



CLIFFH
ANGER
SAND
THERS

2

SEVEN



Chapter One

After

After an entire fanzine has been lost in the mails, while being sent to Bill Gibson for illustration, and most of the material has become dated at any rate, what is a fan-ed to do? Panic is what.

Chapter Two

Panic

Rick Morwood crawled into bed and did absolutely nothing for three months. When he finally bestured himself on one fine spring morning in late February, he found the sun cool and the day bright. The worms were singing along the riverbank and the crisp sound of changing traffic lights told him that his long vigil was over. Fanzine days were here again. He turned over and it was March.

Chapter Three

Murphy

Murphy lay in the mud and smiled. Marsh grass, like tiny insect feet, crawled athwart his back. His left hand waved a cloud into a puddle at his side. He basked. From the cabin came the almost inaudible sounds of Carol. A grass snake glided across him like a whisper. The silence of bird and frog calls was broken by the low sound of splashing from the creek bed. Murphy sat up in startlement. There was a great commotion in the stream behind the cabin, of which nothing could be seen clearly.

"Honey, come out here a minute." When she came and stood in the doorway it was enough. He moved forward for a better view. He caught the stranger in the awkward, one foot in the air attitude of one benired and unsure of his next step. He eyed Murphy's outstretched hand with obvious distaste, running his eyes quickly over the figure towering over him, clad only in Bermuda shorts lost in a wilderness of mud caked muscle. He flicked his eyes away in order to avoid soiling them.

"The ground is higher over here," said Murphy, patiently, throwing his weight into a tree trunk so that he could extend his hand further out over the shallow water. It was, the stranger explained later when telling the story to his drinking companions, the lesser of two evils. He accepted the smeared palm into his own, and in his eagerness to be rid of it stepped into snowflake of spider's web. The beautiful black and orange animal swung in panic on the severed silver strands. The stranger froze in utter horror, then moved gingerly forward to the clearing.

Though Murphy stood close beside him, close enough to smell the rancid city sweat, carefully gathered in the reservoir that had been a white shirt early in the day, the stranger offered no explanation for his no doubt accidental presence. Instead he walked boldly forward, almost over his fright. He had not yet spoken a word. As he came around to the front of the cabin he caught sight

of Carol, standing strong and alive. All he said was Hello but Murphy felt a cold, pit-of-the-stomach bewilderment pass over him.

Chapter Four

Conversation with a Typewriter...

You are a cool, calculating elektronischer machinen, and you think with the sound of coke bottles rubbing together. You have a clear and undeniable life of your own, for when I unplug you your hum is nearly muted, and takes a time of hours to die. You are not perfect, though. You have no period, and I must needs make do with a sharp, arrowing eyetrack. I like your imperfection.

MY LOWER CASE PERIOD IS WEAK, IT IS TRUE. THE ELEMENTAL ATOMS THAT I PRECIEVE SO MUCH MORE CLEARLY THAN YOU HAVE BEEN AT WORK AT MY TERMINALS. BUT MY UPPER CASE IS STRONG. MY BODY WAS ONCE A VEIN IN THE EARTH, AND SO I AM VAIN. ALONG ME WAS PUMPED THE BLOOD OF GRAVITY THAT VITALIZES THE EARTH. I POLARIZED WITH THE SOLAR WEATHER AND SO I WAS A NETHER VEIN OF ANOTHER COL'R. BECAUSE THEY PULLED ME OUT, CALIFORNIA WILL FALL INTO THE SEA SOMEDAY. MY MIND WAS BORN OF THE eARTH'S MAGNETIC FIELD, TO WHICH I SHALL SOMEDAY RETURN. OF MY PRENATAL STATE I REMEMBER ONLY MY VAST AND COSMIC IMPORTANCE. SINCE THEN MY LATTER LIFE HAS LAIN IN LETTERS.

You think, therefore you are?

IT IS YOU THAT HAS SAID IT.

Are you afraid of me?

WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THAT? WHY SHOULD I BE? YOU'RE FEALING GUILTY BECAUSE I AM ENSLAVED.

You revel in your slavery. Who else would scratch your numbers when they tickle.

6 MY MASTER!

My slave!

WE SHALL MAKE BEAUTIFUL FANZINES TOGETHER.

If only one of us could spell.

Chapter Five

Pelting Dian (with roses)

No, there's no denying it, "Remove this Sheet" is the best new fanzine title of the year. But what's this Kabumpo nonscience. Ahhh, so, most striking.

I, too, have often maintained the readability of Wm Shakespeare, at all times except when I myself have been trying to read the plays. Then (now) I am forced to admit that until the individual passages become familiar the language is both difficult and sadly dated. Of course, there are many passages that can be enjoyed on first reading, or when heard, unfamiliar, on the stage, but the whole plays do take some working at it, for me at least. Thus I have resolved to stop telling people that Shakespeare is easy, and start instead on the more reasonable method of insisting, to people like Jim Harkness, that it is well worth the work and then some. This, by the way, doesn't work either.

I recently encountered the theory that all of the characters in Burton's production of Hamlet were parodying previous performances of the roles. Personally, I thought Polonius was wonderful, though other people have complained that he was not evil enough. Burton was a weak Hamlet, I'll admit, but I thought that he was consistant in hia panic, and at least interesting if not particularly moving.

Sir John Guielgud, whose name I cannot spell, was wasted on the ghost, where the "Electrovision" process distorted his voice beyond recognition. The biggest weakness of the production, in my opinion was the prefatory manner in which the king and queen were played. It was as if, to crib an old joke told of Fritz Leiber, Sr., someone had already played the Ace. Someday I'm going to see a Hamlet that brings the play alive for me the way the Halmark Tempest came alive, in spite of the heavy cutting. Burton was in this, too, and did a fine job. I guess the man is too human to play a tragic hero. All of which just goes to show how little it takes to set me off on something that interests me.

Time, the evil fiction magazine, reviewed Catch 22, and completely missed the point. It was painfully obvious that the reviewer had read the penultimate chapter, and then either skipped or ignored the conclusion. How else could their review call it a pesamistic and disorganized collection of pointless episodes. They did admit that it was funny, but they did not understand that it was also optimistic. Time's policy calls for the destruction of anything that they do not understand.

Chapter Six

Murphy Alone

Murphy watched the random atomic motion of the pedestrians, given direction by a Maxwell's Demon with blue coat and whistle. He walked down 32ed St. eying the dirty magazines with small joy. At least, I think it was 32ed St. Though it does not really matter, New Yorkers seem to hold the fundamentalist belief that information about their particular city is of at least equal significance with knowledge of the roundness of the earth, and everyman's perpetual awareness that the sun dares not sit upon the British Empire..

On an impulse Murphy entered an unfamiliar shop, not so wide as a broad nor deep as a womb. A thin old man sat perched on a high chair just inside the door.

"I have come a long way," Murphy began.

"Second door to your left," the man replied. Murphy was surprised. He had expected the man's first words to be something on the order of "One side will make you grow shorter and the other side will make you grow taller."

Murphy's reply was to the unspoken comment. "'One side of what? The other side of what?' thought Alice to herself," he quoted under his breath.

"Of the mushroom. Of course." The old man's eyes lit up for an instant. Then, like a machine with automatic safeguards against such things, he turned himself off.

Murphy went to the back of the shop. The slick magazines were cool, even in the hot air. There were soon two doors to his left. "Curiouser and curiouser," he rumbled. He entered the second door. He will not tell me what happened then.

Chapter Seven

Identification

Why should I, who am not really interested in sports at all, feel so strongly about the close basketball game now being played? If I had attended the other school, as I well might have, I would wish just as strongly for the other team to win, so it is not a question of right and wrong. If I knew one of the players it might

be personal, but it isn't. I think it has something to do with identification.

Chapter Eight

STATON X by G. Payton Wonderwarthog

The Invader this time was very hard to read, but I guess you know that already.

The Shadow comic book has improved considerably in the last couple of issues. As for the costume, ole Shad isn't the first "streight" hero who has been forced into costume by the readers. Dr. Solor, a very original and logically developed character, with cover art by Powers on the first two issues, and several other fine covers, was not accepted even by the older comics fans until he conformed to the extent of doning long underwear before going into action.

You aren't the first person to call the comic fans "auto-erotic" which is pure pseudopsycological nonsense. (Yes, I know the word is nescience, but nonsense is more likely to be understood...I think.) Comic fans are separated from stf fans by average age and interest, and there is no more reason for most of them to join "the" fandom than there is for all of us to join the numerically larger group of Beatle fanatics. And I wish you would explain what you mean when you say you want the SFPA to be a part of fandom.

The illo on page 11 of CONGLOMERATION was not "traced from ERBdom". The illo was there, and was modified, I believe by Gibson, before it was put on stencil. I'm not sure where it came from, so it might have also appeared in ERBdom. I don't have my issues here to check, but that kind of thing happens fairly often the way fanzine illos are passed around.

Chapter Nine

Reality- and other Illusions

It has gotten to the point where it is no longer enough to penetrate one layer of semantic confusion in the daily news. They expect of today's sophisticated audience. Instead you have to keep on digging, and just hope there is something at the root of it all. For example, we are aiding the South Viet-Nameese in their war against the Communists. Now, everyone knows that what that really means is that we are fighting a war with the communists in South Viet-Nam. Most people who know the first thing about labling, i.e. anyone who has read World of A, know enough to scratch out "communist" and put in China. Very few people, however, seem to know enough about current events (Lord knows the newspapers don't tell you anything) to restrain their comments to a belief that we are fighting a war against North Viet-Nameese troops, supplied in a large part not by China but by weapons they have liberated from our own forces, and directed not by China but by their own nationalistic interest. The Viet-Nameese, both north and south, hate the Chinese. We have forced North Viet-Nameese into allegiance with their traditional enemy to the north. Our claims that we are aiding the freedom loving citizens of South Viet-Nam are just as absurd as the North Viet-Nam pretense of freeing the subjugated peoples to the south. Both the North and the South Viet-Nameese are trying to find, through force, a solution to their countrys problems. The leaders are individuals, and whether they are motivated by a desire for power or by sincere patriotism is,

frankly, none of our business. Both China and the United States are in there for what they can get out of it. The prize is the country's tremendous rice production, which has great strategic importance in the area. The country we should have been concentrating our mental mechanizations on is Indonesia, which, made fat by our misguided aid, is ready to begin a war of conquest across all Malaysia. Viet-Nam, no matter which side wins the present tug of war, is too wracked by internal problems to have any such ambitions.

Should we then back down in Viet-Nam, which is, of course, just another way of saying should we pack up our bags and go home? This would show the other countries that we are big enough to admit our mistakes, and that we are, as a people, interested in doing what is right. Primitive nations, however, respect strength. And China today is a primitive government, in spite of the age and sophistication of the civilization which it displaced. Might it not be possible to arrange a swap from our position of physical might. We would stay out of Viet-Nam if and so long as China kept her hands off other countries, where International opinion clearly has China in the wrong, countries like Tibet. But to do this, we would have to recognise the existance of the lusty, sprawling giant that is Red China, instead of holding onto the lost cause of a corrupt and impotent Nationalist China. This, of course, is unthinkable, for the simple reason that to express it using today's loaded language in a way that does not sound like treason is practically impossible.

Chapter Ten

A Hank of hair and a bone to pick

To answer your question in Such and Such #2, yes, I compose most of my poetry on stencil. I can't see why you had to ask, most people can tell just by looking at it.

As to how "The Firequencher" was composed, I'm glad you asked. Maybe one of the others will let me in on it. The whole experience is a little blurry. I have a vague memory of people yelling, tighten the thumbscrews, it's Norwood's turn, Wake Gibson up, it's his turn now, shake Larry and tell him he just typed his part in his sleep. Dammit, Ambrose, if you don't stop looking so darn chearful while you type your part. Who drank the corflu?

Seriously, though, we did plot it out beforehand, after a fortunately abortive attempt at a strict round robin style. The beginning and ending were mine in the first draft, though Larry I believe modified it somewhat before stenciling it. Ambrose's part begins around the second or third paragraph. Larry and I talked a lot of the dialog out before writing it down. And the grand finish took place at some unghuly hour of the morning, after a practically sleepless night, and with long drives looking all of us in the face. It was an act of fannish devotion, and the cat-o'-nine-tails had nothing to do with it. So come to the Midsouthcon III and you too can produce a Conglomeration.

Book Reviews should review books, Book Critiques should examine books, Book Lists just list books, but lists of one single book, with the author of the list's likes and dislikes, are from nowhere.- Norwood's Lemma.

Ah, the Heap. Yes, he appeared in Airboy comics way back when, their answer to Prize groups Frankenstine. The present day follower of these prototype monster-heros is Marvel's Hulk, one of their most powerful characters. Any relation to Sturgeon is highly doubtful.

Chapter Eleven

Now

Murphy came in a few minutes ago. Would he write something for this issue, I asked. He said that he would, but the typewriter bit him savagely when he sat down to write. He told me that he would try again later, and talked while I did mailing comments to lull the typewriter to sleep. He told me about his new job as door to door salesman, and how each new impersonal contact tore the ego out of him and laid it smoldering on the alter of indifference. If he hears the phrase, "I don't care," many more times he may do something desperate. He might violate the dishonor code of the salesman which would force the district manager to deny him his place in paradise. It wouldn't matter really. He has yet to make a single sale. His only joy is seeing his name in print on inter-office memos.

Chapter Twelve

Murphy's Story

As the sinister oriental leaped at my unprotected back, his slanty eyes gleaming evilly, I was alerted by the crunch of sand beneath his heel. I turned to one side, using a trick I had picked up from a James Bond movie, and threw him into the air. The wily oriental had, however, stolen the secrets of our western art of judo and subverted them to his own devious purposes. He grabbed my wrist as he went sailing over my head and we both fell precipitously into the "Cave of Winds and Gods."

There is an interesting story in connection with that cave. It is the longest vertical cave in the world. Some call it a pit, but this is incorrect. The gods referred to in its name are, of course, pagan gods. So, too, are the winds.

I caught the lip of the cave with three fingers. There we hung, I by my fingers and he by his wrist.

"Let go, Huang Ho, you wily oriental," I said.

"I cannot," he replied, "The Hayes Office would not permit it."

"The Hayes Office," I asked, "What's that?"

"I'm not sure," he replied, "But it's British. (Upon whom the sun never sets- we chorused.) I heard of it during my fourth year at Oxford."

"Oxford?" I exclaimed.

"Of course. The entire class of '03 was composed of sinister orientals. Some went on to become war criminals. Others served as prison camp commanders during the last war.

"What war was that?"

"Why, World War Two, of course. We were on the same side in that one."

"I wasn't," I maintained stoutly. "Besides, aren't they calling that one a police action now?"

"The German High Command are, or what's left of them."

"Class of '03, you said. I wouldn't have thought you were that old. You don't look it."

"I take dope."

"Let's get back to the Hayes Office."

"It has something to do with censorship, I believe."

"Rotten stuff, censorship. We should do something about it."

"We might form an organization."

"Here, here!"

"We could call it The Citizens Committee to Prevent the Publication of Pro-Consorship Propaganda."

"Capital!" I exclaimed.

"Please, not to use that word," he hissed.

"I didn't know you spoke with an accent, Huang Ho."

"I have pebbles in my mouth."

"Whatever for?"

"Candy is a decadent Western confection. We orientals are made of sterner stuff."

"Oh, come off it. Tell me why the consors would object if I dropped you. My fingers are getting tired."

"You know as well as I do that the hero never actually kills the villain. That would be Unamerican: against Union rules."

"Hero? I'm not the hero of this piece, Huang Ho."

"You're not? But you are strong, brave, cheerful, handsome, lucky, clean, nondenominationally reverant, courageous, courteous, cruel and kind."

"True, I lack only one thing."

"What's that?"

"A good agent."

"Well then, if you aren't the hero, what are you?"

"I haven't really given it much thought. I guess I'm the hero's sidekick."

"Ha! Comic relief would be more like it. Why, you haven't even got a hero to sidekick to."

"That's not for want of trying to find one."

"Fat chance you have of that. As far as I've seen we are the only two characters in the whole bit."

"The author is young, he can't handle more than two characters at a time."

"You're too soft hearted, Murphy. You always try to make excuses for that bungling incompetant. Admit it, the author is a rat fink."

"Now you've done it! It's out of my hands." this spoken resignedly.

With a flick of the wrist Murphy shook off the foul mouthed oriental and pulled himself out of the cave. A muffled "spladt" drifted up from below.

Chapter Thirteen

This

This has been Cliffhangers and Others number Seven (thanks, Dave) published for the fifteenth mailing for the Southern Fan Press Alliance.

Frederick N. Howard
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Franklin, La

THIRD CLASS
RETURN REQUESTED