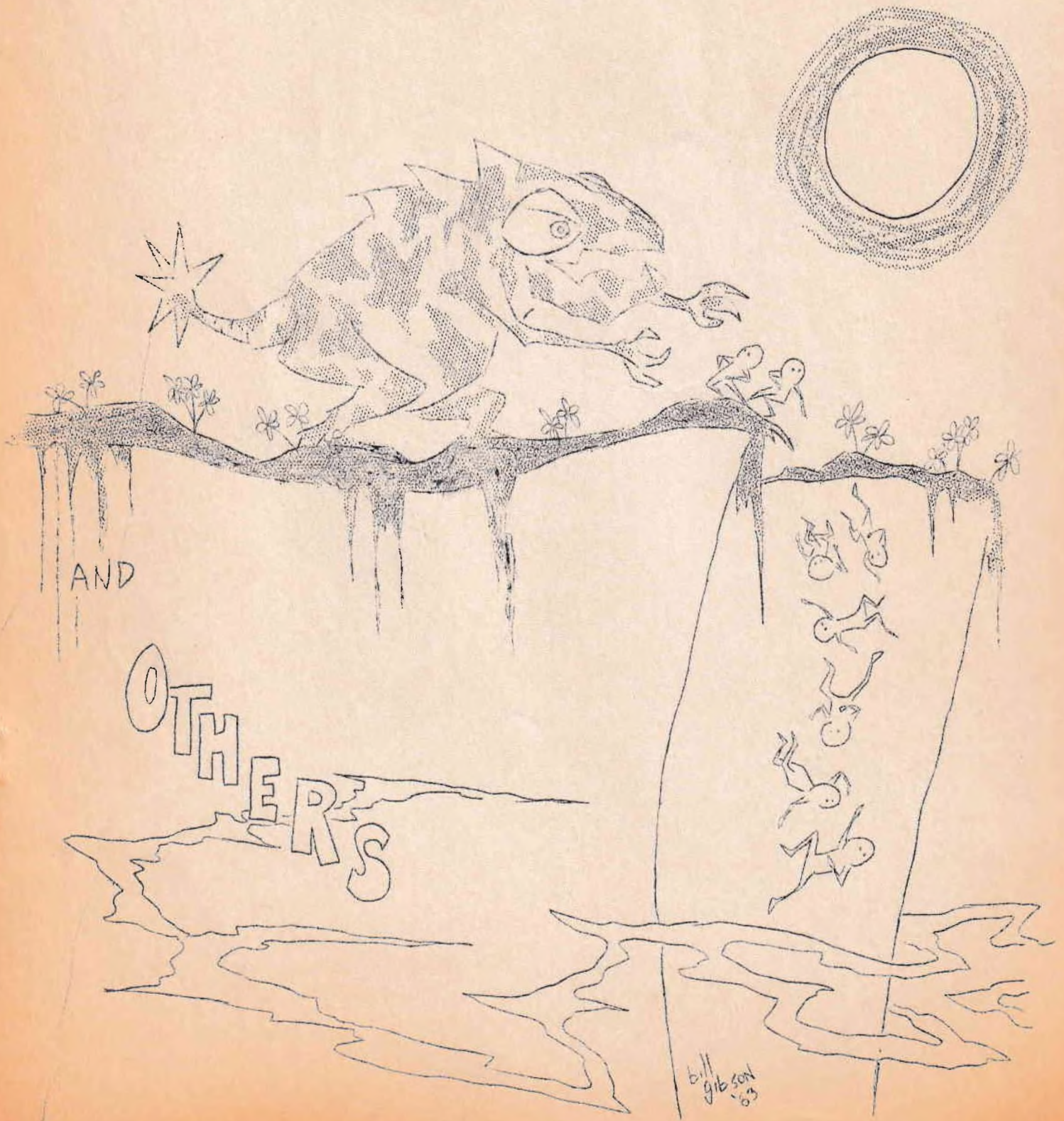


CLIFFHANGERS



AND

OTHERS

bill gibson '63

QUOTH THE WALRUS..

Welcome to the special cliffhanging issue of CLIFFHANGERS AND OTHERS. Rule number one of respectable apa publishing is, "Never, never compose on stencil." This is composed on stencil. Today is Dec. 15, and the deadline is Dec. 15, and this may have to be the final stencil. If the tenth mailing is late, this will be in it, otherwise it will be postmailed. Most of the material thish continues serials started in previous issues, and except for thanks to Lenny Kaye for the basis of a round robin chapter, is to be blamed on yed.

Vital statistics: CLIFFHANGERS AND OTHERS #4 is published for the tenth mailing of the SOUTHERN FANDOM PRESS ASSOCIATION by Rick Norwood, who, due to an incredible twist of fate is back at his old college address, Stewart Hall, Southwestern at Memphis, Memphis 12, Tenn. Printed on the new white A.B.Dick stencils, and we shall see how they turn out. Staff artist, Bill Gibson, came through again with a beautiful cover, which he printed himself. Many thanks.

Sinking from my awesome poetical aspirations of lastish, a few jotted notes on mailing nine: Dol Drum looked awfully nice. I'm not sure why, since the individual illos were sort of sloppy, but what with the scriptwrite and all the total effect was pleasing. This is no place to continue the eternal arguement over the existance or non-existance of existance or whatever, with all its sociopolitico religioeconomic significence [pirated from Kingston trio]. Since it doesn't look like anyone is going to any trouble to make their actions consistant with their beliefs anyway, on either side, I'm not sure what difference it makes what they believe they believe. Gosh, I'm sorry to hear that Chuck White is really a hoax. I just got back from visiting him a couple or two weekends ago, and he looked just as real nor you or I. Maybe nobody has told him that he is supposed to be a hoax yet.//Sporadic was entertaining ~~and~~ ~~in a private~~. I'd better explain about that sinister phone call. I had arrived in B'ham at some unghuly hour, only to realize that I didn't know Al Andrews phone number. All I could remember was that his brother-in-law had the phone in his name, and that said relative was a swimming pool contractor. So, turning to the yellow pages, I proceeded to call down the list of swimming pool contractors intending to ask each one if he had ever heard of someone named Al Andrews. The first number I dialed, a voice said, "Hi, Rick. This is Bill Plott." Prehaps in this context my exclamation is more understandable. //Outre was kind of random. People who complain about "realistic" writing usually mannage to be more offensive, in their offhand manner, than the calculated artistic offensiveness of the story itself. In other words, I liked "Tarzan and the Apes", and thought it deserved a better mention than you gave it.//Stranger than Fact suffered from the average quality of the fiction it presented, but should improve steadily. I had a nice visit with Jim Harkness on the way up to school, and will probably see him again on the way home. We talked about any number of things, and then went to church. Incidentally, he has had book reviews published by the newspaper here in Memphis.//Wormfarm was beautiful, simply beautiful, but the Badger Folk poem was so obviously based on Simak's City that you should, maybe, have simply used dogs as your characters and called it a retelling of dog tales. This is legitimate. Look at Bob Silverberg's fabulous retellings of famous s-f in verse.//Iscariot: contrary to popular belief, Johnny Weissmuller's Tarzan yell was made by Johnny Weissmuller himself.//"No room. No room."AIW

[continued from Cliffhangers #2, in SFFA mailing #5. Part two of a previously untitled round robin, this chapter was originally by Lenny Kaye, but has been freely adapted.]

RECRUIT

SYNOPSIS: Existence on earth had been dull and meaningless, and so I joined the army of Mars. I thought I knew what I was letting myself in for. I didn't. Here was an army of unpaid volunteers, which fought itself by day and the animals and plants of Mars by night, for a purpose which, to an earth bred mind, remained totally incomprehensible. It was night, and the Martians fought to save the lives they had so casually risked during the day. Attempting to save a fallen man from a charging beast, I found myself in the line of its charge.

CHAPTER TWO

I jumped to the side, and the animal ran bellowing past. It wheeled in a flurry of sand, its huge pads sending up spray like the prow of a motorboat. Its tiny red eyes fixed upon me as it charged again. I moved again, but, not yet so nimble as my native counterparts, I caught my foot among the rocks and fell sprawling on the sand. The creature lowered its horned snout, took an almost delicate side step, and came on. I could practically feel the horn before it hit, and grimaced in pain as it tore open my leg. The martians had kept up a steady fire from their poison guns, but the animal, only slightly slowed, came about again, and moved in to finish the job, shaking its head to fight off the effects of the drug. It was almost beside me when it finally wallowed to a halt, and tottered on its trunk like legs. Then, the huge body fell, and for a long moment I almost thought it would miss me. It didn't.

I've done my best to piece together what happened next. I have talked to the runner who carried me on his back to the distant field hospital, for example, and listened to a recording of the conversations which went on in the small room in which they placed me. It was probably something like this.

"He's still out..." said the voice. "But he should be coming around any minute now. There was nothing serious wrong with him, just a few cracked ribs, and of course loss of blood. Even the head wound should be cleared up in a day or so." They didn't even think my leg wound worth mentioning, although I bear the scar to this day. I must have opened my eyes during this summary of my injurys. I sat up and gazed vaguely at my surroundings. I had just walked out of the blackest of nights, with bottomless caves and fireworks. Not alert enough yet to notice the absurdity of the words, I asked "Where am I."

"Mars," came the laughing answer, but I only looked puzzled. The word wasn't exactly meaningless, I don't suppose, for the information must still have been somewhere in my mind, but at the moment it was beyond my reach, for I only asked, "Mars, what's that?" And there I lay, the first bona fide case of amnesia on the entire planet.

Ignoring me, the doctors talked among themselves, and this is the transcript of the recording.

First voice: "Is he kidding, do you think?"

Second voice: "Not necessarily. I seem to remember in Scott's "Terrestrial Medicine" that cases of memory loss are almost common."

First voice: "How silly."

Second voice: "Well, after all, they're only earthmen."

This exchange couldn't have meant much to me at the time, for I soon sunk back into unconsciousness.

FLASH GORDON
VS
THE GALAXIANS

When we last saw Flash Gordon, he and Dr. Zarkov were aiding Earth Security in the struggle against an underground revolutionary movement, the "Workers for the New Republic" led by a mysterious genius known only as "the Leader". It is imperative that the revolt be quelled at once, for alien invaders have gained control of the rim worlds, and are now constricting the net in which they hope to trap government and revolutionary alike. Meanwhile, back on earth, the Leader has unleashed a new menace, an incredible, unstoppable being of living pulsating energy. Now, as the creature receives the order to attack....

CHAPTER TWO
the encloptikon

The weird being lost its human form and floated to the slot beneath the screen of the entropic converger, on which the faces of Flash and Zarkov were framed. The Leader watched, trembling with glee, as it reformed inside Zarkov's secret laboratory and moved slowly and inexorably toward Flash.

As all eyes focused on the screen, a wizened old lab assistant moved stealthily from his station, crossing unseen the cavern which served as the main stronghold of the New Republican movement. Even as Flash's doom seemed sealed, the old man placed his shoulder against the great stone wheel, and with strength unlooked for in a frame so decrepit pushed the round rock into place over the gap from which the green energy-flame erupted. Instantly, with the power source stemed, the lab was plunged into simi-darkness, and the creature, its umbilical cord of power severed by the failure of the entropic converger, dissolved.

"Gork," the Leader shrilled, "What have you done?" But already the old man face was melting away, to reveal a bald green skull perched upon a long, undulating neck."

"My usefulness is at an end, and so I gladly sacrifice myself for our glorious cause. I die, but others will carry on."

"Grab him," yelled the Leader, but too late, for with these hissed words the alien had cast himself into the smouldering ruins of the creation cabinet, where raw, scalding metal ate deep into his unearthly flesh.

Mastering the pangs of disappointment which his thwarted plans entailed, the Leader began reactivating the lab with swift efficiency. Two henchmen quickly rolled back the stone, and the various electrical devices which studded the walls sprang into renewed life, although the creature on which the Leader's plans had hinged, once de-energized, was forever dissipated, now that the machine which brought it to life had been ruined. The body of the alien spy was placed in cold storage, for future study and dissection.

"That cuts it," snarled Carp Lenchman, gargland leader recruited

to the Leader's cause by promise of easy spoils to be reaped during the disorder following New Republican terrorist attacks. "The galaxians have allied themselves with the fedguy forces. Me, I'm going back to Chicago and set things up like they was in the good old days, before I ever met you." He started toward the lift shaft which led to an apparently abandoned miners shack on the surface of the mountain.

"Come back you fool," snapped the Leader in menacing tones. "Nothing of the sort has happened. The only concern of the galaxian spys in both camps is to insure that in our struggle with Flash Gordon and his band of totalitarian thought police, the WSC, neither side gains the upper hand. By playing one against the other, they hope to weaken both our forces until we are ripe for conquest. This is why we must smash the organized government now, with one decisive blow, while my infiltrated sympathizers are still in a position to grab the reins of power. Here, come into my private quarters and I will show you my plans for striking at the very heart of their defense.

Back in Zarkov's laboratory, he and Flash still discussed their narrow escape. "Whatever went wrong with the Leader's plans, you can bet it gives us only a momentary reprieve," Flash said.

"Then we'd better press our advantage. Come on, let's see Senator Clone."

The two walked through the door, which slid open automatically at their approach. In the Senator's office, where they were joined by Dale Arden, the four quickly got down to the matter at hand. The Senator, a robust man, veteran space captain of the first Skorpi war, though grayed at the temples, had lost none of the youthful vigor which made him a feared and respected political force at the world capital at Berlin.

"Thus far," Senator Clone explained, "The only real defence against the New Republican's spy ray, their entropic converger, is Zarkov's idea of using infrared lighting in all laboratories where top secret work is in progress, and it is only a matter of time before the Leader adjusts his device to pick up infrared wave lengths."

"My new detector," Zarkov put in, "Will let us know when that happens, but there is no way we can prevent it. I'm working on illumination on a varying coded wave length, similar to a radio scrambler, but there are technical problems in designing goggles which would let the lab workers see in the resulting light."

"Which is why our best line of attack lies in an open show of force. For this reason, we are moving your Enkloptikon to the outworlds, to quell the insurrections there. Several planets, Margo for example, and New Austria, where the majority of people are still loyal, have armies taken over by the New Republicans occupying all ports."

"But," objected Flash, "That will leave the Enkloptikon open to attack while it is being transported."

"We're leaving that problem to you, of course, as far as the space port. After that the FTL ship will follow an unrecorded flight plan until it rendezvous with the Seventh Outsystem Attack Force off... but then, I'm not at liberty to disclose the name of the star system, even to you."

"With the entire operation cloaked in necessary secrecy, won't the Loyalist party make trouble for you on the floor of Parliament. After all, shipping off our only finished Enkloptikon will weaken Earth defenses in case of a surprise attack."

"Flash boy, the Loyalists are always pecking away at me over one thing or another. You just concentrate on seeing that our baby doesn't fall into the hands of you-know-who."

Four jet-copters bracketed the massive truck which carried the enkloptikon, as it rolled along the Intercontinental Defense Highway. Ahead and behind police cars diverted commercial traffic. Flash himself rode a heavily armed air-sled, while Zarkov followed in a laboratory trailer, on which radar and other detection devices were mounted. As the convoy neared its destination, the DeGaul Spaceport, the highway made a wide curve to avoid the megopolis of Paris. The weather was chill and lowering, and as they had moved across country, occasional splashes of rain had pattered against the bubble dome of Flash's air sled, but now the setting sun burst through the clouds ahead, lighting the already visable towers of the port, and Flash felt a relaxing of tension. Soon, he could dismount from his cramped seat and stretch, and the danger period would be over without incident.

A distant thunder announced the arriving transport ship, right on schedule, although the flare of its exhaust was not yet visable through the gray ceiling of clouds. Flash's thoughts were on hot coffee and sandwiches, which there would be just time for before his return flight by jet to security headquarters, when Zarkov's voice crackled over the communicator. "Hold tight, comrade, I'm picking up something on the radio that I don't understand. It sounds like noise, but it is on the same wave length as the tower that is talking down the transport ship."

"Someone medling with the ship-to-tower communications? Why, they could be giving the ship false landing instructions!" Flash switched to open broadcast. "Attention all units! Turn around! Head back the way we came, fast! A two-thousand ton transport is about to drop in your laps!" Pausing only to pull down his helmet visor, Flash ramed home the lever which flipped away the bubble top of the sled. Instantly, the dull throbbing of jets bacame a deffening roar, as the whipping wind bore the full beat of the booming rockets which held aloft the massive metal ship, hung poised in the air somewhere above his head. Easing back on the stick, Flash pulled the sled into an almost verticle climb in an effort to get above the cloud bank. The damp whiteness closed in about him.

For a moment of unreality, his senses numbed by the constant noise, the cold air blast, and above all the eternal, blinding whiteness, Flash felt lost, detached from the world, as if the clouds would never end. Then, suddenly, without warning, a blood red ball of light appeared in the sky, directly above him, and like a falling thunderbolt, the lost freighter descended.

TO BE CONTINUED

WILL FLASH ESCAPE THE DEATH FROM THE SKY? WHO SENT THE RADIO SIGNAL WHICH SENT THE TRANSPORT OFF ITS COURSE? IS THERE A GALAXIAN SPY WITHIN SECURITY HEADQUARTERS ITSELF? WHAT NEW PLANS HAS THE FIENDISH LEADER? WHY DIDN'T SOMEONE ELSE WRITE THE SECOND CHAPTER OF THIS SERIAL LIKE THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO? WHICH ONE OF YOU IS GOING TO DO CHAPTER THREE?

[continued from Cliffhangers #4 in SFPA mailing #9. Chapter one in Cliffhangers #2, SFPA mailing #5.]

UNDER ONE MOON

CHAPTER THREE

Rand Rand dived deep in the pitted pools of the cliff base, while above him the water was peppered with the quickly desolving crystal spears. His mighty martian lungs sustained him as he sought the safety of the sandy bottom. One large fragment struck his side, and he pulled himself into the hollow which the low tidal waves had eaten into the underwater cliff, glad for its additional shelter.

In but a moment the last of the stalactites had fallen and dissolved and Rand returned to the surface. Already it was noon again. Perhaps once the days and nights of Earth had been nearly as long as those of his native Mars, but now the old planet spun in a mad dance which brought it around on its axis once every forty minutes.

Keeping his head as high above the rolling waves as possible with slow kicks of his toeless feet, Rand watched as once again the falls went through its cycle of freezing and collapse, and then turned his attention to the pirate ships which still rode at anchor a short distance away. Luckily the pirates had no inkling that there might be any other living thing on the eastern side of the mountain range which served as an almost impenetrable barrier the length of the seacoast from the Gulf of Mexiko to the ice fields of Kanada. Only the mountain pirates themselves knew the secret ways through the mountains, so with them lay Rand's only chance of regaining the Vale of Llith. Certainly there was no hope of fighting his way back up the underground river which had carried him to this desolate spot.

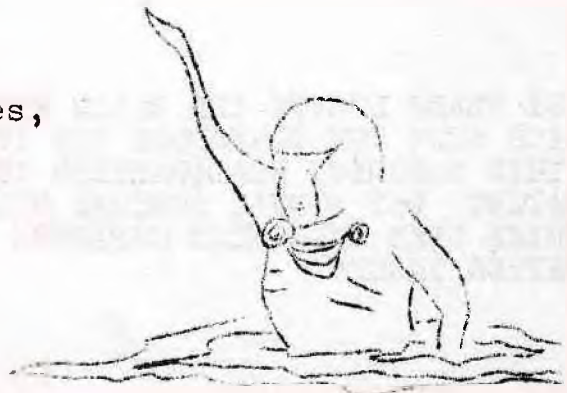
No mercy could be expected from the pirates if he should be captured by them. He had slain their chief, when he had assaulted Kola, Rand's beloved mate, and even now pirate bands searched for him on the neights. He must use trickery to gain his ends.

Again he dived and swam out into the trackless ocean, where nothing but green could be seen in any direction. He had to surface far more often than his need for air would dictate, in order to get his bearings, but slowly the pirate ships drew near, and at last he found himself rising and falling with the waves that laped the wooden sides.

But it was almost inevitable that someone aboard the ships should chance to see him as he swam, and already he heard the command drift from above, "Lower a boat."

Before he had time to swim more than a few feet, a longboat rounded the bow of the sailing ship, rowed by two pale skinned slaves, while three bronze pirates, splendid in bright, loose garments and armed with needle rays stood in the bow.

"There he is," the largest pirate shouted. "Kill the nasty little alien."



TO BE CONTINUED