

SAPRISTI!
C'EST

DRE
FAUSTENSTEIN

NUMERO 1

NOM D'UN
CHIEN!

"You can do anything you want,
if you're prepared to do it badly."

-- Peter Jones.

This is

DR FAUSTENSTEIN NO. 1

written and produced by David Redd.

Editorial address: "Kensington"
9 Queensway
Haverfordwest
Dyfed
Wales

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your own grotty fansine, or $\frac{1}{2}$ lb of Swiss
chocolate. Airmail extra.

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If Dr F. drops dead before your sub expires, tough.

The editor will make every effort to ensure loss of or damage to
all unsolicited manuscripts, especially if
accompanied by S.A.E.

Cover by Cheapo.

Next issue: April 1979.

YOO LUCKY PEOPLE

Editorial

You have got your hands on DR FAUSTENSTEIN No.1, you lucky people. What is DR F., why did I send it to you, and do you have to pay money for it? These questions need no answers here, I trust. However I remember years ago receiving the first issue of QUICKSILVER, out of the blue as it were, and because there was an extreme lack of information about the magazine I was a little puzzled as to why I'd got onto the mailing list. Did the editor have something against me? Did he expect me to enjoy its big-name fiction? Or was he just groping in the dark for readers (er, metaphorically) the way I'm doing with DR F.? To make the present situation quite clear, then, you have received DR F. for one or more of the following reasons:-

- (1) You might be interested in the articles.
- (2) You might send a good Lcc.
- (3) I had your address handy.
- (4) You sent me a fanzine.
- (5) You sent me money.
- (6) I want you to persuade your friends to send me money.

Cross out the categories which do not apply; when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains is the truth. (Nobody comes under category 5 as yet, which is why you lot in category 6 were included. Get busy!)

And now, looking through my original pretentious notes for this page, I'll salvage my reasons for producing DR F. The more discerning amongst you can skip straight on to the next feature; anyone who gets high on rereading Greg Pickersgill's prose had better stay with me.

You see, for too many years I've been pursuing a career (note the word "pursuing") in civil engineering. It isn't entirely satisfying. For one thing, despite all the publicity about corruption in construction nobody has come cash in hand trying to corrupt me yet. For another, I grew up with sf; a chap whose imagination has roamed the universe can't settle down to watching wet concrete for the rest of his life. And with a couple of my stories belatedly seeing print in 1978, this winter my thoughts returned seriously to sf. Is this the time to start writing the Greatest British SF Novel, or is Rob Holdstock even now beating me to it? Be that as it may, I fell foul of Greg's reminiscences about his NEW PEMBROKESHIRE REVIEW that never was. He described it thusly:-

"...it was going to be really good. Going to have fiction, book reviews, poetry, articles about really fascinating things I'd been reading about in the 'quality' Sundays or in the back shelves of the local library, and was going to be an all-round sensible and mind-improving little magazine....the artwork was going to be pretty good too...."

Now how could anyone read that testament and not recall his or her own early ambitions without a tear, or a snigger? I couldn't. So DR F. is going to be a genuine really good first fanzine; about, at, by, with or from sf. Mind you, I don't read much current science fiction, so the reviews are going to be a bit peculiar.

The success or otherwise of DR F. depends upon an unknown quantity: have I the skill to counterfeit naive enthusiasm for page after page, issue after issue? Of course I have! Naive confidence comes naturally to me, and burning enthusiasm can be generated quite easily for anything unconnected with civil engineering. But a word of warning: unless I receive some really good letters of comment, next issue I'll do a serious editorial about the State of SF Today. Your fate is in your own hands.

Feature

Start paying attention now. I'm only going to explain this feature once. A couple of years ago I started a notebook for useful tips about story construction, pacing, characterisation, etc., and I'm going to reproduce my notes here exactly as I jotted them down. Some of them are trivial, some incoherent, some clearly wrong....but every one of them will help fill up the gaps in DR F. All text between vertical lines, as here, will consist of chunks from my notebook. When an extract ends in the middle of a sentence, it will be continued in the next convenient space.

1. THE CITY AND THE STARS (Clarke)

When Vanamonde is introduced, the first sentence after the asterisks uses the impetus of our expectancy to give the impression of age before naming him....thus the final word is half answer and half further mystification, an effect missing from the more usual construction "Vanamonde had seen the Galaxy revolve many times", where the name comes too early for any impact.

2. MONTRALDO (Cheever)

"The first time I robbed Tiffany's, it was raining." A good opening, contrasting an ordinary observation with a far-from ordinary protagonist. In this story the abnormal (hence interesting) acts of the protagonist provide a firm framework within which a simple observation of an abnormal situation unfolds to best effect.

3. 1922 -- 1972 (BEC - Rene Cutforth)

"We had this (extract), these (extract) and those (extract)." More effective than three non-linked introductions to the recordings.

4. HENRIK IBSEN (Meyer, V.3)

"Have you ever noticed how in conversation a woman usually ends a remark with a word of two or three syllables, a man with a monosyllable?" (Presumably in 19th century Riksmal.)

5. (forgotten) (Blish/Atheling?)

Lester del Rey's trick of always working out a new ("personal") explanation for whatever scientific gimmick he uses in his yarns gives those yarns an extra touch of originality.

6. (a) THE SNATCH / (b) TWO AND TWO MAKE FIVE (Graeme)

(a) compare MacVicar: an inactive writer narrator must do something active to save the hero just before hero's final glory - or else narrator is redundant.

(b) compare Thomas (SORCERORS OF SET) in which Sexton Blake knows a trail is false but follows it from thoroughness; Mather following a false lead when the truth is obvious merely frustrates the impatient reader, lacking the psychological tension of Blake's adventure because "ather is groping not struggling. (Graeme's sheer readability carries us through.)

7. HAUSER'S MEMORY (Siodmak - film version)

Note the way an easily-grasped physical process (patient

LIVING LAND

Fiction

Even a personalzine can have problems with its contributor. For this first issue I'd decided to lead with two exceptionally brilliant stories of mine; needless to say these aren't the two. I've lost the MS of one, and require another editor's permission to use the second. These authors are right awkward idiots to deal with -- you can't imagine the agonies we editors have to suffer. In the meantime I can offer you ALTAIR PROBE later in this issue, and LIVING LAND which starts right here.

"Richard!" his father called. "A glider's coming!"

Richard looked up in surprise. Nobody had warned him to expect visitors. Up in the blue sky he saw a slim ochre aircraft soaring gracefully beside the glittering peak of Sagarmatha. He jumped into action, running to drive the herd of grazing oxen away from the landing field. The glider was coming down. Before his shouting the great beasts moved only slowly, reluctant to leave their sweet grass, but Richard yelled and prodded them on with all the determination and authority a twelve-year-old boy could muster. He succeeded. The oxen ambled away behind the line of trees; the glider came to rest upon a green and shimmering plain.

From the glider, two men whom he did not know walked the short distance to his father's house. Richard saw one man mopping his face with a cloth in the heat. His father was waiting under the shade of the big banyan tree, and when the newcomers reached him they began talking. Richard hurried across to join them, being eager to share any excitement.

"Thanks, Richard," said his father. "You got the beasts clear quickly -- well done. Now, I'll have to guide these men to the island. I suppose you'd like to come?"

"Yes, please!" He walked beside his father as all four of them followed the well-trodden path to the lake shore. They had to step around some oxen which also used the path. Richard was not interested in grown-up affairs, for his father often took white strangers to the island temple, but the journey would give him a chance to visit the island. Usually on these trips the boatman's daughter came with him; her name was Dal. Richard was the only white child in the area.

Dal lived in the thatched farmhouse by the shore. Richard ran on ahead to the buildings, passing new haystacks, passing lichen-covered stone walls, passing water-buffaloes chewing cud...until he saw Dal's mother, beating moistened grain within a hollowed-out log. The Newar woman smiled on seeing him, and called for Dal to come quickly. The girl appeared at once, still clutching one of the corncobs she had been stringing up to dry. She was cheerful and talkative, a year younger than Richard. Her mother said yes, she could go to the island.

The men were deep in discussions as they reached the shore: "You'll need luck," Richard's father was saying. "Even if the priests agree, the king won't let us corrupt his people. If you get a chance to ask him, that is."

"He's got to see reason sometime. We need workers, they need technology--and how! Look at this filthy farmhouse! It's time the segregation was stopped." The man paused. "I can see the boat, but where's our ferryman?"

Dal's father was away, but her eldest brother came out to untie the

boat. Richard watched the strangers, noticing their distaste for the farm and their constant sour talk. Although they too were white he did not like them. The Newar grownups were much more fun, with their jokes and singing and dancing. Even their farming was much more fun than the dull studying and machine-minding his own people had to do.

Richard and Dal scrambled first into the boat. The men followed. Dal's brother got in last, letting his rope slide free of the mooring-post on the bank, and their lake crossing began. Richard and his father helped row, which seemed to surprise their visitors. The lake water was smooth and peaceful, reflecting the glacier-sided mountain tops which rose pyramid-like twenty thousand feet above the plateau.

A yellow-robed priest was awaiting them, even though no signal had been sent about the visit. Richard guessed that someone had seen the glider landing. Every time he had been here a priest had been ready, standing in the avenue of rhododendrons as the boat grounded.

His father said, "We have come to ask permission to visit Kantipur." The priest nodded, and led the three men away towards the temple. Kantipur was a distant city where the king lived.

In the boat, Dal's brother ate a banana and went to sleep. Richard and Dal decided to explore the island; hidden among the trees were several of their favourite groves and holy places.

In a clearing they met another priest, an old friend of Richard and Dal whose name was Bahadur. He advised them to wait on a little headland nearby. Presently Bahadur and the temple brothers would be bringing flutes and drums, and there would be much music.

So Richard and Dal went on to the headland, and lay down in the grass beside the water's edge. Richard could see Dal's mother on the far shore, very clear in her blue top and black skirt against the brown farmhouse wall. He could hear crows and cooing pigeons in the trees above him; dragonflies darted past; and jumping fish made circular ripples among the floating orchid petals. What books of grey print could equal the living magic he saw around him?

The carved wooden gables of a temple building jutted through the trees behind him. The priests would not have to travel far for their music.

Dal asked, "Does your father want to visit Kantipur?"

"No, but those strangers do. They're asking permission to see the King. Did you see their glider?"

"The King won't let them near him," said Dal. "He'll tell the priests here to keep them away."

Richard said, "They'd be shocked if they knew that I'd been to..." and Dal laughed.

Richard, defying the laws, had been to the city. Secretly, of course, smuggled in by Dal and her brothers. Richard, tanned and dirt-smearred, had passed for a Newar. They had walked all the way, arriving one misty evening like mountain ghosts in their white wrappings and scarves. The next morning, in sunshine, Richard had entered the bustling life of Kantipur. Metal-beaters at work, performing bears, fruit sellers, beggars.... gaudy temples of Malla times, huge box-like "offices" from more recent years. The children spent some days in the service of a rich merchant, earning enough money to feed themselves and buy coloured bracelets for Dal and her mother. That money came as coins, solid and heavy, quite unlike the flimsy papers which Richard's people used.... just as this city was quite unlike the cities of Richard's people.

With his parents he had been to the cities of the white men: cold, silent, cheerless places, clinging uncomfortably to the stony middle heights between the green rice-terraces below and the high shining ice-walls of mountains like Sagarmatha. His people were refugees, survivors of the fighting which had destroyed the outside nations years ago, and that was why they were

limited to the slopes where once only the yeti had prowled, why they were forbidden to use land that the Newars might need.

A white city, or a Newar city?

Richard knew which he preferred.

A lime-green butterfly danced past Richard's nose. A white one followed it. There were no butterflies in the concrete boxes on the bleak slopes.

"Listen," said Dal, after some time. Richard ceased dreaming and listened.

His father's voice came floating through the trees: "So we're still limited to what we've got. What more did you expect? I've got no further in all the years I've been stationed here."

"Yes, but they can't go on locking us out like this! We've got to see the King, whatever these priests say. Let's stop here and think what to do before we go back to the boat--"

The voices faded. Richard felt sorry for his father. Yet again, his people had been refused permission to visit the city. Almost immediately, the leaves beside him parted as yellow-clad priests arrived with their musical instruments. Bahadur smiled at him and Dal. "Still here? Good! Join us in our prayers!"

Dal agreed eagerly, but Richard was still troubled. "Bahadur, why is it wrong for my people to visit your cities?"

"It is not the visit which is wrong, but the results of the visit. Your people would wish to change things, and we do not want any changes."

"But--" Richard was very persistent,--whether chasing oxen or questioning a priest-- "won't you help us like my father wants? Help us do things our way?"

Bahadur snook his head. "Not your way, no. Our land is living, and yours is not."

Richard pictured the empty world outside, and understanding came. Maybe, he thought, his father was not trying very hard to persuade the Newars to change.

wheeled aboard aircraft) can be substituted for the more orthodox exposition-by-briefing or similar.

8. CAKES AND ALE (Maugham)

Organisation of material leads to construction: either cut straight to important matters, or develop build-up (a) as interesting material in its own right, and (b) to increase main scene effect by contrast or expectancy.

9. ALL SEASON'S SONG (Burchell)

Superb use of (standard) human reactions to involve reader: experienced Oscar Warrender suggests improvements to Fulford's song-cycle, then query & explanation all making Warrender's encouragement more believable. Also dialogues which convey very clearly different relationships of characters to each other: uncertain, hopeful, self-assured, upper-class, etc. (Too numerous to quote, but the subject-matter aids the technique.) Plotting always a delight. (I enjoyed the technique if not the story.)

Review

Quite an elegant cover, despite the names of ten authors sprawling across it. Inside we find not ten but thirteen stories; naturally the other departments have been pruned ruthlessly to a mere two (both worthwhile). In a magazine of only 132 pages, thirteen stories have to include a fair number of very short items—read too many at one sitting and the effect is something like strobe-induced catatonia. But with AMAZING now limited to quarterly appearances, editor Ted White is clearly determined to give value for money. Comparison with the November 1975 issue—the nearest unread AMAZING within my reach—shows the fiction wordage considerably increased now, with denser but clearer print indicating a solid improvement. (I won't examine the 1975 issue any further. I don't feel like reviewing an out-take of THE FOREVER WAR or yet another Robert F. Young story....all the magazines I buy seem to have Robert F. Young stories in them, and once I've said "a Robert F. Young story" further criticism is impossible. So, back to November 1978.)

The lead novelette is Christopher Anvil's WHILE THE NORTH WIND BLOWS, about typical Anvil colonists fighting alien beasties and human idiocies. If you were reading ASTOUNDING religiously twenty years ago you'll enjoy this one. (You may not enjoy the last couple of pages, where hero and girl quote doggerel at each other, but it goes well until then.)

Now for the other twelve stories. The ones I liked were DUEL by Charles V. de Vet, THE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE by William F. Temple, and WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WHEN YOU SEE YOUR LADY STROLLING ON THE DECK OF THE STARSHIP? by Grant Carrington. After a title like that I should have hated the Carrington, but despite myself I warmed to it quickly: my only complaint was that the major situation was set up and resolved so fast. After being told there was no vacancy in the crew for him, the hero needed only a couple of paragraphs to make himself an indispensable computer genius, and his final success seemed too easy in spite of his problems. (In fact, many stories here give an odd impression of being underdeveloped—they need a little more meat on them.) DUEL concerns a feline alien and a human hunter stalking each other across the wilds of Kurdistan, an old plot given new life by the aptly-chosen background. THE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE describes an ill-fated experiment in hypnotism: again, craftsmanship saves a tired theme. Temple's first stories for AMAZING appeared as early as 1939, and it's nice to see him still writing.

Nine more to go. Competent glimpses of Spinrad/Ellison territory from Vol Haldeman and Eileen Gunn; a well-controlled parable of exploitation from Robert F. Young; a high-vacuum survival story from the promising Steve Miller; a smooth secret-agent thriller woven around philosophy from James Sallis—good variety of subject-matter here, you notice. Nothing genuinely amazing but at least you can tell that the editor is awake. In passing, this issue demonstrates the continuing influence of THE TEMPEST on sf. The editorial mentions FORBIDDEN PLANET, Carrington leans on Caliban and Miranda, and Young parodies Prospero's farewell speech. Coincidence, I know.

And stories from Marion Zimmer Bradley, Glen Cook, Jack C. Haldeman II and A. Bertram Chandler (Commodore Grimes again). Certainly an action-packed issue, and you could do a lot worse for 60p. Now, I have a couple of other AMAZINGS to hand. November 1975 doesn't appeal to me, so that leaves the next most recent AMAZING for review as....yes, July 1935.

Hmm, the first story. Another hot-from-the-presses adventure of Professor Jameson and the Zoromes. Neil R. Jones isn't up to Doc Smith at describing interstellar battles, I find. All the same, by the end of SPACE WAR nearly every character in sight has been killed or dismantled, and Professor Jameson is marooned on a hostile planet without food, water or oil. At this point the narrative cuts off with the words "The End." It sounds final enough, but

we know that the series ran on into the 1950's. No doubt the sequel to SPACE WAR began with the words, "With one bound Professor Jameson was free...."

Not one but two serials here, both of them more concerned with imagining wonders than with simply setting down words to fill a page. (I mean, conflict and narrative are here but there's also a desire to extend the nature of human experience.) On closer inspection, though, the task of "simply setting down words" seems to have been a major challenge to most authors of the period. A. Hyatt Verrill's THE INNER WORLD is a brave attempt to explore an alien world, but the reader needs to be equally brave to explore the prose: as the following extract shows, it was pretty basic stuff.

"The Tss-zzrs and Iss-dors gathered about, chirping, chattering, emitting shrill, pleased sounds and obviously complimenting and congratulating me. The flat-faced, fishy-eyed Uk-kuls uttered weird squawks, as they opened and closed their vacuous, toothless mouths and fluttered their rudimentary wings. The porcine, pulpy, wingless Tu-jeers fairly grunted with delight, and their illuminated horns flashed and twinkled as they rolled and waddled about. Even the long-necked, flipper-equipped Mo-hals joined the assemblage of bizarre creatures, and grunted and wheezed as they inflated their membranous, illuminated chests...."

Never mind, it was all good clean fun. And I'd have less of a guilty conscience about ridiculing Verrill's prose if I attempted to portray something truly alien more often in my own stories.

The other serial, John Russell Fearn's LINERS OF TIME, jettisons the chirping, grunting and wheezing in favour of some fast action. The yarn seems to have been a smash success, judging by the raves from enthusiastic thirteen-year-olds in the letter column.

The varied short stories include a glimpse of Cro-Magnon/Neanderthal conflict from P. Schuyler Miller, a mad-scientist weather-control opus from one Arthur Cave (no other entries to his name in the Day index), and something of a trail-blazing effort from Harl Vincent entitled PARASITE. Years later in 1967, Vincent wrote to R.A.W. Lowndes: "I had to quit science fiction writing in 1941, when war work in my regular field of engineering became so urgent. And it is only during the past three years that I've gotten back into it a little. After being retired from engineering twice." (Quoted in FAMOUS SF, Spring 1969.) His comeback was cut short by his death in 1968, before he could recapture his old form. Back in the thirties, however, he was a readers' favourite, originating ideas which later writers would exploit more successfully. Just consider what he started with PARASITE.

The parasites in question are intelligent spheroids which fasten on people's backs and take over their brains, just like the Vitons of Eric Frank Russell's SINISTER BARRIER (1939) and the slugs of Heinlein's PUPPET MASTERS (1951). The theme of men fighting alien possession has always been a winner—even Joseph J. Millard's minor variation THE GODS HATE KANSAS (1941) saw several reprints—and Vincent's only real failure was that he missed fame and fortune by not expanding his idea into a novel. Surely some academic could worry a doctorate thesis out of this story and its successors. Why, for example, did the aliens always settle between their victims' shoulder blades? Nice one, Harl.

Final credits: all illustrations by Leo Morey, cover by Morey, not his best work. Editorial by T. O'Coner Sloane, Ph.D., on THE FUTURE OF POWER ON OUR EARTH, touching on heat losses, exhaustion of fossil fuels, and harnessing tidal and geothermal energy. (Nuclear power, omitted from consideration, was clearly regarded as mere science fiction.) Letter column with one from P. Schuyler Miller which is better than his story in the same issue. And in the Book Reviews, the finest plot summary I have ever read: Edison Marshall's DIAN OF THE LOST LAND, 269 pages admirably condensed by C.A. Brandt into a mere column and a half. Now there's value for money. One thing the November 1978 issue lacked was a juicy book review.

10. BEACHCOMBERS: POTLATCH (CBC series)

Nick -played by Bruno Gerussi + Jesse emerge, counting money, jumping for joy. Nick gives dollars to curious kids. Discuss spending: S.F., bank it. Nick goes for suit; Jesse tells him about potlatch. "Potlatch" - "Buy up food and presents, invite relatives, throw party." "Then what?" - "You're poor again." "Huh?" Explains importance to manhood. Nick in suit, Jesse drive to hard-hat who explains potlatch, difficulties with no parents, must catch a bear. Molly at cafe dismayed. Jesse digs bear trap. Red + papoose follow 2 kids to hole, discuss his plans for wildlife park with crown grant, then mentions his beartrap (wife in hospital) invites home. Awakened by Red, dress, see kids hungry so skip breakfast and take out rickety bear trap. On trail, see bear, drop bait, trap falls to pieces, hunters retire up tree. In cafe (several scenes) preparations for party, borrow more money, Indian ceremony surprises Molly. Back to pit, Red hunts. Fire! Kids scream baby in hut. All rush back; Nick smothers pan, pulls out baby. His jacket over pan. Red? Back to pit. Leg broken, in pit. To hospital: no insurance. Chief worried Jesse late. Leg set, signed etc. Jesse pays with potlatch cash. Drive back late, dark: "no bear, no potlatch." Exodus, but Red tells chief the story. Chief calls back people, Jesse has made greatest potlatch of all, so is accepted after all. Nick gives chief envelope in appreciation: expenses-paid holiday in San Francisco. "I never been there." "Neither have I."

Simple storyline, humour, personal reactions, a little adventure, virtue rewarded (although not materially for Nick), and everything OK in the end. Light and enjoyable; any carping about a high saccharine content is outweighed by the total absence of any bad guys, villainy or evil intentions (these days, that's so welcome a change that I regard writing a successful story without evil as a major challenge.).

North American drama series can draw on two major myths which, if deployed, give their scenes an interest-content above that of similar series from other countries: (1) world's most advanced civilisation-- its technology + life-styles remain fascinating (2) the frontier situation with its elemental images. It seems unfair that one country (well, Canada does share it) should have two such complementary frameworks still available to modern drama. (Aside: export success of lousy U.K. comedy SPANISH FLY attributed to exotic foreign setting-- lacking in most home products.)

Only point to note is the way each plot point is put over e.g. developed pleasure at receiving money, rather than bare (British-style) statement of "Here's our money. How'll we spend it?"

IN CRIMES TO COME

Fair warning

Next issue includes at least ten pages of fiction....a "Fifties" article consisting entirely of plot-summaries of the OLD GROWLER novelettes.... reviews of recent magazines including ASTOUNDING STORIES....and a positively soporific editorial. The cover is the same old scribble, and I'm still charging a full 50p for it.

Gentlemen, it's a lulu!

KING OF THE COAL SWAMPS

Horror

Because there isn't a lettercolumn in this issue (a bit difficult in No. 1) I'm substituting the following. It's a sequence of letters received tracing the birth, life and death of a science fiction novel which never made it to the newsstands. If I'd been able to include my proposed lead story for this issue it would have made good sense to feature these letters as a kind of follow-up. It no longer makes good sense, but here they are anyway. My comments follow in double brackets ((like this)); the first letter is dated April 4, 1969.

TERRY CARR, Ace Publishing Corporation, 1120 Ave. of the Americas, New York.

Dear Mr. Redd:

This is, for a start, a fan letter. I've been reading your short fiction in If and Fantasy & Science Fiction with a lot of pleasure, and I thought you might like to know that one more person is appreciating your work. I like your imagination and stylistic abilities, and I'm impressed by the evocative quality you're able to get into your stories, particularly A QUIET KIND OF MADNESS, my favorite among your stories that I've read.

When I enjoy a writer's work so much in the shorter lengths, I soon begin wondering if he's interested in writing novels. Are you? Do you perhaps have something in mind, or in the works? If so, I'd certainly like to see it.

I edit the Science Fiction Specials that Ace publishes, as you may know; I'm enclosing several recent releases in this series to give you an idea of the scope of the series and the packaging job we do. All the cover paintings are by Leo & Diane Dillon, and the format is standardized; we've found that by making all our best sf books look similar we can sell better even novels by lesser-known writers, since the series itself has picked up a following. You may know that three of the seven nominees for this year's Nebula Award for best sf novel were from this series, and that the winner, Alexei Panshin's RITE OF PASSAGE, was one of them. It's worth pointing out too that the Panshin book and the other two nominees as well -- by Joanna Russ and R.A. Lafferty -- were first novels, the only ones on the ballot.

I'm interested in newer writers for a variety of reasons, prime among them the fact that I think most novelists do their freshest work in their first few books. I hope you have been thinking of turning your hand to the novel, and if so I hope you'll think specifically of me as a very interested editor to whom to submit. Most editors do shy away from writers without reputations, because the lack of a Name does make a difference in sales; I'm able to implement my interest in new novelists not because of foolhardiness or unquenchable idealism, but because I can get around the lack of Name value by relying on the series format, as explained above.

May I hear your thoughts on the idea of doing a novel for the Specials? Or, if you should already have something in the works or ready for submission, I'd like to ask that you think of me. Advances for the Specials are \$2000.00 and up, and I always offer an author the chance to approve or delete any changes I might make in his ms. before it goes to the printer --- and the chance to read proofs too. I think you'd find I'm easy to work with, and receptive.

((I've quoted this one in full. A nice letter for a beginning author to receive; who could resist a first paragraph like that? And from Ace Books too--- I'd bought their paperbacks in dozens over the years. Along with this letter, Terry sent me a couple of

new Ace Specials: ISLE OF THE DEAD by Zelazny, and THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS by some new kid called Ursula Leguin. (I must read them sometime.) Anyway, I was still interested in writing novels then, but for some reason I was a bit doubtful about doing a new one for Ace. I mentioned the offer to Victor Briggs (then Scott Meredith's man in London), who contacted Terry Carr. Eventually Terry replied.)

TERRY CARR, Ace Publishing Corporation, 1120 Ave. of the Americas, New York.

I understand your reluctance to "have an author writing at great length without some guarantee of publication," and in fact I agree with that feeling. I couldn't draw up a contract for Redd, however, without something concrete to show our publisher. I'd suggest that he put together an outline and portion, maybe two chapters, and let me see that; from there we could go easily enough to a contract with money on signature.

((Fair enough. But what could I send him? The only remotely interesting material I had to offer was a first-draft short novel; basically an action adventure, but with definite promise in the character/social background development. Too short. Then I remembered Silverberg's THE SILENT INVADERS-- which Ace had published-- and my course became clear. The original "Calvin M. Knox" novelette of THE SILENT INVADERS was slim and fast-moving, while the book version took exactly the same events and filled them out with interesting characterisation, atmosphere, etc, and also used every device known to man for expanding one word into six. Surely I could do the same with my story: expansion would be a totally new technical challenge and I always enjoy such challenges. I'd have to describe my hero's early life, but it didn't seem to belong at the beginning and ideally would slot into the middle as a flashback. There was at least one precedent for such an interpolation: in fact, Lloyd Biggle Jr's THE ANGRY ESPERS had a totally irrelevant middle third...and that was an Ace book too. I didn't realise, then, that the works of Calvin M. Knox and Lloyd Biggle Jr were not perhaps the best technical models to follow. I went ahead; wrote the novel outline and the sample chapters; sent them off to Terry Carr; and heard nothing. While waiting and wondering I got interested in the novel at last, and wrote a reasonable but plodding treatment to just over 45,000 words. And in the fullness of time the contracts arrived.))

TERRY CARR, Ace Publishing Corporation, 1120 Ave. of the Americas, New York.

I'm sorry to have been so long getting back to you on this, but aside from the usual office holdups, this book proposal set a problem for me. I'd really expected a much better book from David Redd, to be truthful, and though I find this one acceptable as an other-planet adventure novel, it certainly wouldn't have fitted into the Science Fiction Specials line for which I'd mentally slated it.

I debated whether or not to decline the novel entirely, in fact, but have decided to offer a contract at a somewhat lower advance, \$1,500.00, and simply publish the book as the adventure story it is. I'm sure David Redd would find it impossible to write an outright bad book*, so this one ought to work out perfectly well.

But I do hope that for his next book for us -- assuming he can be persuaded to do another for us -- he'll set his sights a bit higher, and turn in the kind of sf novel of which he's capable at the top of his form.

((Looking back from a 1979 viewpoint, realising what the Ace Specials were, I can sympathise with the problem facing Terry. (He

* Terry was wrong here.

was soon to vanish from Ace in a puff of smoke, or something.) But back in December 1970 I saw only contracts, publication, fame, money, money, money...except for two thumping great snags to the deal:-

- (1) The contract called for 55,000 words. I only had 45,000.
- (2) Delivery date was just three weeks away.

Three weeks! If I hadn't done a draft earlier off my own bat I'd have had no chance at all of producing anything. As it was, any improvement and enriching was out of the question-- I only had time to rub it down and fill in the cracks. (One night I had no sleep at all, pencilling corrections right through until breakfast.) Mad panic: three weeks. One to shove in 10,000 words about nothing. A second week to get the MS typed out; the part-time typist also lost some sleep. (I'm sorry about that.) And a third week to jet the two fair copies across the Atlantic. That first week, though, was a killer. Then, as had happened with the outline, there occurred what you might call a Long Loud Silence. After six months some letters started flying about; the outcome was depressing, to say the least. Here's one memo from the time, which Victor Briggs received and passed on to me.))

JOHN HOLT, Scott Meredith Literary Agency, 580 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10036

Dear Vic:

I just got a copy of Donald Wollheim's letter to you about David Redd's KING OF THE COAL SWAMPS, and I hope you haven't broken the news to Redd yet, because it's not quite as bad as it sounds. Naturally Scott flipped when he read the letter--the idea of making Redd wait all this time, then rejecting the story. So he's been twisting Wollheim's arm this afternoon, and, though Wollheim won't or can't accept KING, he'll sign for a new story by Redd. He wants something fresh and original, something he can publish, not in a "double" volume, but all on its own--a special. So please ask Redd to give this project his best effort, because if he does so the chances of acceptance are excellent. Scott really went to bat for Redd, as I'm sure you'll be pleased to know.

((I gave up writing novels; in fact I nearly gave up writing. I must have been very ungrateful for Scott's efforts, and I wish I'd been in a more sensible frame of mind that summer. As it was, one more short story got written to prove to myself that I could still write (WARSHIP in a 1974 AMAZING, all blessings to Ted White) and that was it. Apart from the obvious lessons to be drawn from the affair--e.g. study the market properly, always aim for the top, and so on--one thing stands out very clearly. Never be overawed by a contract, especially by any three-week rush clause when you've had to wait six months for the deal. If the book's any good they'll wait for it, and if it's no good you've no business selling it. But I hadn't worked out the finer details back then. Anyway, it was over. Six years later I mentioned the affair to Scott.))

SCOTT MEREDITH LITERARY AGENCY, 845 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022.

Your question about KING OF THE COAL SWAMPS leads me to fear that it fell victim to the transatlantic mails. After it had been turned down by Ace we took it to the other SF markets, then held it for a while after getting no takers until there were some editorial shifts at the SF houses; after another round of submissions and no sale, since it didn't seem that the novel was going to sell, we returned it in May 1975 according to our records. It was never returned to us, so I guess we have to assume that the maw of the post office swallowed it somewhere en route -- hardly the first time, alas, that this has happened, but frustrating and infuriating nonetheless.

((A fitting end! But suppose I'd bothered to read THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS back in 1969? Would I have tried to match that in quality, instead of THE SILENT INVADERS and THE ANGRY ESPERS? Would I? The nutty kid I was in those days....and still am, inside....))

Nostalgia

The Fifties were my decade. When, between the ages of three and thirteen, I learned to read and learned to love sf. This series of articles will recall some highlights of my temptation and fall.

Librarians are creatures of habit; having bought one book in a series, they can rarely resist buying the next. Readers, especially young readers, are also creatures of habit. I soon learned to await the next Eric Frank Russell opus in the adult section, and on the children's shelves I would hunt for a new "Golden Amazon" or "Lucky Starr" title. This was from the local County Library, a free public service. My mother also bought me a yearly subscription to the Boots Booklovers' Library, regarding the literary quality under free enterprise as superior to anything smacking of socialism. Admittedly I did first discover Arthur Anscombe and C.S. Lewis at Boots, but high up on their shelves (we tinies had a miniature stepladder to help us reach the top rows) I also discovered the distinctive blue boards of the Kemlo series. I could tell they were sf by the spaceships on their spines-- a marketing device sneered at by Algis Budrys among others, but one which actually works.

A small digression: Boots disapproved of dust-jackets. They preferred to gum their green paper badges directly on the bare front boards. Wire loops or metal-rimmed holes in the spines held the tags of the readers' tickets. When ex-libris books were sold off cheaply-- and my own buys included SLAN, MISSION OF GRAVITY and THE WEAPON SHOPS OF ISHER-- a black cancellation line was inked under the pages. These arcane rituals so impressed me that sometimes when I bought a new non-Boots book I would remove its dust-jacket, ink a line across its pages and maybe glue a purloined green badge to its front.... The whole Boots set-up was more olde-worlde atmospheric than its County competitor, maybe because you could actually buy books to keep there. Whatever the reason, even now I sometimes dream that I'm passing the stationery counter into a Boots library, wandering among those high shelves with their aura of wood polish and discovery.

Incidentally-- a digression from the digression-- I'm sure that the struggle for authors' public-lending fees would be much easier if these national commercial libraries hadn't succumbed to television and the free County Library competition; the notion of paying a reading-royalty to authors and publishers as well as to library-owners would have seemed less outré to our administrators. But the time was never quite right.

And so to our hero, Kemlo.

The central idea of the Kemlo books had the classic simplicity of genius or innocence. They were books about children in space, living in your actual void, born there and actually breathing space. A situation like this required some explaining, of course, and series author E.C. Elliott obliged. In his universe space was not a vacuum but a kind of universal ether; spaceships carved bow-waves and turbulence-trails through it. Children born into this stuff survived quite happily-- in fact, to them oxygen was a dangerous poison, which made visits to Earth impossible. Kemlo was a teenage lad, space-born, living on the outside of a space station with the other kids, while all the parents lived inside, in normal pressurised quarters. Naturally Kemlo had a long series of adventures in space, testing new inventions or visiting various planets. The stories smelt strongly of cardboard at times, but always included space journeys and lots of authentic-sounding technical details. In the Fifties I read them with undemanding enjoyment.

You see, that space-breathing generation was a marvellous idea. Elliott worked out a near-perfect series format in which the ingredients blended nicely with each other. The background of separation from parents and dependence on technology gave scope for all kinds of adventures. Building a new satellite; testing futuristic technology; fighting Martian robots; exploring the craters of

the Moon....all good gripping stuff. Yet the strangest adventure of all was KEMLO AND THE GRAVITY RAYS, in which Kemlo got to visit Earth. When he finally learned how to use his powered atmosphere suit and made it to Earth he was shown around and mobbed like a circus freak. End of story. No adventures, no alien planets, only the dull plod of training and a rather sour view of human attitudes. I liked it.

These stories seemed oddly vague at times; even before my teens I realised that Elliott simply wasn't a very brilliant writer. I didn't realise, being gullible, that his science wasn't very brilliant either. Just consider these examples of "science" from a rereading of KEMLO AND THE ZONES OF SILENCE:

A spaceship in flight "creates its own vacuum which... is more apparent at each side of its line of flight than above or below it....a lot of exhaust gases are thrown downward [i.e. below the line of flight] from a spaceship."

Space stations here are "moored in the sky, each spinning at over a thousand miles an hour. Or at least, the hub is spinning....as there's no law of gravity up here they have to spin to keep their proper position in relation to the Earth."

On a space-walk without life-line or reaction gun: "By some manoeuvring of her arms and legs she slowly moved forward..."

Nice trick, that last stunt. I should point out that when Elliott had freedom to imagine something totally alien, such as "honeycombs" (odd pockets of inexplicable gravity pull dotted about in space), the result was much better, emotionally convincing if not entirely plausible. Of course, Elliott wasn't the only Fifties writer who had trouble with science. At this point I can't resist mentioning the strange case of Captain W.E. Johns.

Johns was best known for his aviator hero Biggles, whose numerous exploits may be worth discussing some time, but not this time. Johns dashed off several other series of books, including some sf adventures concerning the "Kings of Space." In the first book the usual teenage lad named King met the usual professor building a spaceship in his backyard and they made the usual explorations of the Moon, Mars and Venus. Subsequently Johns took his heroes out to the Asteroid Belt, where some vision of endless arrays of worlds must have blown the author's mind. His books exploded with pure imagination, racing through planets and ideas faster than light and faster than logic. The infinite worlds of his books no longer bore the slightest resemblance to the actual Solar System. Eventually even Capt. Johns must have cried, "Ye gods, this doesn't make sense!" How could he reconcile his inventions with the True Facts? A man of his imagination was not lost for an answer. For his next book he whipped up a serious Introduction, a portrait of the known Solar System in sober, accurate prose. Nothing but the True Facts there, by jingo! Then he went on happily writing the same lunatic fantasy as before, ignoring the True Facts completely. I salute him.

The same dilemma faced Kemlo's creator. Accuracy and imagination were never reconciled.

Yet why was the Kemlo series, with all its faults, so successful? (It lasted for fifteen books, and that's a success. People don't go on buying flops. Even librarians don't go on buying flops.) Kemlo had going for him the children-in-space situation, the exploration of strange worlds, supposedly realistic hardware, and also-- possibly the most important-- a consistently level-headed tone. The series never descended to the pulp levels of monsters, space pirates and so on, concentrating instead on actual life in space. A comparison with, say, the tone of the average DAW Books series twenty years later makes you appreciate Elliott's real achievement.

The first and second books had particularly good alien life-forms, sympathetically described, but from then on the series focussed more on the technology. Perhaps the later KEMLO AND THE GRAVITY RAYS was a reversion to the initial theme, with Kemlo himself as a misunderstood alien. These two original

books were illustrated by R.J. Jobson, whose artwork was sometimes wooden and sometimes moodily atmospheric-- his alien bat-men from *KEMLO AND THE ZONES OF SILENCE* haunted me for years, and may yet appear in a story of my own. (To see why I was haunted, inspect the bat-man on the 1960 paperback cover-- artist unknown-- and then study Jobson's vision of the same alien inside.) For most of the series A. Bruce Cornwell produced competent illustrations, giving way later to someone called Craig, if I remember correctly. By this time Elliott had given up aliens for hardware and his illustrators had less to work on. A real mystery: why, after the first two books, did the interest of the series change so abruptly to pseudo-realism? Did some editor demand more science and fewer flights of fancy? Or was there more than one Elliott?

I see from Donald Tuck's hypnotic *ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF SF & FANTASY* that E.C. Elliott was a pseudonym for one R.A. Martin, but Tuck gives no further details. Returning to my memory I recall that for his usual publishers (Nelson) Elliott also produced a more conventional space-age juvenile called *Tas*; the books, such as *TAS AND THE SPACE MACHINE*, were shorter and cheaper than the *Kemlo* books, being aimed at much younger readers. *Tas* didn't last long. (Three books or so?) In the same series were books by Robert Martin, a writer of juveniles for Nelson and other publishers. Hmmm. And considering the Ward Lock sf list, I suspect R.A. Martin of being "Rafe Bernard", whose *THE WHEEL IN THE SKY* was a regrettably mediocre adult novel about (can you guess?) building a manned satellite. (The space stations of *Kemlo's* universe were wheel-shaped and had the same peculiar atmosphere of "diathene" as in the Bernard novel.)

And that is as far as I can go. I don't even know what happened in the end of the series; did *Kemlo* finally grow up, or get killed off, or what? I know what happened to me: I grew up, more or less, and began writing my own stories. But what happened to Elliott?

11. *THE LAVENDER HILL MOB* (T.E.B. Clarke)

Very much American "consequences" and "developed" plotting rather than the British "and then...and then..." of, say, *KIND HEARTS AND CORONETS*. Note (1) policeman singing "Old MacDonald had a farm" as he hitches a ride on the villains' car....ludicrous episode but balanced by same copper actually catching Al.

(2) Despairing cry from Al upon capture "Run, Dutch!" shows how he has changed during film's events, and engages our sympathy rather than simply him saying "It's a fair cop," or similar. (3) Getaway van arrives in yard is the information; thieves picking up gold bars which have fallen through the floorboards is the development-- much more interesting than a bare statement. (See 10 and 83)

12. *THE TIME SHIFTERS* (Sam Merwin, Jr.)

Twist-plotting misfires when the pitched battle turns out not to be via time travel; striving for a medium surprise-effect to keep the story moving, Merwin has made what should have been a climactic conflict into something staged and disappointing...thus taking the last socko out of an already weak ending.

13. *COSMIC CRUSADE* (Richard Saxon)

Lousy writing: "The darkness all around him was stygian. (cliche AND obscure) and he knew that there would be no morning on this planet. (statement) No sun would ever soar up from its horizon. (repetition) No starry light and heat would ever beam down upon the fields of waving grasses and tall trees....etc., etc., etc. (elaborated repetition)" All this for a single statement "It was dark!"

ALTAIR PROBE

Fiction

The temptation to fill these pages with any old junk I can dig up has to be resisted, and to strengthen my resistance I decided to follow a single basic rule with the fiction. The rule is this: no story which has been rejected by another editor may appear in DR F. So why is ALTAIR PROBE here, after being rejected by ANDROMEDA some years back? Because--- and it's a rather slim because-- that version was the eighth draft, and this is the eleventh. I feel there's enough new material here for this to count as a different story. Not better, just different. Peter Weston is excused from reading this story, for humanitarian reasons.

"If you were a real man, you'd hit him!"

At the drinks dispenser in the starship's lounge, Dr Novim Milner heard a woman call out behind him. That was Sue's voice; what trouble was she starting now? Novim took his alkasyth from the dispenser and gazed across the lounge.

At a table with Sue Tesla, Novim saw two young men in technician's uniforms. One reached forward to the other's beard, and tugged it sharply. Watching them, Novim frowned.

"I like seeing men fight," Sue was saying.

The bearded man shook himself free. "Hey, leave off. I haven't been out a lay yet."

The people who were being revived, now that the ship had reached the vicinity of Altair, were discovering how much personal relationships had changed among those who had not slept. General moods had evolved, and certain new ideas were acceptable where certain old ones were not. Novim himself had awakened to find that even Sue had altered.

The tormentor persisted. Novim saw the newly-revived technician suddenly lose patience and swing a fist at the other-- missing him, luckily. Sue chuckled. "Now that's more like it!"

Hastily Novim swallowed his drink, and moved across towards Sue. These men should not be wasting time in a stupid quarrel, when all the Altairan planets and even Altair itself were waiting to be studied. As he walked over to Sue Tesla he dampened his inner annoyance, using the mental techniques of metabolic control in which all interstellar personnel were trained. He stood over her ominously, breathing slowly, projecting his age and authority.

"Sue."

She glanced up, her bright eyes flicking over him. "Novim." Her voice went flat. The quarrelling men drew apart from each other, disturbed by his intrusion.

"I'm about to monitor our next probe to planet D5," said Novim. "Don't you have some biological experiments on the probe, Sue?"

"Yes, I have." Her air was cautious. "It's only a non-return probe, but useful."

Novim saw the technicians move away quietly, in opposite directions.

Sue said, "You can be very unfair, Novim."

He chose to ignore her comment. He said, calmly, "As a biologist, Sue,

you must be sorry that we can't land in person on D5." To Novim, though, the lethal fluorine atmosphere was a challenge.

"The probe cameras will see enough," said Sue, without enthusiasm. "I know you're not interested in my work, Novim-- you're only making conversation about D5 to justify the way you broke up our little session."

"On the contrary," said Novim, "I have developed a great interest in planet D5. I remember you mentioning, at our last liaison group meeting, that you were looking for certain key species in the D5 ecology."

With over four hundred specialists on board, many of them like Novim only recently revived, most people on the ship were still learning about each other and about each other's work. Sue was one of the few who had worked normally, without any period of suspended animation.

Sue said, "I'm looking for life-forms left over from the last major climate change, if there was one. Particularly, dry-area plants with vestigial wet-area features. Now, is that what you wanted to know?"

"I think so," said Novim. "The victims of catastrophe; a shift in D5's orbit, perhaps. The plants found themselves suddenly in a drier world and had to adapt or become extinct." It would be an extension of Sue's work on Earth, where she had studied certain animals from land which had been driven back to the sea by various planet-wide disasters. And Sue had described another, more ancient catastrophe, when primitive semi-living things stranded by retreating water had become ever more complex, those that survived.... Novim continued, "I wonder, in these sudden changes, aren't the psychological effects just as important as the physical results?"

"Only in advanced life-forms. There's nothing advanced down on that fluorine planet."

Nottyst; thought Novim.

A bell sounded.

Novim stood up. "Probe countdown beginning. I'll have to leave you, Sue. I'm getting suited up to check the float-off platform afterwards. Are you going to watch the launching?"

"No, you're the hardware expert, not me." She laughed, probably relieved to see him move away. "I prefer living things, Novim. When the probe starts sending pictures, then I'll watch."

"It's your choice. Well, I won't see you again, but I've enjoyed our little talk."

"I'm sure you have," said Sue Tesla. Her tone was bitter again; clearly she still resented his interference.

She might begin to learn, in a few hours, the effect her change of attitude had had on him.

*

Near the launch airlock, Novim Milner stood encased in a Mark V industrial spacesuit which was designed to withstand both vacuum and corrosive fumes; it would certainly resist the fluorine air of D5 for the five hours he needed.

He reported by sound channel to the control room. "I'm in observation cubicle 123 SX, suited but not sealed."

"Check," said the operator, via the helmet circuit. "Why the suit?"

"I'm going to examine the float-off platform for exhaust abrasion." Probes were lifted out from the starship on a small re-usable platform before blasting clear-- thus avoiding damage to hull and instruments. Novim had examined the platform for rocket damage once before, having had some experience of corrosion protection.

The operator grunted impatiently. "You forgot to file your EVA control requisition. Send it later-- I'll okay it for now."

"Thanks." Novim hoped the operator would not be disciplined too severely, afterwards.

"Forty-five and holding!" The countdown was interrupted. "Cause: malfunction signalled, probe limb 4."

Novim had sabotaged Limb 4 an hour previously.

He called to Control, "I'm sealing my helmet-- I'll check that fault." The airlock was depressurised for the float-off. Novim had a two-minute start over the maintenance squad; the operator could not stop him. Within seconds Novim was through the personnel hatch and inside the main airlock.

*

He knew that his voice was being recorded. "I've cured the trouble."

"Yes, malfunction ceased, situation normal. Say, what was it?"

"The grip alignment was out. A sealing band off-centre, nothing serious. All I had to do was pull the band straight-- you know these assemblies. I'll send in the usual report. Right, give me time to get back."

"Sure. I'll hold countdown until you're back through the hatch."

Novim pressed a switch. While he watched, the subsidiary personnel airlock went through one cycle.

"I'm clear now. You can resume the countdown."

"Thanks. Forty-five and holding, engage, forty-four, forty-three...."

There was no indication to Control that Novim had not left the probe.

*

Triangular metal walls swung away and down, like a flower bud opening out. Several hours had passed. Within the probe, Novim Milner stood beside the camera runabout and looked out at the surface of D5. He saw tufts of feathery vegetation dotting a sloping lakeside shore. The lake appeared to contain water, but he knew the liquid to be hydrofluoric acid. Water could not exist on D5; human beings were mostly water. Further away, he saw pale leafless trees with coloured dewdrop-like sparkles on their branches.

He was on the fluorine planet, where the starship people could not reach him.

No other probe could be launched for some days. His oxygen supply would last for mere hours. As he had intended, this was a one-way journey.

A brief whistling sounded in his helmet. Probably his extra mass had been detected, and they were signalling to him via the probe telemetry channel. A voice came: "Dr Milner, this is Captain Rawson."

They had guessed. Did he owe them any explanations? Perhaps--

"Novim Milner speaking. Have you deduced where I am?"

"He is there!" A different voice; probably a listening adviser.

"Dr Milner, do you have any physical injuries?"

"None, captain. I am wearing a Mark V industrial suit."

The second voice said quietly, "Mark V might hold out for a day or so."

The captain again: "Dr Milner, what happened? Were you trapped on the probe? Why didn't you signal for help?"

"I do not want help. Conditions after I was revived--" He did not complete the explanation. He said, finally, "I had to come here. I wanted to."

The captain hesitated only momentarily. "That's for our socio staff to

sort out. Our immediate problem is getting you back before that fluorine air penetrates your suit."

"I am not coming back. This suit has only enough oxygen for another five hours. Even if you had a round-trip probe ready to launch, it could not return me to the ship within five hours."

"Don't give up hope! We'll do our best to reach you...."

They would never rescue him. That was why he felt safe.

"You should send the runabout forward," said Novim. The little vehicle with its camera eye was pointing towards the white glittering jungle. "I will ride on it as far as the trees."

"Dr Milner, please stand back from the runabout. It has very little time for its experiments. It's best if you stay at the probe."

Novim said nothing. Faintly, he heard a woman speaking in the background: "Oh, carry on. We needn't hold up the runabout for him. It's what he wants."

The woman was Sue Tesla.

Captain Rawson must have given way. Novim felt the metal hull vibrate as the vehicle began to move. Swiftly he clung to the teflon-coated instrument arms, and he let the runabout carry him in this fashion down to the alien scrubland of D5.

The grass-equivalent on the fluorine planet was a simple thread-like growth, rippling upwards in dull grey waves and bending aside under the wide silicon-compound tyres. Novim saw clouds of winged insectoids darting low towards the lake. Probably other creatures were scuttling through the grey grass below him. But most of all his eyes were for the jungle; far ahead its delicate white traceries each sparkled with tiny jewels, rainbow-glinting. Far ahead, yes, but close enough to reach. Were those colours from some form of moisture, from trace elements, from a bizarre alternative to flowers? They were magical, beckoning. He could walk forever within that forest, as he had walked when tall and young in the forests of Earth....

But he was old, withering, about to die in an atmosphere of purest poison. And briefly he longed for the smothering safety of the starship.

"If we close orbit," a voice was whispering, "drop a K-probe homing on the runabout signal...."

"No good, the next K-probe needs half a day at least to finish its coating."

Somewhere up there Sue was with them, as they debated what to do about Novim Milner. The captain must have questioned her about him. She was gone now, disappearing like everything else from his life, although in a sense she had gone from him when he closed his eyes for the cold sleep of the outward voyage. But he himself was still the same; she and the others had changed. Younger men, perhaps, could adapt to such things.

The runabout turned aside, skirting a mud flat where a stream was overflowing amid shallow pools and spiral growths of slime. Now, thought Novim, once past this soft ground he should step down and make his own way onwards to his jungle....

Abruptly the runabout swerved, beginning a long slide across the mud. Novim tightened his grip instinctively. He had just enough time to regret his mistake; he should not have held on. The runabout reached the edge of the lake, splashed through the surface without dignity, and went down.

A liquid resembling muddy water bubbled around him and over him. He was submerged in hydrofluoric acid.

A voice from the ship: "Can't get it to move, sir-- the wheels locked when it sank!"

Novim heard the alarm in the control room, and felt his pulse-rate rising. In the gloom he could just make out the lines of wheelmarks on a rising slope; that would be his route back to land. He could walk as easily under water as in atmosphere, protected by his suit. He calmed himself, by the usual skills of metabolic control, swiftly reducing the action of his heart to normal. He released his grip on the runabout. He could do nothing to aid the heavy vehicle. His suit would probably resist the acid lake for several hours if necessary, but his most obvious course now was to walk away.

Several voices came again from the starship. "See these readings? It seems to be a weak electric field--could be some kind of natural field jamming the wheel servomotors--"

"Dr. Milner?"

"I am unhurt. I am leaving the runabout." He stepped down, his feet sinking only a short way into the lake-bottom mud. Once he moved away, he suspected that they would lose contact with him very quickly.

"Dr. Milner, wait, if your suit can take it--"

"What do you want?"

Distinctly he heard a man whisper, "Call him Novim." More whispers followed. The psychologists must be sweating up there; he felt oddly pleased. Maybe they were beginning to understand the pressures that could overwhelm a man.

Sue Tesla spoke next.

"Can you see any animals nearby, on the lake floor perhaps, or just swimming around?"

He had not noticed anything, but he had not stopped to look. Novim paused. He had no obligation at all to report his observations to her. But Sue had spoken impersonally, as a scientist, and by deliberately not using his name she had left the decision entirely up to him. She was ignoring the current fashion for personal pressure, and letting him be himself.

He looked around.

A few undistinguished plants; some possible shells nearby; a little shoal of tiny drifting things, and....

At the base of the shoreline rise, he saw a long dark shape resting, almost motionless, in the current from the incoming stream.

"Yes, Sue. I've seen something, a fish floating ahead."

"Small or large?"

"About the size and length of my arm. It's in no hurry to go away, but it doesn't look dangerous."

"Not to you in your suit, it isn't. But to the runabout-- Is this fish the only one? Or is there anything else large and reasonably mobile around?"

He could see nothing else.

"Then the fish is our problem," said Sue. "I can compare this with Earth-type environments where animals use electric sensor fields. It seems similar enough."

An electric field? Presumably that fish was seeing him as a pattern of echoes from its sensor pulses-- pulses which were affecting the circuits of the runabout. A strange form of sight. What catastrophe could have made that creature seek food and life through such abnormal means?

"We've a chance to free the wheels, Dr. Milner." (Captain Rawson again.) "In the side of the runabout, in the, ah, lowest control clamps, you'll find a sonar signal generator. Pull the instrument free, don't worry about ruining the sonar experiment, and just point the antenna at that fish. We'll override with a resonant frequency from the runabout transmitter."

Novim stayed still. "What do you plan to do?"

"Frighten off that fish to stop it jamming the circuits. Are you ready?"

Novim did not reply. Did he still belong to the people of the starship, or had he cut himself free of them?

He reached for the slim rod which was the signal generator, and aimed it towards the dark shape ahead. A brief electronic scream assaulted his ears, then ceased.

The fish whirled and disappeared. Close beside him, the runabout shuddered forwards.

He had done this to show Sue that he had not changed.

*

After he had followed the runabout upwards to the dry land, Novim gave a last report to the starship.

"My suit has survived the hydrofluoric acid undamaged, as yet. Probably it will remain functional in the atmosphere for up to two days."

"That's good, Dr Milner! We might just get a probe down to you by then!"

"Too late. My air supply will be exhausted long before then."

Although, if they had solved the problem of the fish, they might well solve the problem of Novim Milner.

"Hold on down there, and we'll get you out somehow! You helped us, we can help you. There's got to be a way!"

He did not reply.

*

His feet, heavy and clumsy in his Mark V suit, dragged across the strands of alien plant-life. He was determined to reach the white trees, no matter how slow and tired he became. Yet from a part of his mind came a strange reluctance to go on struggling, a desire to retreat back into the known world of the starship—

No. There was no way he could leave D5, even if he wanted to. He needed oxygen to breathe, and the only oxygen available on this planet was already contained within his spacesuit tanks: less than four hours' normal supply by now.

The captain's voice droned on, like an alien insect producing an alien and meaningless noise, becoming fainter as he walked on. The runabout could not follow him across the mud. Even if it could, what could it accomplish? Nothing.

And so Novim came to the edge of the jungle, where he stopped for a while, staring at the tall creamy trunks and branches. Coloured dewdrops sparkled at him. These were Altairan trees, from another evolution. They were beautiful, even though their world would not allow an Earthman to survive. Within his suit he was a single cell of Earth life, surrounded by death, victim of a final catastrophe.

A voice seemed to echo faintly within his helmet; he ignored it. There was no returning. Long minutes passed, until abruptly the tiny voice became sharp and familiar.

"We can save you, Novim!"

Sue Tesla had caught his attention once again.

"You do have one chance, Novim, if your suit holds out...."

A chance? He listened, despite himself. The lounge where she had soaded men into quarrelling seemed more distant than Earth itself.

Sue said, "You'll have to slow down your metabolism, use the self-hypnosis taught you for suspended animation on the flight out."

Yes, he had the skill to do that.

"Lie still near the probe, or in it if you can get to it. Your oxygen will last you for days with your body functions brought to rest. We'll send down a return probe to home on the first one and pick you up for revival, before the D5 air can eat through your suit."

Everything fitted. If he slept and gained time by reducing his breathing, the K-probe could be prepared and launched. He could return.

"So, Novim, this is the answer. Just start your metabolic control. Don't worry about anything; the psych officers can help with your troubles back here. Wait for us to reach you...."

All he needed to live was an effort of will.

He stood before the trees, staring at the alien leafless branches which no other man had seen with his own eyes. Why should he give the other men a chance to change him?

"No, Sue," he said. "I'm still myself."

He walked forward through the white forest, on and on. In his helmet a distant voice dwindled gradually into the silence of eternity.

14. THE PONTIUS PIRATES (J.T. McIntosh)

Secret agent receives a message. To make this opening fresh the enormous cost of the call (£14,000,000.00) is emphasised. Repeats + further explanations, giving continuity, interest and emphasis of high stakes. (The "angle.")

15. H.M.S. LEVIATHAN (John Winton)

(See 9) Dialogue shows people's relative positions (socially) by different tones of information, deference, comments to others, narrator's comparisons. Also good cutting from points made to background.

16. BEACHCOMBERS: GRAVEL PIT (CBC: Merry Campone)

In absence of lead character, the necessary stronger-than-usual situation is provided by missing children. Plotting in a closed situation requires ingenuity; the trapped children work through all possibilities of escape/rescue, intercut with home scenes hung on peg of fishing/eating fish, etc. To avoid monotony of repeated attempts and to develop characters, a night scene pauses for the customary philosophy/reflection spot in which here the children discuss their dead parents. This quiet scene emphasises the ensuing action when Relic finds the children and goes away. Relic provides a moral dimension: instead of "Will they get out/be found?" we ask "Will Relic rescue them if he has to admit trespassing at night?" Good development of process of say going up fire ladder: dialogue "Isn't it Nick's turn to go up first?" throws light upon procedure as well as allowing the children's grandmother to reach them first (a nice human touch, and also shortens any final explanations etc.). Relic's final slight crookedness redeemed by (a) children being safe, and (b) Relic did call the fire brigade. Humour with Nick completes ending.

(This feature will be continued in the next issue, unless I hear a chorus of protests.)

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE, by Barry N. Malzberg (NEL, remaindered).

Review

What was Malzberg trying to do? My cynical answer: trying for a quick couple of thousand bucks without ruining his "intellectual" reputation. The first few chapters are quite entertaining, concerning a Director restaging the Kennedy assassination with urban-yckel actors, but after the inevitable assassination of the Director himself everything explodes. Death, sex, the self-abuse of society, everything gets thrown in. We readers fight our way onwards through flashbacks, dreams, assassinations of trendy U.S. martyrs, some background material for the opening chapters (inspiration running low, clearly), with a few multiple murders, orgasms and used-car lots to maintain our interest. I liked the used-car lots.

Knowing that the first section began life as a complete short story is off-putting to the critic. However, trying to be objective, the opening does seem to be more skilful than the rest. Consider this paragraph from Chapter I:-

"Are you all right now, sir?" he says(sic), stepping some feet away, backed off from the others. He is still locked into the role-- timorous, shaking, but latently aggressive-- which is good. None of the others would have had even this elementary understanding. "I guess you're all right," he says, turning. "So the hell with you then. There's much work to do. I'm on my way."

--which is a well-paced mixture of action, description and reflection, with a concise attitude-change and an effective transition speech. But the rest! The initial vision only returns fleetingly during odd moments, as in Chapter XXV when the citizens discover that to the war machine "we are the enemy now"; effectively blending low comedy and high tragedy. Elsewhere, who can tell what is happening, and who cares? Tedium conquers all; the heat-death of the universe reaches for us through Malzberg's entropic prose. (Shall I do the entire rest of the review in that style? Gasp, no!)

Nice title to this book. Have you seen pictures of the murdered Kennedys hanging as ikons in Catholic Irish homes? Man destroys every temple. It occurs to me that some ultra-smart critic has probably decoded the deep meaningful message in this novel, and I'm rambling on all unawares making an idiot of myself. Or possibly the ultra-smart critic was the idiot, and there isn't any message.

I liked the ending. Pity I can't remember why.

I LOST MY HEART TO A STARSHIP TROOPER

Hot Gossip

.....We understand that ARIES 1, the eagerly awaited original sf anthology from David & Charles, is due to appear in June or July this year. ARIES 1 contains stories by the cream of modern British sf writers; also eagerly awaited is the payment for their stories.....True Confessions dept.: when I cut the stencil for the AMAZING SCIENCE FICTION review there were still two of the thirteen stories I hadn't read. I further confess to enjoying Jack C. Haldeman II's short entitled LAST ROCKET FROM NEWARK; quite a good issue.....
....We have been tipped off by The Man Who Knows (oh, all right, it was Rob Holdstock) that the well-known genial giant Nick Webb has disappeared from Pan Books to pop up at NEL as editor, now searching desperately for British writers with strongly plotted conventional sf novels.....maybe this is a chance for David S. Garnett's RAY GUNS FOREVER, also known as GALACTIC BASTARDS. Or has Dav as he once was actually sold it?.....Genuine query: whatever happened to Beryl & Archie Mercer?.....The next page is really good.....

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