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E N T R' A C T E
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embarassed editors-

Ken J. Krueger, one of the men behind the new publishing house in Buffalo (PEGASUS PUBLICATIONS) which soon will publish a collection of short stories by Willy Ley, is mad at us because we forgot in our last issue to credit him with typing the ornately-done words on our cover with his vari-typer. He is so mad that he wrote us a story.

of the Chicago con.

We had a lot of fun and met a lot of people we liked, some we didn't.

the Lovecraft Collector's Library

Leverentz published the first of the seven ere he left for his hitch in the army: it's a good job, well worth 35¢. The other six are to be published by his sister, Diane, and myself. The set is \$2.25.

NOTE: If anyone wants his copy of The Lovercraft Collectors Library personally inscribed by Lovecraft, see Ken Krueger who is an expert in such matters. And send in the rating slips for last issue and this one.

—THE EDITOR

A PHONE IS RINGING

BY LARRY SAUNDERS

There was a phone ringing somewhere. An impatient hand found the receiver and lifted it. There was a sharp click followed by a succession of weak coughs.

Then the voice:

"To whom it may concern:

His face is white; his throat is red,
When you arrive, he will be dead."

A sharp epithet was followed by the same voice. It seemed to be trailing off.

"Dead. Waram is dead..."

The man sat alone with a dead receiver. He slammed it into the cradle. His brow wrinkled.

A practical joker. Not that it was important.

The murder next day was important. So important, in fact, that when the phone list was tapped and James Winston was found to have had a particular call the previous night, said Mr. Winston was arraigned and forcibly brought in for questioning.

He was a puzzled young man; an angry, impatient young man. His demands were met with cold silence. Finally he was led into a small office. A man was seated behind a desk with a pad before him. Another leaned back against a desk.

Winston stepped in angrily.

"Why have I been brought here?"

The man leaning against the desk indicated a chair.

"You'll find out in due time. First will you be seated?" The voice was polite and yet Winston knew he had been ordered to sit.

"Cigarette?"

"No thanks?"

"Mind if I smoke?"

Winston shook his head.

"You had a phone call last night didn't you?"

Winston glanced up sharply. A call?

"No. No one called. I was busy all evening. Nobody called."

"I don't doubt that you believe that Mr. Winston. We're not questioning your integrity. But the fact remains that you did receive a call last night." The voice was edged with steel. "Think hard Mr. Winston. We know you had a call last night. It's been registered. Now why delay. A murder's been committed. Surely you don't want to be hooked as an accessory, or at the very least, of withholding evidence."

"I'm not withholding anything!" Winston jumped up angrily.

"Ridiculous isn't it? But you did have a call didn't you?"

Winston sat down hard. A slight shock buzzed through him. There was a call; a ridiculous incident, really.

"There was a call." His voice was subdued. "But it couldn't mean anything. It was some practical joker."

"What did the caller have to say?"

Winston glanced up, baffled.

"Something silly. I never did find out who called. The voice itself was a man's or it seemed to be. It seemed to be gagged. It seemed to come from far off."

The questioner leaned closer.

"What did you mean when you said that, Mr. Winston? Come from far off. Isn't that a strange way of phrasing it?"

"Yes, I suppose so. Yet I think that's a perfect description. The person on the wire had a coughing attack before we began talking."

"Coughing attack?"

"Yes. Another strange thing—he paid no attention to me; as if he didn't care who answered. In fact one of the first things he said was 'To whom it may concern.' "

" 'To whom it may concern?' "

There was a short pause and Winston felt the sweat break out.

"What else was said?"

"Well..."

"Yes? Go on."

"This sounds silly as Hell but..."

"Everything," prompted the voice.

Winston went on with a gulp.

"There was a verse. I can still recall it. It went, 'His face is white; his throat is red; when you arrive, he will be dead.' "

"That's it completely?"

"Word for word."

"Anything else?"

"Oh something like 'Dead. Waram is dead.' Then he hung up. That's all."

The questioner stared off moodily. Finally he motioned to the fidgeting witness.

"All right Mr. Winston. That will be all. Sorry to have caused you this inconvenience. You're free to go. I must ask you not to say a word of what you know to anyone."

"I understand."

When Winston departed, the questioner turned impatiently to his writer/companion.

"You've got down everything that was said?"

His companion nodded.

"Everything."

"Strange case. What do you think Bart. Got any ideas?"

"If he's telling the truth..."

"Why should he lie?"

"I don't know. Why does anyone lie?"

Harris, the questioner, laughed.

"Good point. You're referring to motive."

"Well, what is the motive?"

Harris, tall and gaunt, rubbed his nose nervously.

"I don't know. Strange case. A man of influence found with his throat neatly torn out. A person receives a call reporting the murder. Was revenge the motive? Was it the work of a maniac?"

"Sounds like a maniac. What clues you got?"

"Not enough to bother with. Winston was our only hope. His statement sounds like the ravings of a lunatic."

"This whole case does."

Harris glanced up humorously.

"You've got a point there Bart. Can we investigate under that assumption? I wish I knew."

What is the theory you're working on, Will?"

"Oh that." Will lit a cigarette. "Only one possible one to work on."

Lunatic at large. Possibly an ego-maniac. Calls up a complete stranger. Informs him of the murder—with poetry. Motive?" He exhaled wearily. "Take your choice."

Bart moved over to a typewriter.

"Want this typed up?"

"Yeah," Harris grunted. "I'm going out now."

"Sure."

A young man named Morgan received an anonymous call that night. He ignored it as the work of a crackpot. The next day an elderly man was found with his throat torn out. A young man presented himself at police headquarters because, according to him, he had talked with someone who had mentioned the dead man's name.

Will Harris was with the man for a short time. Harris was a worried investigator when the witness left.

"Another senseless killing. Probably the same killer who did away with old Waram. But where is the connection? These killings are crazy. There has to be some pattern."

Bart tapped his pencil anxiously.

"Not with a lunatic."

Harris whirled around.

"Yes, there has to be. In a killing of this sort there is always a pattern."

He slammed his fists together.

"Only where is it? Two murders in as many days and with the same method. Two unrelated murders; unrelated as far as we know. And two whacky phone calls. A maniac, sure as Hell."

"Seems that way. What did the Commissioner say?"

"What do you think? Find the killer. Results, results. I don't even have a time limit."

"He usually sets one."

"Not this time. Its 'get him or else.' "

" 'Or else' meaning the full treatment?"

Harris snapped his fingers.

"The old heave-ho."

"Tough."

"Yeah. I'm going to the electric power-plant now with Sam. Some research work."

Will and Sam were introduced to Mr. Chadwick, who controlled the city's electric output. He was small, weak-eyed, grey-haired, yet managed to seem intense.

He was a nervous man. His hands resembled waving butterflies. He smiled at the two investigators and led them into a large, cluttered office.

"This job to me is a great responsibility. A token of trust, you might say. It's a lonely job, you know, quite lonely."

"I can well imagine." Will Harris poked his way through a maze of equipment. Peering down through the window he could see the main corridor of the powerhouse stretching out into hazy shadows.

A wonderful setting for a scene of cold grue.

"Rather sinister isn't it?" Harris spoke to no one in particular. A smile twitched at Sam's lips.

"You've eaten too much, Will. A bicarbonate is your antidote for horrors of the soul."

"My palate has nothing to do with my inner feelings."

"Oh?" Sam laughed. "Pickles and cream, Will."

Harris grimaced.

"You win."

"Mr. Harris is right in a way." The pair turned to find Mr. Chadwick near them, his eyes vacant of expression.

"Too much power is no good. Can you imagine a monster created from the rupture of energy from these machines walking this earth? I can. Have you ever walked alone down a long corridor when it is deserted? When your only company is a multitude of generators towering all about you; their grey shapes hiding something horrible? Then, gentlemen, do the white meters take on a new and terrible meaning. For they are suddenly the watchers, checking every move you make. It is a long walk." He brought his hand over his eyes and laughed distastefully.

"I imagine too many things. But my job, you see, has made my life a lonely one. And contrary to fact lonely interests do not coincide. Metal and flesh, unfortunately, do not mix."

"A point well taken." Harris smiled slyly. "Metal is much more endurable."

"To an extent I would agree with you, Mr. Harris. But when you speak of endurance I gather you refer to the years of usage?"

"That's just a side issue. This machinery will hold this giant called electricity for a short span of years and then it is gone; fused into heaven-knows-what."

Mr. Chadwick smiled.

"You have your gripes against the machine age, Mr. Harris?"

"No, not specifically speaking. We were viewing the philosophical angle. I could just as well take the positive or the negative."

"For argument's sake I suppose you could. However in the final analysis it is a breakdown of your internal character that decides for you what is right and what is wrong: nature-wise speaking of course."

"Of course."

"Human nature has very little to do with the machine age, I'm afraid."

Sam leaned back against a packing case with arms folded. "The machine age improves. Man slides back—a natural introvert."

"You're wrong, young man." Mr. Chadwick shook his head sagely.

"I'm wrong. Nature-wise speaking, of course."

All three smiled.

"You're jesting." Mr. Chadwick brushed his way past a packing case. "But enough of this. You came here on business. I've kept you here with my wild ramblings long enough. I believe you wanted to check up on one of my employees?"

"That's right. Routine matter."

Mr. Chadwick led the two men into a small office. He went to a metal cabinet and brought out a folder. He gave the folder to Sam, then turned to Will Harris.

"By the way Mr. Harris, I saw your name in connection with those two ghastly murders. Awful incidents. I wonder why people do such things?"

"A loose channel up here." Will tapped his head. Mr. Chadwick nodded in agreement.

"I do hope you catch the murderer. Do you have any clues; if you'll pardon my asking?"

Harris grinned.

"I'm afraid I do mind your asking. But no, we have no clues. But we'll catch him."

"It's a man?"

"Who else?"

6 "I suppose you're right, though indirectly, women are usually respon-

sible for man's downfall."

Harris gazed humorously at the greying man.

"You've never been married, Mr. Chadwick?"

"No I haven't. But I've had experience. My mind is not just limited to blind prejudice."

"Of course not. But still I don't think a woman has any part in this puzzle."

"Perhaps not. Although if you care to pursue the subject, I daresay murder as a fine art goes beyond the scope of sexuality."

"Perhaps. If you care to accept the hypothesis that murder is a fine art. Crimes of bestiality are far more common as in this case."

"Bestiality." Mr. Chadwick involuntarily shuddered. "A ghastly word. A degrading and wholly unnecessary term."

"Crime is always unnecessary."

"There are exceptions and limitations."

"That is everything in a nutshell. But who shall judge the nutshell?"

"Man to judge man. Ah," Mr. Chadwick chuckled delightedly. "A basic argument. You question the right of man. Ah yes, who shall judge? Judgment is a harsh and blunt instrument at best; a physical and sometimes mental club. It is a powerful club and you question who has the right to wield it?"

"There is no question. Man judges man for the good of man. Who else shall judge, to paraphrase a line?"

Mr. Chadwick cocked one eye.

"Others, perhaps?"

"Others?"

"A sinister sound hasn't it? Well I assure you it is. We do things for the betterment of ourselves and others. For the greater good. This, of course, refers to our own simple rulings. For the greater good, you might put it, of whom?"

Harris bit his lip while Mr. Chadwick eyed him with expectancy.

"Basically you would have to say the one with the advantage; with the overall strength."

"In other words, brute force. Ah yes," he wagged his head slowly. "And that brute force is not as we conceive it. It is beyond our conception. It is the hideousness which is referred to as the unknown. I suppose deep inside we fear everything; the dark in particular. And might there not be something in what we fear? To believe hard enough is to exist."

"A point. Although I don't go along with it. No, unless I'm completely wrong, the unknown exists wholly within a dark chamber of the mind: the unconquered section. Thus breeds murderers. Insanity and unreason are the greatest enemies."

Mr. Chadwick chuckled softly and fingered his chin.

"Ah me, who shall know? Who shall know indeed?"

"Perhaps you'll find out presently." Sam had finished with the file and had replaced it. He stood before Mr. Chadwick and grinned.

Mr. Chadwick shook his head ominously.

"I do not want to know."

Sam was persistent.

"And why not? Surely it would be a great discovery."

"A discovery for whom? Who would understand it? No, no, it is better to digress than to prove. What we do not need is proof."

Sam moved away wearily.

"You have your theory. A dull one but a safe one." He rubbed his head. "This sort of talk gives me a headache. As if we're treading on fairyland again."

"Fairyland," Mr. Chadwick echoed blankly. "It is no fairyland. Certainly no fairyland."

"All right, no fairyland." Sam moved toward the door, then faced around.

"Thanks for your time and help, Mr. Chadwick."

"Are you going?"

Will Harris joined his companion at the door.

"I'm afraid so. I'll see you again sometime."

"Yes." Mr. Chadwick nodded soberly. "Your arguments interest me."

The two left Mr. Chadwick leaning against a window while while gazing down a long, empty corridor.

Commissioner Rhiner was large and pompous. His office smelled of political pull. He was up against it at the moment. He explained this to Will Harris inside his private office.

"Harris, you know what I'm up against. Pressure from all sides; job in the balance. All that sort of rot. I need good, dependable men." He puffed on a cigar. "What leads have you dug up?"

"So far two phone witnesses."

"Any results?"

"We believe the killer is a homicidal maniac. Ego-maniac, possibly. Beyond that," he shrugged, "nothing."

"Nothing." Fat fingers drummed on the desk. "Harris, I have to have something. I don't care what but get some results."

"I'll try."

"Action and results." He waved the cigar at Harris. "That's what I want."

"I'll do my best."

The commissioner stared at Harris for a moment, then nodded slowly. He frowned at the cigar he held. It had gone out.

He dismissed Harris.

Back in his office, Will Harris sat down and brought out pencil and paper. Bart sat across the desk.

"There must be a way." Harris chewed on the pencil.

"Publicity might do it."

Harris shook his head.

"How?"

"Warn the people. The next time the murderer makes a call, find out who the victim is and throw a dragnet around that area."

"It's too far-fetched."

"It's a try."

"We have to have something better."

"I don't know."

A phone rang that night. The following morning a body of a boy with his throat torn out was found under an old bridge. A trail of blood led from a phone booth to where he lay. It puzzled the police. The papers brought out the news in screaming black print. A crusade was on.

Harris and Sam were at the scene of the crime. The body, as explained by one officer, was found under the pilings of an old wooden bridge. He

pointed out the bridge. A loose trail of blood led from the bridge, up a steep embankment and over to a public phone. A distance calculated at being over one hundred yards.

Sam shook his head.

"I don't see how he did it."

"He might have been carried or dragged."

"He might have but he wasn't. Look at the ground; a boy's shoe imprint. No, he walked. What did Maron have to say?"

"What do you think?" Harris flipped a stone into the creek. "He can't explain it. It's got him muttering. He claims that boy should have been dead inside that booth. His throat was torn out there, that's a positive fact."

"No hint of sex, revenge by playmates, anything of that sort?"

"None. Only the throat was touched. No marks elsewhere."

The two men stopped by the telephone. A dark stain was visible on the inner door.

"There's something about these killings that isn't right.... I mean besides sheer brutality."

"I know what you mean." Harris sighed. "It's more than the work of a maniac, it goes beyond that. I wish I knew...."

The witness was a badly rattled young man.

"I told you I got the call last night. It was near midnight. I work late at night. It's a habit. I'm a writer, or hope to be someday."

Someone snickered.

"You're a good writer, son?"

"Well," he laughed nervously, "Not exactly. I've still plenty to learn."

"Of course."

"I've told you everything, I think. The verse, the name..." he shuddered. "It was horrible and I didn't pay any attention to it. Why do people do such things?"

"It is terrible isn't it?" The voice was polite yet cold.

"Awful." He shaded his eyes. "Oh one other thing: I almost forgot to mention it."

"Yes?"

"The voice was muffled and seemed far off, yet I could almost swear to the fact that it was a boy's voice I heard."

"A boy's voice? Are you sure?"

"Well, no. But that's what it sounded like."

"All right," the polite voice turned away. "Tenn and Cane will see you home, son. You'll find out what to do from then on."

Three men left.

A frozen-faced Will Harris stared out the window at the bustling city. He turned to face a frowning Bart.

"A boy's voice...."

Will Harris was working on a theory. It was a strange and repulsive one, yet it made sense in an alien interpretation of the word. He harkened back to the visit with Mr. Chadwick and something that was said.

Harris knew there were three murders committed in the same pattern. Now murder would be the natural supposition, but suppose it wasn't murder?

The phone was ringing. Harris brushed over an ink bottle and cursed. His nerves were not what they should be. He noticed with a professional eye that his hand shook as he lifted the receiver and his mouth was as dry as cotton.

"Yes?"

"This is Mr. Chadwick. Do you remember, Mr. Harris?"

"Of course." He breathed in wheezingly. "How are you?"

"I'm all right. I called to find out how you were. I wondered if you could tell me of any more news concerning the murders?"

Harris wasn't supposed to, but—

"I have a theory."

"So have I, ridiculous as it may seem. I must see you at once. I think I have the answer but it frightens me. And I think you will understand me. Can you come over to the plant right now?"

"I think so."

"Good. I'll expect you."

The coroner, Maron, bent over the bloody and lifeless body. A maze of papers was strewn about the room.

"Another torn throat victim. It's getting monotonous. Tch!" He straightened up after covering over the body. "I tell you I'm sick of staring at throatless people."

"You should be." Will Harris leaned back against a packing case and closed his eyes. A dark chamber, a dark chamber.

"And who may hide in the dark?" He spoke aloud.

Maron turned to him, puzzled.

"Whoever hides there is good and ruthless."

Harris protested.

"Don't enter the word 'good.'"

"Just a phrase."

"I don't know. We never know. Chadwick thought he knew."

Maron arched his brows.

"Him?" he indicated the body.

"Him." Harris replied moodily. "He was a smart little man. Full of ideas. It's a shame."

"He knew who the murderer was?"

"The murderer?" Harris stared vacantly at the coroner.

"Who else?"

"Who else, indeed?"

The coroner stared.

"You sound screwy."

"Pressure." Harris searched around for a cigarette. "Old man Rhiner is on my tail."

"Rough," Maron sympathized. "Say how come you were here?"

"He called me, told me he knew the answer. When I got here I found him in that condition."

Maron bit his lip.

"I wonder who got the call today? Say, I just thought of something; how did the murderer know who Chadwick was? And how did he know he was going to talk?"

"I don't know. It's quite a puzzle. It boils down to the fact that he knew too much."

Harris poked idly through a mess of papers. Maron watched with interest.

"Find something?"

"This one paper. I think he was trying to tell me something when the ... murderer struck. Look here—" Harris held a paper before Maron and moved his finger. "—Look at this picture. What does it suggest to you?"

Maron grinned.

10 "Maybe I'm just plain stupid but all I can see is a photograph of a

city—it might be ours."

"Nothing else?" Harris watched him closely.

"Nothing."

"To most people that's all it is. But to some it's much more, much more."

"I can't see it, myself."

"Your angle is off. Your perspective is limited. Even I can't see what Chadwick saw, although I have my own suspicions. When he did achieve the gift of perception it was over."

Maron snatched at the paper and glared at it in exasperation.

"Where——" he slapped at the paper "——where do you see anything? Am I blind or nuts?"

"You're both."

"Huh?"

"I don't mean to be rude. I'm just stating a simple fact."

The coroner moved away grumpily.

"Facts like that can cause trouble."

Harris suddenly felt very grim. He nodded and smiled dourly at the retreating figure.

"That's only the half of it."

Harris sat back, his feet on the desk, chewing methodically on his favorite pencil. The instrument was being reduced to a frazzle.

"The answer is somewhere, Bart, but I don't think we'll find it."

"Why not? Aren't we supposed to be the finest?"

"In our own particular field we are."

Bart frowned. His gaze, though, was innocent of guile as he asked:

"You're talking of another field; something that has nothing to do with murder?"

"No, it has everything to do with murder. We know murder to be the killing of an individual by another individual."

"Sure," agreed Bart. "That's what it is."

"There are other angles."

"Such as?"

"Oh——suppose I put it this way. If, say, a certain branch of society suddenly alienated itself against a group of parasites and then proceeded to eliminate the parasites, would you classify that as murder?"

Bart frowned and shook his head.

"That doesn't make sense."

"Of course not. Why should it? But if something of that sort did exist, what could we do about it?"

"I don't follow you. To kill is to kill. There are two angles——crime and punishment."

"There are more, many more angles."

"That's crazy."

Harris closed his eyes, and laughed.

"Sure it is."

Bart scratched his head, then pushed on.

"What angle are you working on?"

"Any angle. Bart——" Harris swung around and faced his companion squarely. "Do you know where all angles start, where all angles go out, come in, and end? Do you?"

Bart thought for a minute.

"I don't know what you mean. Are you talking of greed, revenge, sex or what?"

"Of everything."

"You can't include everything. There are angles..." He stopped short.

"Of course there are angles. They exist here." Harris tapped his head. "In the mind."

"Well sure." Bart was slow to agree. "Naturally, but what does that prove?"

"I wish I knew. Perhaps you might say, as near as I can explain, that there is a malignant growth now taking its vengeance after long years of growing and waiting."

"You're beyond me," said Bart doggedly. "I believe what I see and nothing more."

Harris nodded bitterly.

"The hideousness of the dark and lonely corridor."

"What?"

"Nothing. Just thinking out loud."

Bart eyed him narrowly.

"This case is putting a strain on you. Rhiner still after your hide?"

"That's putting it mildly."

"Well don't worry, something's bound to turn up. Maron have anything to say?"

"Nothing unusual. Throats torn out by weapon or weapons unknown. No trace of a weapon, anywhere. Probably a sharp piece of metal."

"A real maniac."

"Sure."

"Has a drag-net been set up?"

"A flexible one."

Bart's face brightened.

"Maybe it will help."

A pencil point snapped.

"Why not?"

The phone rang for six nights in succession. The morgue was rapidly being cluttered.

The city itself was in an uproar. Rumors flew in the windlike straw in a hurricane. Doors at night were locked and double-locked. "Specials" were brought into service. Pairs of two patrolled all the area that was possible. Every precaution was taken.

Yet the murders continued.

Panic threatened the city.

Those who were wise moved out of the city—into neighboring towns.

In the city there were cries and please and demands for protection. The use of a phone was regarded with open hostility. At the sound of the familiar ringing, many persons fainted dead away. A few with weak hearts never rose again.

The pressure, from every quarter conceivable, was pressed full-blown upon Will Harris. The heel of authority ground over him and left him stripped.

He received the letter one bright, sunny morning. (No phone had run the previous night.) It was official and pompous and regretful and it relieved Will of his job.

He had expected it. In fact, he was glad of it. The pressure, for him, was off.

The letter politely suggested that he call Commissioner Rhiner at the first possible chance. He didn't want to call the commissioner. He wanted to be left alone. The incident, as far as he was concerned, was closed.

He walked to the window, and raised the sash. The city, orange fires and blue mist with dirty tumbling blocks, hooted up at him. His room was high. Thirty-six floors, he believed.

Out past a tall orange building he could see a patch of the harbor. The boat hooting was clear and cool and echoed of the dark blue water. Traffic sounds drifted up to him dimly. Across, on the building opposite his, he could see a window washer polishing the glittering fire.

The city was alive in the morning. It was colorful and a spectacle. It was orange and grey and blue and it was cool and damp. It was a hoot and a roar and a distant grinding of brakes. And above all else, as Will Harris knew, it was something more:

It was a murderer.

While we all know many things, it is the things we do not know that attract us, that are swayed before us in a mock parade. A present in a box. A star in the sky. The man behind the mask. All such elements of mystery enter our life as, for example, a rolling pebble on a gentler slope. When the pebble is detoured, new elements arise. Harris could compare the city with the pebble. It had rolled along quite peacefully and now it had struck a detour.

A detour. Harris moved away from the window and lit a cigarette. A detour toward what? He lifted the receiver off the hook and dialed. A detour that led into troubled waters.

The phone was buzzing.

The commissioner would like to know certain facts. For instance: (A curious buzzing sound echoed in the room) metal, and in particular steel, had reached a high point in perfection. People had come to depend on the products of metal...

He brushed his hand before his eyes. Curious how it wavered and danced, as if caught in a vital heat wave. The phone, on the table before him, glinted brilliantly.

Take those murders...

The commissioner would have an impossible task... really impossible.... if he hoped.... Harris ran his hand over his forehead.

The sun was too strong. Harris felt that he would like a drink of water. The heat and as a result, the sweat on his brow...

He listened.

"Commissioner Rhiner speaking..."

Harris gulped. If only he had a drink. How could he talk when he was so dry?

He wet his lips. He held the phone near to speak. It was while he was gazing at the window that he first noticed the cold steely thing. A soft insistant grasp at the underside of his chin... at his throat....

A moment longer...

He spat.

"Who is there, please?" The voice was raised in alarm.

And suddenly the room was cool and sunny, and the phone was dull and the humming was gone and he felt sick.

"It's me, commissioner... Harris. I called as you asked me to...I.. well...." He blundered and suddenly began shaking all over.

"Oh, it's you, Harris." The voice was relieved. "I wanted you to know that there was no hard feelings. I'm sorry about your being relieved but—well frankly, it was out of my hands."

Harris mumbled his words.

"I understand. It's quite all right. Quite all right."

"Good. I'm glad you're taking it that way. It's a terrible mess we're in. Lord knows."

"Yes." Harris responded mechanically.

He hung up.

The room was cool with the window open. He went over and reached up to shut it. He gazed down. Thirty-six floors.

His head hurt. With a savage lurch he slammed shut the window.

He moved away.

His head positively ached.

"If I had the time I could head for the country."

Silly idea.

"Away from civilization."

Everything sounded silly.

He whistled feverishly, then broke off. With a sudden swaying motion he staggered into the nearby bathroom. He stationed himself with his head over the toilet.

Will Harris wanted to be sick, desperately sick. He wanted to vomit until he collapsed.

He gagged.

A strange voice piped from his throat.

After a moment... he straightened up. His face was pale, but determined. With a slow deliberate motion he brought his fist back and sent it smashing into the wall.

There was a crunching sound and something clunked sharply on the tile floor. Harris picked it up.

It was a small piece of metal, soft and colored. It was the exact duplicate of a finger.

The End

VIGIL

by ISABELLE E. DINWIDDIE

Will you meet me at dewfall
When the sickle moon appears?
I have remembered your step
Down through the tapestried years.

I have asked so many times
And silence was the reply.
Sometimes I thought I had heard
A half-stifled sobbing sigh.

Straining my eyes in the dusk
For some impalpable sign,
Yet knowing the grave would not
Give back, what once was mine.

If you should decide to return
To give me a comforting look,
I shall be waiting here for you
Down by St. Alban's brook.

THE MAN-HEART

Soft the stars amid the dusk,
Soft the sigh of leaves,
Soft the water's ripple:
And hard, oh, hard, the heart of Man.
—Toby Duane

At the latest world science-fiction convention, I was assured (by a number of the respective seers and Gods who there entertained their adoring masses) that science fiction has at last become (sic) "Respectable."

Such a statement, I am sure, was pleasing both to those who uttered it and to those who heard it. There were many such statements, to be sure, but few made less sense. As a rhetoric expedient it was apt to the extreme. Ethically, it is rather odious. Objectively, it is nonsense.

In the same month as the afore-mentioned event took place, COSMOPOLITAN MAGAZINE had a related comment to make. I quote Louella Parsons' column on films. In speaking of one of the recent cinematic atrocities, she uses these words:

"You might as well try to unravel a Gobelin tapestry as this plot. Burt is a buccaneer, he captures a Spanish man-of-war, there is a lady in distress, and every time Mr. Lancaster gets into trouble he out-jumps it, out-scales it, out-swims it, or goes into the science-fiction department in an exciting, unbelievably athletic, gay, and amusing way. Children will eat this up."

So it seems science-fiction has indeed become popular, so much so that it can be used in lieu of an adjective (or adjectives). And the adjectives? Let us say it has come to be synonymous with that which is childish, illogical, and impossible, and I think we cannot go far wrong.

Does this make it respectable? In a rather weird way, I suppose, as nonsense, puerility, and insanity all have their own inviolable precincts. But does it mean that science-fiction is possessed of that virtue that all its devotees would impute to it, viz., that it is able to stand bravely upon its own merits with the rest of contemporary literature? It would hardly seem so!

Some of you will say that Parsons is in no way fit to judge science-fiction (and will feel quite proud for having said it), since she essentially knows nothing about it, having seen only the poorer manifestations of it in the corrupted film-land medium. This is true, insofar as her experience is concerned (I would imagine) but it in no way decreases the validity of her statements.

The very fact that she is un-acquainted with science-fiction makes her the spokesman of public opinion, and it is this public opinion which bestows the title of "respectability." It may be a difficult thing to admit, but the "big names" of science-fiction are virtually unknown outside this select and snobbish little circle of Pseudo-intelligensia called "fandom." The world (here personified by Parsons) views science-fiction as pure tripe, as something wholly for children, and relegates it to the most nether division of hack, where it most indubitably still belongs.

I will not play prophet and say that it will or will not someday develop to the point where it is respectable. I only say that today it most emphatically is not. In the eyes of its adherents it will probably always remain so, as it will in the opinions of those who create it. To a child, the toys with which he plays are respectable, and his playing is likewise respectable in the eyes of others. But I must look askance at men who still follow the pursuits of children, and I am the more discouraged when they adamantly claim they are fully and entirely adults.

The respectability of science-fiction remains a dream and a phantasm. Yet it is most difficult to weed dreams out of children, and I fear this one will persist, like most dreams, a fallacy and a detriment. And I know fandom will find ample room for but a single additional detriment amidst all those it has already taken to its possessive bosom.

I write this prior to Christmas (29 November), but I think I shall be safe in assuming we shall soon be hearing "Rudolph, The Red Nosed Reindeer" again. I am a little disturbed each time it blares forth from the wireless, and I wonder if it is not the most fitting of songs for our day of "Brotherly Love."

To me it is an odious song. I do not know the intent of the composer when he wrote it, or of those who have spread it. I am only aware of the end-product: the instilling into young hearts of the great American doctrine of suck-holing.

Pay a little attention (if you are so capable) the next time you hear it. Its message is plain, dressed up a bit in the garments of the season, but painfully precise: Love no man for what he is, but only for what he may do for you.

Our children (a collective "our" rather than a personal one—insofar as I am at this moment aware) know little of the fundamental principle by which our society revolves, the elemental law of kissing your neighbor's latter anatomy if there's some future profit involved. They should be prevented from ever learning it, if it were only possible, and if they had parents and relations who had a little more self-respect than almost any person I have yet met. But they do learn it, by imitation and indoctrination. Sometimes they conquer it, they better their parents because they have a little more sense and even perhaps a greater degree of that fabled "God-head" within them.

But we have "Rudolph" feeding them the brackish wine of servility and self-corruption ere they are hardly old enough to do any formula-tive thinking, whatsoever, for themselves. Things like that stick, much as I hate to make the concession to the psychologists, and they become so deeply rooted in the fertile soil of infancy that even the wisest monitor is defeated before he starts.

It is a fitting analogue of Christmas, this little melody. It is a mirror of the policy of humanity, of our appalling submergence of the individuality of thought and behavior, of the striving for individual worth and companionship. I am not a Christian, but I am not an enemy of the basic dogma of Christianity (a stand I would someday explain were it possible, as it is now not). I detest what Christmas has become out of a respect for that which it might symbolize. I am offended that this day, wherein we would incorporate our highest ideals of life, can have been so altered.

And I would like, were it in my power, to destroy every copy and every recording of Rudolph and to deal with its author as he truly deserves. He should be meted out a just punishment for what I consider a disgusting propagandizement of one of the greatest flaws in human conduct, the crying affront to personal nobility.

The End

A POEM ON LOGIC WRITTEN WHILE WAITING FOR A BUS

Motion, like a pale pear
Thriving on olives for dessert,
Includes only the very choicest
Equations that you can find,
Even in Calculus.

—TOBY DUANE

OF COLIN AND THE LEPRECHAUN

BY TOBY DUANE

Colin had always taken the legends of leprechauns with a grain of salt, but his disbelief was utterly shattered when, on a day in July as the dusk settled, he caught sight of one of the little people.

Remembering well the tales of the hidden treasure of the leprechauns, he silently stole upon the place in the thicket where the tinyman stood, and pounced full upon him.

There was a shriek of terror and he felt the wiry body of the little one in his hands, struggling fiercely to escape. But the strength of the leprechaun was puny beside the power in Colin's strong hands.

Finally the mite ceased to struggle. Colin watched him carefully.

"Lead me to the treasure!" he demanded at long last.

"Treasure?" The voice was powerful for one so small.

"Lead me to the treasure of the little people, and I will free you."

"Let me go!"

"Not until I have the treasure. Tell me where I can find it. Lead me!"

The tiny one said nothing more. Suddenly his face began to change. His legs melted together, became the tail of a huge, coiled serpent.

Colin was understandably frightened at this, but still he held tightly to the leprechaun, and said in what he thought to be a brave voice, "You cannot frighten me! Lead me to the treasure."

The snake became a dragon that breathed out great columns of fire and smoke, and Colin choked and gasped under the heat, but he did not loose his grasp, nor did he do so through the other transformations which the leprechaun underwent.

Finally Colin's prisoner assumed his natural shape once more.

"Now," said Colin, "I have won." His courage was restored by this thought, and he bellowed out again, "Lead me to your treasure!"

"Do you expect gold?" asked the leprechaun slyly.

"Yes. Gold, silver, jewels," said Colin. "Lead me."

"Very well," said the leprechaun. "It is not far. Follow!"

And the leprechaun led Colin into the woods and only a few hundred feet away bade Colin push aside the leaves of a large bush. There nestled a small, wooden casket.

"Open it!" Colin demanded.

The casket opened, and Colin saw the treasure of the little people, just as the legends had told. And Colin took it up beneath his coat, after freeing the leprechaun (which immediately disappeared into the wood) and he bore it home, where he showed it to his wife, saying to her to behold what he had brought.

"What is this?" she exclaimed in surprise. "A piece of rotten stump? You are a fool, Colin, why have you brought this dirty thing into my clean house?"

And, shamefacedly, Colin could not answer.

And in the spaceship, thousands of miles away into space, Rhi, the telepath, sulked in anger because the other Martians refused to credit his report on the extraordinary customs of native Earth dwellers.

The End

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"TARRY THOU HERE..."

BY AL LEVERENTZ

The shop was little and old, and the paint which covered its front was the colour of dirtied, yellow parchment. It was old, and it announced its age as if it were no longer ashamed, now, of all the years that had passed it by and treated it so badly.

But Morton Hobbes knew all about such shops. He had haunted them on three continents and in hundreds of cities, and each of them had been like a shadowed friend to him, a halting friend that wished to aid him but knew it could not, and took refuge from its wanting in its sobre silence. So many of them had disappointed him, but they had never been unkind. In their way, they had tried. At times this made him seem less tired, his search less futile, his life less long.

Morton Hobbes pushed open the door and went in. It was soft and dark inside, with a coolness of shadowed forest nooks that he only half remembered, and with an almost indiscernable odour of age and dustiness hanging vagrantly quiescent. This shop was like all the others ——— he found them unerringly ——— and yet it seemed suddenly, subtly, different.

His eyes adjusted almost automatically to the inner dimness, and he glanced about. He saw the books almost instantly. The shop was full of books, from grimy floor to cracked-paint ceiling, but he always knew where the special ones were. It had been difficult at first. He had had to ask, to search them out. He had been too foreign to them, too unaccustomed. But now, he had learned.

He moved over to them slowly and softly, as if fearing to stir up the little echoes which always lurked in corners and beneath shelves, wait-only for a call. The feeling was upon him again, the feeling he had known only a few times in the past, the sensation that he was near his goal. His prize might lie just beneath his fingertips, on the shelf before him. He rolled his eyes about. Always that strange sense of nervousness! Could he never abandon it? He moistened his lips and stretched out a hand hesitantly.

Dusty leather creaked under his thin, blue-lined hands. A title page fell open before him, with ancient woodcuts and letters already faded into semi-indistinction, and slowly the cover closed as he sought another.

The pages paraded one by one before his tired eyes, awakening fond memories with their spindly characters, the olden print, the occasional notation of one who had long ago been granted that which had been denied him.

They were old books, yes, but they were ordinary. So ordinary!

And then it was there. Simply, miraculously. The culmination and the consummation of a lifetime of searching; a very, very long lifetime. His tired eyes were less tired as the years seemed to drop from them; he smiled, and he seemed not to feel at all the wrinkling of the skin and the protestation of it.

He slipped the book under his arm and turned. The shopkeeper was there, as always.

"Can I help you, sir?" Yes, he could. "Would that be all, sir?" Yes, all, truly all. "It's quite a rare volume, sir." Morton Hobbes knew that far better than he. "How will fifty dollars do, sir?" That would do fine.

He paid him and he was gone. They always seemed to pop from nowhere and return to nothingness just as quickly. In the past he had hated them for it, for he had never been given a chance to ask if there were, perhaps, other bookstores. If he was near or very far. But he had no need of that question now.

The book was heavy beneath his arm, unwrapped, dusty, real! And in its weight was the replacement of the weight of despair and desperation.

He had won! And it was his great victory. Once he would have thought it so pitiful a gain, so foolish, so useless....

He had tried hard, and they had known, and the bond was broken.

The street and its glare was harsh, cruel as it had been for centuries, but the sun was a glory, now, a receding glory that would merge into a greater blessedness. He walked as a man within a different world, and so deep was he within that world that he did not depart from it when the car struck him.

The police were there!

"Did anyone know him?" No, no one knew him, and none dreamed how many he had known. He looked like a tramp. There were a lot of them in the neighborhood. "Who saw this accident? Whose fault was it?" It was his. He walked right into the path of the car. The light was against him. It wasn't the driver's fault. He must have been drunk. You know these bums. Every cent goes into alcohol.

But someone was protesting. "He's no tramp!" It was the shopkeeper, animated suddenly, coming from the dark sanctum of his livelihood. "He's no tramp. He was just in my shop, paid fifty dollars for an old book. See? Still got it with him."

The crowd began to drift away. There he was, with his book. A drunk bum? An eccentric? Perhaps a mad-man....

He must have got religious in his last hours. At least he died with a Bible under his arm.

The End

ASSAY REPORT

The March-May issue returned thirteen votes, the largest number in many months. Thus far the July-September issue has returned only four! Please send in your ratings both for this issue and the last. Since four votes mean absolutely nothing, we'll hold that till next time.

This issue was very surprising. Thus:

<u>PLACE</u>	<u>STORY</u>	<u>AUTHOR</u>	<u>POINTS</u>
(1)	DREAD HUNTRESS	ANDREW DUANE	2.15
(2)	RETURN FROM TERROR	JAMES E. WARREN, JR.	2.27
(3)	TO BE A GOD	WALT KLEIN	2.31
(4)	AFTERMATH	AL LEVRENTZ	3.27

The marvelous part of all this, first of all, is that many people I know (who did not vote in the ratings) considered the Leverentz story one of the best pieces of amateur fiction they have read in a fanzine. Leverentz himself considers it the best he has ever done. I, personally, thought it the second best story of the issue. The second interesting thing is that the order of the first three means absolutely nothing. One more rating, or one less, could completely change their order. It was quite a race! In the poetry ratings, ABANDONED, by I. E. Dinwiddie, was first, and VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY HEINE, by Walt Klein, was second.

THE EDITOR

JUST BROWSING AROUND...

GLADIATOR, by Philip Wylie (Avon Publications, 25¢). Leverentz let me read this with the idea I should review same for GROTESQUE, something I didn't get around to doing. Since a book review column should contain some book reviews, and since those I have are all out-of-date anyway, I turn to a discussion of GLADIATOR. Despite the fact that the basis of the meagre science that appears in the book is untrue, this may well rank as one of the most important contributions to literature of the field of science-fiction. Wylie has for the most part submerged his anti-religious themes for the purpose of the book, and as a result the actions of the characters seem quite real and quite human—no painful submergence of his ideas into a story-presentation. Only, I ask you, people, why must every superman be killed off in the end?—from this standpoint we could say that these superman heroes we read about aren't really supermen at all—not in the sense of survival ability. (You'll notice I've said little about the plot—I leave that to you, gentle readers. Read.)

—W. Paul Ganley

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST FANTASY STORIES (Avon, 25¢). A collection of nine short stories of fantasy, stf and off trail. No longer a new collection, but one which is deserving of mention, particularly for the second story in the book (THE CHILD WHO BELIEVED, which I believe best. It concerns a magician, third class, whom no one had faith in. His tricks were old and often seen. A little girl, however, had faith and he pulled his last and greatest feat. As he died, he passed the ancient talent on to the child. "The Child Who Believed" is worth 25¢ alone.

—David A. Bates

NEW TALES OF SPACE AND TIME, edited by Raymond J. Healy. (Pocket Books, Inc; 25¢). This book is a relatively novel experiment in the science-fiction field—an anthology of completely new stories. At first glance one might inquire as to the difference between such a book and any magazine one might pick up, but the distinction becomes obvious when one realizes that the pulp magazines, stf or no, are still pulp magazines, and as such are subject to pulp taboos. Such magazines as claim adulthood appear to consider such condition as meaning that they can now discuss (sssss-sh) sex, without blushing. One story in the book I was unable to finish—Gerald Heard's "B plus M—Planet 4". "Here, warmly, humorous, philosophically, a brilliant writer expounds his fascinating theme" (that flying saucers are spaceships piloted by giant bees from the planet Mars). Actually he propagandizes his pet crackpot idea in a very dull manner. The other stories are quite good, particularly STATUS QUONDAM, by P. Schuyler Miller, BETTYANN, by Kris Neville, and HERE THERE BE TYGERS, by Ray Bradbury. By all means, yes!

—Toby Duane

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

We hope, next time, to present Eugene DeWeese's long story, SECOND CHANCE—it was scheduled, originally, for this issue, but we will find it necessary to utilize an elite typewriter for it, so that the entire story may be presented in one issue. Other than the DeWeese tale, we have no idea of what will be used—we have no good short-shorts in our backlog: those herein were written on demand. Fans?

—THE EDITOR

SOLUTION T-400

BY KEN J. KRUEGER

The fanzine editor was perplexed. Here it was only two days before deadline and he was short one very short story. Only a four hundred word one would fit—and that had to be exact.

There were few alternates to his problem: he could advance his publication date, but he hated to do that as he had never missed a deadline; or he could fill in with a hurry-up book review, but this was primarily a fiction fanzine.

There was always the possibility of a drawing, or cartoon, but he couldn't draw a straight line with a ruler, and the one artist within reach was as slow as molasses in January.

The only remaining out was the one he cared for least; but what else could he do? He did it.

With a quiver in his voice, he approached a very wonderful person residing nearby. Could that person, possibly, somehow, find the time to spare a mere four hundred words to help out a fellow man in distress. Payment was negligible, but there would be the joy of helping out an unfortunate—

The fate of a fanzine hung in the balance as the great man considered. Should he do it? It seemed like casting pearls before swine to give this groveling, shriveling creature some of his golden words. He burped, and the fanzine editor quailed.

He scowled, and the editor squirmed.

He nodded—and the editor fell prostrate before him, crying aloud his thanks.

He waved his hand, and bade the editor begone. The editor crawled toward the door on his belly.

* * * *

When the editor had removed his person from the magnificent one's sight, the MO frowned in annoyance. He was used to writing volumes, not mere trivials. How, he wondered, could he express anything as magnanimous as his thoughts in a lousy four hundred words?

It was like looking for a micro-cosmos in a macro-cosmic world. It was inconceivable. He was stumped.

But then a great light dawned, and he saw at once the simplicity of it all. The fanzine editor would be saved, and his own prodigious reputation would again be secure. He sighed contentedly, and reached for his pen; then wrote without a halt. It was foolproof, and, above all, it kept his record for exactness unimpaired.

For, if you would care to count these deathless words, you will find exactly four hundred.

The End

Al Leverentz decided to publish a fanzine. He borrowed my mimeograph, started work, and in a short time had three issues out. One day I talked with him on the telephone, and he said sadly, "I got my notice." Thus GROTESQUE, the magazine of weird and fantasy material, dies. But it is still available; a set of three can be purchased for 50¢ (subscription price). Write me or Al L., 320 Stenzel St., N. Ton., NY. Mark the envelope "subscription for GROTESQUE."

WHAT THE CAT DRAGGED IN

Address all letters to Robert
E. Briney, 561 West Western,
Muskegon, Michigan. No let-
ter should exceed 250 words.
in length.

First of all, we have a reply by Al Leverentz to some remarks made about his re-
cent story, AFTERMATH FROM ANGLE TWO:

A short note to Keran O'Brien: I resent your writing off my AFTERMATH as an "un-
fortunate experiment." Usually I am not given to taking issue with people who dislike
my material, but I balk at someone condemning a story without knowing what I wrote a-
bout, and it is this which impressed me about your letter. My story was not at all a
diatribe against Christianity. That you should interpret it as such is explainable o-
nly by the fact that this prodigious modern faith has very tender dogmatical toes, and
they cause pain even when someone only walks by a little too rapidly, even without any
treading upon them.

In no part of my story, Mr. O'Brien, did I say that Christianity had offered twenty
centuries of gloom. Doubtless you have had too great a dose of religion. It has con-
fused you to the extent where you can no longer read intelligently. I said exactly the
opposite! The very title indicated this. It was an "aftermath from angle two," the
impact of the new faith upon the old gods and not upon such as were to follow the con-
ventional aftermath of the cross. It would cause them gloom, for they had lost domin-
ion. I made no references to those who acknowledged the new faith as beneficent. If
and when I should choose to do so--a task which is singularly pleasurable, but from
which, in deference to those who fully accept it, I have refrained up to this time---
there shall be no doubts about my intent. I hope, if that time comes, it will meet with
some readers who are a little more preceptive than you, or at least some individuals
who don't find any experiment which even vaguely seems to portend ill for religion at
once an "unfortunate experiment." ---Al Leverentz, 320 Stenzel Street, North Tonawanda,
New York.

And by some strange coincidence, here is a note from Keran O'Brien, but on a dif-
ferent topic than the above:

Fan-Fare came in two days ago. I find myself in hearty agreement with the state-
ment that the magazine has improved an astronomical percentage over its beginnings...
All the stories are good. You must have been hard up for letters.. "Address withheld
by request." Hah!

Must put I LOVE YOU ROBERTA first. A really tender, unsentimental in the sense of
too much sweetness and light, love story. Next, SUPER BOMB. The entirely convention-
alized portrait of heaven at the end enabled Terry to get over the point and the "snap-
per" of the story without overmuch finagling, and to my mind succeeded perfectly. Joe
Semenovitch's I, a fine horror story, next. Then and last--but only because of what
came first, A BIT PREMATURE.

Let's hear more from Al Leverentz. /Heard enough?--Ed./ I find it hard to believe
that fandom is as bad as all that; I guess I must consider myself a fan, that's the rea-
son. I vote YES! on keeping the column. Maybe he's got reasons for what he says. I
hope we will be treated to a change in subject matter in the next issue. ---Keran O'Bri-
en, 186-29 Avon Road, Jamaica 3, New York.

And now--Oh, Lord, no!--well... Another egregious epistle from our ubiquitous ep-
istoloor, Anonymous George. Incidentally, George says he is planning on leaving town as
soon as this letter gets published. I wonder why?

23

Do you have any conception of how much work it takes to put an issue of
an amateur magazine together? How much effort goes into writing all the
material that goes into one? And how insignificant, beside that, the sim-
ple procedure of rating the stories and mailing the slip to the editor?
Yet how very much this small task does to make editors and writers happy
to keep editing and keep writing? This time, please--send it in!

Please rate in order of merit: a "1" for 1st place, a "2" for 2nd, etc.
A PHONE IS RINGING _____ TARRY THOU HERE _____ THE BEST POEM WAS:
COLIN & THE LEPRECHAUN _____ SOLUTION T-400 _____

WHAT THE CAT DRAGGED IN (continued)

6 ⁷/₈ Bilgewater Boulevard
Dummkopf 22, Maryland
Sol 21, 1953

Yeditor:

In your Jan. ish some scoundrel took a cursory (swearing?) view of that SOB (Sup-pressor Of Blasphemy, if ye paul-pry postal police peer-in) Twatkins. He obviously did not like it; but I will be a ~~fiend~~ friend and tell him something. I hear some fans are starting a campaign to clean up Twatkins. By Clean Up I suppose these nameless crusaders mean Twatkins is dirty and that he unexpectedly may be treated to a bath. Or it may be construed that by cleaning up Twatkins, they intend to rough him about pugilistically. However from the uproar he has created in certain quarters both prospects seem imminent.

By the way can you tell me who is G. M. Carr? To me that name looks suspiciously like an alias. Consider: General Motors Carr. Ugh! The lengths some fans go to seek droll nom de guerre.

Now as to that "Visitors in Abbas Hall" thing, I have one additional comment. That shyster Cecil Wells must be a cluck. Even I know of a precedent law case he might have invoked. In the EYRBYGGJA SAGA of Iceland, a poor soul's house was haunted by spooks. Know what he did? Hired a good lawyer and had the spooks ejected by due legal process. (Check "History of the Supernatural," pages 329-30.)

I recently put the editor of MAD on the spot. I wrote: "Sir could I get a Mad on you? If you don't let me get a Mad on you, I will get a mad on you! Either way you lose, as I will still get a M(m)ad on you." He gave up. He sent a copy.

Illegibilly,
I remain
Noah Good
per. Deorg

Only one more item this time. It is not exactly a letter to Fan-Fare, but a part of my private correspondence, and for that reason I won't quote it directly. But since it concerns a subject sure to be of interest to all F-F readers, I will relay the gist of the letter. It is from Ed Ludwig, editor of FANTASTIC WORLDS. The core of the news is that FANTASTIC WORLDS is going to suspend after the second issue (now being distributed). Putting out a magazine of the caliber of FW was just too big a job for one man to take care of in his spare time, and so Ed is dropping the editorship of it. What he wants to do is give away the magazine as a Christmas present to a group of responsible and interested fans who will keep it going in its present format. It seems to me that every time some worthwhile project like this is begun, no matter how good it is, it always ends up on the discard pile; the reason for this remains obscure, but there should be something that could be done by fans to keep mags like FANTASTIC WORLDS going. The old ARKHAM SAMPEER failed because of lack of reader support; THE FANSCIENT got to be too big a job and had to be abandoned; and now FW is very likely added to that number. Let's hope that Ed finds a recipient for his "present," and that somehow this magazine--off to such a magnificent start with its first two issues--will not fade out as the others have. Any takers?

And this about completes the letter column for this issue. Write, dammit!

-REB

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TO: