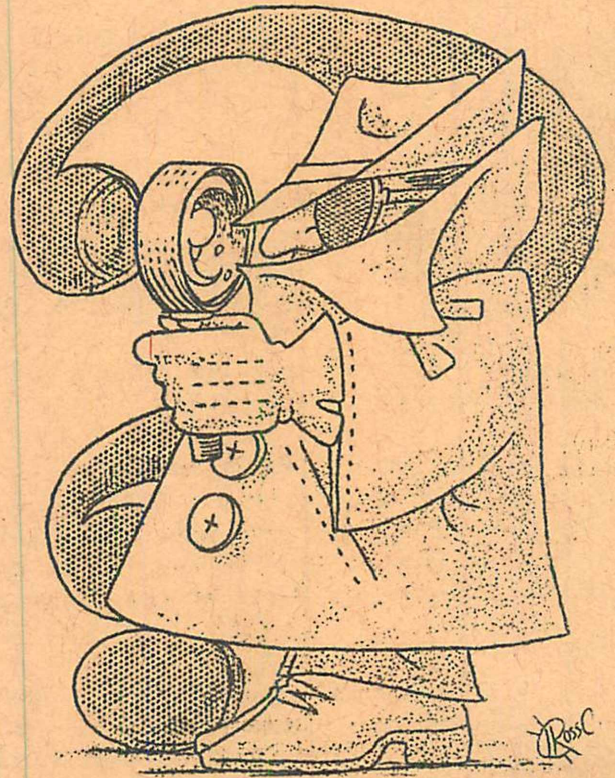


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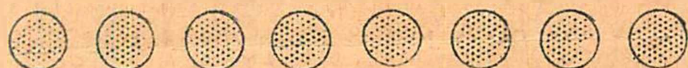


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EXTRA

Four Star Extra, Volume 1 Number 3, is brought to you by that hedonistic-to-the-hilt quartet, Joyce & Arnie Katz (59 Livingston St., Apt. 6B, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201) and and Bill & Charlene Kunkel (85-30 121st St., Kew Gardens, N.Y. 11415). Published frequently, it is sent to the 100 people on our mailing list with our compliments. Reviewers Please Note: Four Star Extra is not available for money. All funds received as a result of this "I Love a Mystery" issue will be deducted from our standard fee of \$100 a day plus expenses. We'll be blowing all unsolicited dough on fast cars, raw booze and hard living. It's a tough job, but somebody's got to do it.

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FOURPLAY



I LOVE A MYSTERY

Arnie: All right, the first thing I want you readers to do is lean your palms flat against the wall and spread 'em wide. Good. Glad to see you know the drill. Now take off your belts and empty your pockets on the table. Come on, come on, let's see it right here. That's right, put all that garbage on the table.

Jeez, Bill, did you ever see such a collection of shit? I dunno, I think they're saucer nuts or something like that.

Okay, readers, now I gotta read you your rights before we go any further with this joint editorial for the "I Love a Mystery" issue of Four Star Extra. You have the right to send letters of comment, you have the right to bestow egoboo, and anything you write may be stenciled up and used in the letter column. If you cannot think of something clever to say, please so state at this time and an interlineation will be provided for you.

Bill: You live around here? What? Don't call me "my man," creep. I'm not your man, my man. Remember that. No sentence has over six words. The thing is, though, you got to take the fall on that "Lack of Certitude" charge. Maybe, you cooperate with me, just maybe, we can drop the "Poor Response," because your shyster thinks we violated yer civil rights on that one, anyway. What can I tell you? I could lie to

Fourplay - II

you. You want I should lie to you?

Screw this, I put in my twenty years. I don't need this shit. It's like my old man always told me, "You deal with the public, you get shit on." The hell with this. I'm gonna take my pension and run. Get a soft job writing movie and book squibs for Starlog. Screw this. The job ain't what it used to be.

Arnie: Now that Bill and I have set up the proper ambience for you, we can progress to the really important matters. For instance, there's the game of Clue which we just finished playing in commemoration of this issue.

I felt I had an early lead playing Miss Scarlet, though I was worried about the grim efficiency of Charlene's Col. Mustard to my immediate left. Bill, evidently still lost in a kaleidoscopic vision of station houses as suggested by his first turn at the typewriter, was moving around the board in fits and starts. Perhaps he was waiting for the game to end so he could collect his pension.

Meanwhile, Joyce put up a good front, continually proclaiming that she had never even played the game before. Although this was, in fact, the truth, it didn't prevent her from correctly accusing Miss White of the dastardly deed, which the murderess had committed by using a wrench on her poor victim in the dining room. Probably spoiled Mr. Body's meal, too. Some people have no consideration.

Joyce: Ironic, isn't it, that I won despite the fact that I'm the only one of the four who doesn't really dig detectives. However, since I actually Had Dealings with an honest-to-god detective this very week, perhaps deductive reasoning rubbed off. (This mystery along with all others -- or, at any rate, some others -- will be revealed later.)

Still, I can't escape the suspicion that there's an awful lot of luck helping to decide whether crime pays or not that more than equals the effect of scientific deduction. How much of Sherlock Holmes' success is due to the fact that he just had blind luck with his hunches?

Charlene: Luck? Heaven forbid! What a thought! Luck and guesses are two things which are not features of Sherlock Holmes' stories. "I never guess, Watson," or something like that.

I, myself, am a fan of period detectives. I can read and enjoy almost any mystery, but my heart belongs to the likes of Sherlock Holmes, Lord Peter Wimsey, Solar Pons, et al. If I must read Agatha Christie, give me Hercule Poirot!

And who can resist Nick Danger?

Bill: Nobody, sweetheart, nobody.

Arnie: If I were a stoolie, I would probably sell you the story that the other three luminaries are, at the present moment, slouching around our living room in their trenchcoats doing imitations of Humphrey Bogart. I mean, this is the third issue you've gotten of this fanmag, so you probably know full well what's going on here. You realize that the scene which I have just sketched for you is not beyond the realm of possibility, at least for this group. But I ain't no stoolie, an' I

(Continued on page 21)

# KATZENJAMMER



## THE DAY CASE

The rain was a Chinese water torture, slapping my office window with a sound like a Manhattan secretary smacking a wiseguy in the chops in a singles bar uptown. This wasn't uptown. It was downtown. Way downtown. Brooklyn.

The hands of my battered Timex pointed to 10:00, but they lied like a suspected stoolie doing a command performance for a Puerto Rican social club in Park Slope. It was somewhere between 11 in the morning and four in the afternoon. I didn't know exactly, and I didn't care. All I could think about was my wallet, now thinner than the walls of a highrise apartment building.

I needed a client, any client. I needed one the way a Needle Park junkie needs a fix. And someone had stolen my bottle cap.

Then the office buzzer sounded, and I knew I finally had a case. "Come in," I growled at the unlocked door. She was the kind of client everybody wants and only Phillip Marlowe gets. She swayed toward me and sank into the green naugahyde chair I keep for the paying visitors.

She crossed long tapering legs that ran from here to there and made you never want to come back again. Her long hair was the color of 12-year-old Chivas Regal, but her eyes burned into my gut like a belt of cheap gin.

"I've never been in a situation like this, Mr. er, ah..." she began in a voice that blended the soft purr of Jackie Onassis with the silken sexiness of Miss Monitor. It was a good voice. A voice that hinted at character. Not just another pretty dame, the voice said to me. I was willing to listen.

"MacDonald, m'am," I said, "Ronald MacDonald."

"Well, as I was saying, I've never been in a spot like this before, Mr. MacDonald," she husked. She studied me with eyes as green as Breyer's Mint Chocolate Chip.

"Call me Ronald."

"Well, Mr. MacDon-- ah, Ronald," she giggled girlishly. It was a good girlish giggle. A giggle that hinted at character. It was a girlish giggle I could learn to like.



ARNIE KATZ

Katzenjammer - II

"I didn't know what to do at first when we received the letter," she tried again.

"Who is 'we'?" I cut in. She was scouting strange territory and didn't know what path to take. She hadn't read the right detective books. I was willing to help her. That's me, Ronald MacDonald, a triple-A guide in a world where everyone has lost his Exxon road map and no one remembers the best route home.

"Oh, I'm sorry," she blushed. It had been a long time since I'd seen anyone blush in Brooklyn -- or had wanted to. I was a sanitation man in a borough full of human garbage, and there were no tables left at the luncheonette where I could coop on my shift. "My husband and I, he's Dr. Thaddeus Bodog Savanna, received the most disturbing letter earlier this week and, well, this is the only place I could think of to turn for help."

"You've come to the right place, Mrs. Savanna," I vamped while my mind juggled crazy notions like a pizza-spinner in a fly-specked grab joint on Broadway. "Tell me your story, and I'll try to help." That's me, Ronald MacDonald. I was an overgrown boy scout riding the American dream like a shopping bag lady on the Double-E local struck on a siding in a bad part of town. Lately, they were all bad parts of town, and that was the trouble.

"Oh, thank you, Mr. -- that is, Ronald," she gushed. She had a nice gush. A gush with character. A gush that whispered, I'm not just another gushy dame. I was glad. "Then you do think you can do something about adjusting this telephone bill?"

"I'm Ronald MacDonald, m'am, I'm a private investigator. I'm a free man with a body for hire packing a magnum that belongs to nobody."

"Then you're not a customer service representative for New York Bell?" Surprise exploded in her face like a 30-second spot for Iris Chacon.

"No, I'm a private dick, m'am, just a private dick."

"I guess I'd better be going." She uncrossed those lovely legs and flashed me a slice of tanned thigh.

"I guess you'd better," I admitted. I didn't get up as she swayed to the door, opened it and walked out of my life forever. I heard the click-clack of her heels on the floor, and I knew she had been no scare-eyed honey.

I looked at my battered Timex. It said 10:00. I went back to my private eye thoughts and the rain.

-- Arnie Katz

# POWER SQUARE



# THE CHEAP DETECTIVE

I'm like most people, I guess, in that I have no basic objection to figures of authority - I just want them to be benevolent. And I've always been obsessed with cops. "Police Story" and "Kojak" and "Columbo" and Dirty Harry and Popeye Doyle. And, of course, the Private Eye. He was always benevolent - I guess that's cause he's paid by the day. Plus expenses. Also, he got to carry a rod, get hit with a sap, and do so many other fun things denied us ordinary folk.

So last summer, when I was invited to work as a shamus, I couldn't say no. Besides, it'd been a dry spell and, err, I needed the money.

"Cup of coffee, Mr. Kunkel?"

"Sure, why not."

"Cream and sugar?"

"Just as long as it disguises the taste, ma'm."

I was staring at her legs when it hit me. The coffee...it was... drugged...!

"Err, tell me, ma'm...do you have...any more of this...coffee?"

+ +

The guy who offered me this gig - as an assistant sleuth - was Jackie, an individual with a history so prosaic that he intrigued me immediately. Actually, I'd known him some fifteen years earlier. When I was eleven years old and used to hang out on Margaret Habercorn's stoop, Jack was thirteen, held the position of Warlord in the Junior Saints (tyro version of the neighborhood clique), and was getting it on with Mary Ann, Margaret's older sister. A thug of absolutely chilling reknown, he would stomp friend or foe into the earth at the drop of a comb, ride through the streets on a Harley and spit on the sidewalk every chance he got. He was definitely not the guy your father wanted you to grow up to be.

And now, here we were - he, a thirty year old ex-cop, already twice divorced; and me, a twenty-seven year old starving writer. It was obviously quite important to him that he impress me, and so all the lurid details of his life and times were offered up very early on for my approval. His first wife, he explained, had been a beautiful heiress, and they'd lived in one of her dad's many Miami Beach condos, right up until the divorce. Old Lady Number Two had followed



BILL KUNKEL

him onto the needle, wound up getting tagged for armed robbery, and hung herself in the Tombs (or, at least, that was what he originally believed. It later turned out that she had switched I.D. with a cellmate who was planning on checking-out and wound up officially dead, while being paroled in her new identity.). He was now on methadone, and had been for some years. In fact, he took the N.Y.P.D. to court a couple of years back, he told me, and became the first methadone addict to join New York's Finest. His third wife, Suzy, had recently detoxified and demanded that he do so as well. He refused, so she left him, taking with her one-half of J&S Security, his brand new rent-a-cop outfit, thus setting up divorce number three. However, rather than endure dragging it all through the courts, he dissolved J&S, filed for a private investigator's license, and cleaned his guns. And that's when I entered the picture.

"I know you could use the bread," he was telling me on the phone. "I mean, the research part is pretty dull, but then the pay's pretty high. And it's a strange fuckin case."

That night he brought over his notes and we went over it: thirty year old man (A) is accused of stabbing his wife (B) to death. A'd previously done time for cutting somebody in a bar room fight, and was still on probation. His mother (C) hired us to uncover evidence sufficient to get him a new trial. And, as I sat in the local library examining law books and doing other research, a story as weird as anything ever conceived by Raymond Chandler, unfurled. A's father (D), Jackie explained, was a judge, very prominent and very wealthy. The mother (C) was a practicing lesbian and the woman (E) in the apartment next to the victim's (B) started telling a different story altogether, than the one she'd laid down in court. A and B, it came out in court, had fought violently the day of the crime, with E testifying that she heard the victim (B) scream: "Put down that damn knife!" No eye witnesses, but our boy said he left at least half an hour before the estimated time of death.

And so the long summer days dragged on. Voluminous research was assembled, and Jackie seemed to be forever shadowing somebody. Then, one rainy Wednesday, he tracked the Judge (D) to a gay bar. But wait, that's only the tip of the iceberg. Besides, better drama lay just around the corner. This case went from the intriguing to the insane too quickly, especially once Jessica, Jackie's second wife, turned up, alive and somehow involved in this whole mad affair. The next day, Jackie dropped by, looking grave. I had intended to explain that I needed some money and that, once paid, I was going to start writing full time again. But something in his face made me wait. Then, he emptied the contents of a brown paper bag on the floor. Large bottle of 10 mlg. valiums, Dilantin, an anti-convulscent I'd known him to take, and about five hundred Darvon.

"I guess you figured out that I'm sick," he announced blandly.

"Epilepsy?" I guessed.

"Brain tumor. Malignant. The convulsions have been getting terrible."

I was absolutely stunned. "You're kidding," was the only thing that came to mind.

"I've got, maybe, six months. I wanna get the bread from this

Power Square -- III

case and split upstate - I don't want people to see me die."

The confusion was so thick a pencil would've stood up in it, and as if things weren't bad enough, on his way home somebody tried to ice him.

The phone rang at ten thirty the next morning, and I picked it up angrily.

"Yeah?" I asked, annoyed at having been woken up.

"Jackie. You hear it last night?"

"Hear what, Jackie?"

"Gunshots."

He'd been walking along Hillside Avenue, he explained, and saw a dark Chevy waiting in the cud. Suddenly it growled to life and rocketed forward. Just as the bright flash of a handgun erupted within the auto's dark interior, Jack was diving over a hedge. His adversary was using a .45 automatic, and the bullets chopped away at the shrubbery. (You hear a lot about Magnums, but what's the point, really? It fires a high-speed bullet, perfect for elephant hunting with a handgun, or firing through a moving vehicle, but on the street, the bullet can travel through your victim, through a car, a brick wall, and take out somebody on the other side. A .45 is for killing people, not cars or rhinos, and the fact that the bullet travels slower only makes it more deadly. That, and the heavier calibre give it more stopping power. Still, when the smoke cleared and the cops arrived, Jackie was unscratched.

+ +

"Don't play me for a sap, sweetheart."

I don't know, it was too incredible. And things began to fall apart. I never saw any of these fantastic adventures. And it turned out that the big-name department store where Jackie claimed J&S Security were under contract, had never heard of the outfit. And I kept begging him to collect some money. I wanted to get back to writing, and even a portion of the fee would've helped anormously. But every day there was some new reason why the gelt wasn't forthcoming.

Two days later, Jackie called again. "You hear it last night?" he asked. More shots. Another attempt on his life. Come on, man, I thought.

"Oh yeah," he added, "you busy tonight?"

"Why?"

I was getting annoyed, and he seemed genuinely hurt. "Well, I was gonna pick up our check, man, but if you're --"

"Really? Great, man! Definitely, I'm free tonight!"

As we rode the bus that evening, he went over the case once again. Each day seemed to bring some new plot twist, some added convolution. Now, he had figured out the connection between his ex-wife and the case. He handed me a Polaroid snap. It was pretty blurry, but you could make out a fifty-ish man in a motel with an attractive girl at least twenty years his junior. "This is her?" I asked, incredulous.



Power Square -- IV

"Uh huh. And guess who the dude is."

I knew what my answer was supposed to be. "Not the judge!"

He nodded. I began to get very worried. And it helped not at all that our "client" wasn't home. On the way home he asked me, "Do me a solid and walk me to Liberty and 121st?"

"Yeah, why not." I had to talk with him. As we got off the bus and headed down Liberty Avenue, I began to press him, once more, for my money. If something was wrong, I told him, I'd rather know. Etc. Etc. Etc. He looked across the street and stopped walking.

"Look."

I stared up at the window he was watching, the second floor above a bakery. The lights were out, and nobody was visible.

"So this is why she wanted me to meet her here," he said, as if he'd suddenly realized a great truth. "She's got two big motherfuckers with guns up there waiting for me! And that hallway --" He moved, cat-like, across the street, I following in a daze of disbelief. He stood before the door to the building, looking through the glass down the long hallway. "I wouldn't of stood a chance in there!"

"Who?" I wanted to know, for god's sake. "Who wanted to set you up, man?"

He didn't take his eyes off the door. "Suzy," he told me.

Odd, isn't it, that someone can be stone crazy, and you never notice, then, all of a sudden, you wonder how you could've not realized.

He was explaining her motives. "She always said that if she couldn't have me, nobody would. But I never fuckin thought --!"

"Uhh, listen, Jack - I have to get going." I spoke very softly.

He was staring up at the window, now, where no shadows moved. And he followed those movements that the shadows-that-weren't-there didn't make. "Yeah, sure," he was saying. "I'm gonna check around back, see if I can get in that way."

I started away. "Hey, Bill, wait a minute," he called. "I might need back-up!"

I tried to tell him, but how do you explain something like that? "I don't associate with lunatics, my good man!" No. I just shrugged. "I, uhh, have to go... that's all, man."

He was already moving toward the building's fire escape, and I wondered what he'd find inside. Meanwhile, the streetlight's illumination cast crazy shadows on the sidewalk, as I headed home.

-Bill Kunkel

P L O Y



# A TOUCH OF WIMSEY

First of all, in the interests of honesty and fair play, I have a confession to make. I am not really a fan of mysteries per se. Discovering "whodunnit" is never a motive of mine when I pick up a paperback from the mystery section. Discovering who discovers whodunnit is more like it - that is to say, I love not a mystery, but a detective.

My affection for detectives began just where such an attraction should begin, with that epitome of all sleuths, Mr. Sherlock Holmes. It was sometime before I entered high school that a number of old books belonging to my grandparents were being discarded, and naturally I poked through them first. There I found, among other things, copies of A Study in Scarlet and The Sign of the Four, circa the early 1900's (and, I might add, pretty obviously pirated editions). I took to them right away, and upon being gifted soon after with a copy of The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, was as devastated as readers had been some 75 years earlier when my hero died at the Reichenbach Falls.

It was a few months later that I, having entered high school and so gained a measure of independence, was on a shopping trip and decided to glance through the paperback section of the department store I was in. Lo and behold, what caught my eye but a copy of The Return of Sherlock Holmes! Aha, stories I hadn't read yet! I quickly made my purchase and headed homeward. Reading on the train, I discovered the fabulous truth - this was not simply a volume I had missed, but a resurrection! Sherlock Holmes Lived! My delight was an echo of that felt by so many back in 1903 when "The Adventure of the Empty House" first made its appearance. After that I searched out a Complete Sherlock Holmes, and then came The Annotated Sherlock Holmes, and the beginning of the end of a good deal of my shelf space.

Well, Holmes was my only detective interest for some time. I remember quite clearly when the Lord Peter Wimsey books were first recommended to me by a relative of my brother-in-law. I tucked the paper she'd written some titles on into my wallet, and every once in a while I'd come across it and say to myself, yes, I must try to pick up some of these books. More fool I. Well, time passed, but eventually I was clever enough to buy a copy of one of them, and I became quite hooked.

So it was with the typical mixture of happiness and trepidation that affects any of us when we hear that a favorite book has been purchased for the screen that I greeted the news of the BBC Lord Peter adaptations. Thankfully, most of my fears were ill-founded. Oh they did a few bad



CHARLENE KUNKEL

## Ploy - II

things to some of them, it's true, but by and large the damage was minimal, and seeing them come to life on the screen, a joy.

Before I get into the adaptations themselves, perhaps I should give a brief introduction to Lord Peter. The creation of Dorothy L. Sayers, Lord Peter is the quite wealthy younger brother of the Duke of Denver. He resides in London, attended by his manservant, Bunter, who was also his sergeant in World War I. Bunter now also assists in investigations, although Lord Peter has another "partner" in Inspector Charles Parker of Scotland Yard. Detecting began as a hobby for the naturally inquisitive Wimsey which worked to calm his nerves, which came out of the war in a bad way. The war, indeed, is a strong influence on Wimsey's personality, and the devastating effect it had on that "lost generation" a constant in the earlier books. The best thing about Lord Peter, though, is that the character grows.

It's clear from the beginning that the prattling facade he often uses is just that, but exactly what kind of person is underneath it is something that we learn slowly as the books progress. The characterization that in Whose Body, the first of the Lord Peter books, seems interesting but perhaps a bit pat gains depth in future novels, and finally with the introduction of Harriet Vane flowers into a fully-rounded personality.

In many ways the most charming thing about the television adaptations is the mood. Set by the beginning credits with their background of various bits of evidence and equipment and an overview of Wimsey in a variety of poses, they're backed by the most entertaining twenties-type music you could desire. The ambience is almost perfect. A few difficulties do appear almost immediately, however. Ian Carmichael is really a bit too old for the part, and certainly too good-looking (Lord Peter is described as looking as if his name were Algy), but he's so very good in the part that those complaints demand to be overlooked. Indeed, these adaptations were to quite an extent his baby; according to an interview with him on PBS, Carmichael knocked on the door of every producer in the British Isles with the series idea before he got lucky. Glyn Houston, who plays Bunter in all the productions save one, is equally excellent, but poses a more difficult problem in that his part is too often overblown. I'm as fond of Bunter as the next person, but an overemphasis on him has on occasion hurt not only his own character but that of Lord Peter, as well as doing some damage to the entire story. This was particularly true in Clouds of Witness, and is a general problem throughout the series. The supporting cast is otherwise uniformly excellent.

"Clouds of Witness," a story revolving around the Duke of Denver being accused of murdering his sister Mary's fiance, one Colonel Cathcart, and an affair between the Duke and Mrs. Grimthorpe, wife of a local farmer, features some plot changes by adaptor Anthony Stevens that are infuriating, and even offensive. Not only were they totally senseless, in most cases they not only did not add to the dramatic value of the show but actually detracted from it. Now, I admit that I am far from the most particular person when it comes to plot. I am a lazy reader in that I do not try to figure out solutions to mysteries; indeed, if I do figure it out I consider it a flaw in the story and I view the author accordingly. But when the case is wrapped up, I like it to be wrapped up! In the television production of "Clouds of Witness" there are so many loose threads left hanging that any self-respecting mystery fan would be shocked. Several points dealing with Capt. Cathcart's suicide which figured prominently in the plot are left unexplained, such as: why did he shoot himself in the chest? What

was the reason he dragged himself toward the house? etc. Also, a number of motivations are left unclear. But the worst part has to deal with the Grimthorpes. Instead of Mr. Grimthorpe being accidentally killed by a taxi as he fires wildly at the car Denver is in, he is wounded in a struggle with Bunter (the old Bunter problem again!) and only incapacitated for a couple of months. His wife is changed from an independent woman looking forward to building a life of her own to one who is prone to fainting and agrees to become housekeeper for Peter's "villa in Sorrento!" Really, now! Peter comes off as a most unpleasant character in this business, and Mrs. G. effectively loses all her admirable spirit, and we are left with a most unpleasant taste in our mouths.

I tend to pair "The Unpleasantness at the Belonna Club" with "Clouds of Witness", since they are the earliest stories produced by the BBC, both are set in the mid-twenties, and perhaps for these reasons they have a similar feel to them.

Based on Lord Peter's attempt to answer a deceptively simple question, at exactly what time did this 90-year-old General Fentimen pass away, it becomes a tale of murder replete with coverups upon coverups.

It is also the only series that does not feature Glyn Houston in the Bunter role. This is something of a mixed blessing, in that the part is kept in better proportion but the actor who replaces him, Derek Newkirk, although competent, is just not as well suited to the role.

Television is not noted for subtlety of characterization, and "Belonna Club" sadly is no exception. There is an unhappy tendency to move opinions and traits to the extreme. For example, Lord Peter's sympathy and understanding attitude toward George Fentimen, who was left in poor health and a bit crazy by the War, here becomes really heavy-handed and almost hard to take. A recurring problem in the several productions that also crops up here is the attitude toward women. Just as the treatment of Mrs. Grimthorpe in "Clouds of Witness" is annoying and inexplicable, the women in "Belonna Club" are transformed into caricatures of what was once considered typically feminine, and the male-female relationships in the plot suffer accordingly. For instance, when in the book Gen. Fentimen tells his nephew George that he ought to cherish his wife with whom he has been having problems, many of which are based on the fact that she must now work to support them, George comments "as if I needed him to tell me that." In the t.v. adaptation, that's changed to "as if cherishing would mean anything to a woman like Shiela".

One of my favorite characters, a woman friend of Lord Peter's named Marjorie Phelps, is pictured in the book as quite independent, a sculptress and member of London's bohemian colony. Although the basic facts about her are not changed, her flighty side is typically overdone, and her relationship with Lord Peter unfortunately altered. In the book, although it's clear that Marjorie is quite fond of Lord Peter and would perhaps like a more permanent relationship with him, it is also evident that she realizes that he is not so inclined and she accepts this. In the t.v. version, Marjorie comes off instead as being love-sick over Peter, turning a mature relationship into one that better fits the juvenile view t.v. so often takes of love and sex.

## Ploy - IV

Aside from these complaints, the production is very enjoyable, with well-paced direction and excellent acting. A particular standout in this series is Mark Eden, whose portrayal of Charles Parker is a mainstay of the entire run.

"Five Red Herrings," a timetable mystery set in Scotland, has never been a big favorite of mine simply because that sort of tale is not much to my taste, but it comes across surprisingly well on film. The plot is clearly presented, despite the many characters and the sometimes difficult to understand Scots burr. The story is solid, the scenery beautiful, and the final reenactment of the crime quite entertaining.

On the other hand, I've always been quite fond of "Murder Must Advertise." The few flaws in the TV production are mostly sins of omission, and on the whole it is excellent. Bill Craig's adaptation, combined with the atmospheric sets, produce an appropriately heavy aura of mystery. Carmichael is closer to the age he should be, since Peter is about half a decade older than in "Beltona" and "Clouds", the production is on the whole better balanced, and the thirties ambience impeccable. Indeed, the first two chapters may very well be perfect.

"The Nine Tailors" has been called not only Dorothy Sayers best book, but also one of the best mysteries ever written. The BBC production, happily, lives up to its material. There are a few minor changes from the book, but they are mostly unimportant, and everything hangs together very nicely. Once again we have a somewhat older Lord Peter in a very different setting from his usual London, with a cast of supporting characters who are quite fascinating in their own right. The one most important change once again involves padding Bunter's part, but it does make the climax even more dramatic, so one really can't argue too much with it. I think that this is the best Lord Peter we are ever apt to see on film.

It's sad that, apparently, there will be no more Lord Peter stories made into films. I'd like to have seen Harriet Vane make an appearance - "Strong Poison", particularly, could have been very good. I hesitate to mention "Busman's Honeymoon", since that actually was made into a movie in the 1940's called "Haunted Honeymoon." Sometimes seen very late at night in a truncated version, this ranks with "That Forsyte Woman" as Great Murders Perpetrated by Hollywood. It is even worse than you might suppose.

But what I'd most like to see is some of the Lord Peter short stories done. "The Abominable History of the Man with the Copper Fingers" is a particular favorite of mine, and seems a natural for the screen. The thought of the art deco sets it would require alone sets my mouth to watering. "The Haunted Policeman," "The Bone of Contention," and any number of others seem equally appealing.

But finally, I must ask, when are we going to see a Sherlock Holmes series over here? The BBC has done it, the appeal certainly is there, what, pray tell, is their excuse? If we can't have more of Lord Peter Wimsey, let's at least see Sherlock Holmes, presently just sitting in a film can somewhere in London, waiting to unroll on our screens.

-- Charlene Kunkel

# GAS GIANTS



# LETTERS FROM THE LOUD CROWD

It all seems strange to JIM MEADOWS

This was a very satisfying issue. You all did a very skillful job of latching on to those trivial things that were so important to us all when we were Tiny Tots. How strange they seem when compared to the trivial things that are important to us as adults.

I never followed the baseball cards like you did, Arn. I was never a very good jock. But in the mid '60's, when I was about 10, Irwin Allen was cranking out Lost in Space for CBS, and that sloppy hulk of a tv series was one of my first science fiction highs.

Oh, the bubblegum cards that came from that one! The series' first season was in black and white and the cards came from the earliest episodes, so I didn't have the advantage of color, but I still collected the things religiously. I kept them neatly in sequence and read them furtively. They were really not very satisfying at all once they were collected, but I hadn't yet learned the ins and outs of collecting -- still haven't, entirely.

I know my mother hasn't. She has religiously collected all the Star Wars bubble gum cards. They're kept in rubber bands in the kitchen, and don't you ever let her know I told you. (She reads these pages occasionally.)

Bill Kunkel's "How to be the Batman" was one of the funniest pieces I've read in a fanzine for a long time. A long, long time. I can't even attempt witty repartee about something so damn good and funny. (← S'funny, I always find it easiest to respond to something that's terrifically funny in the first place. Gets the juices going, at least for me. -- AK →)

Like dollhouses, Joyce? My sister had 'em in her time. But if you like to go whole hog and you live in the Chicago area, the thing to do is go to that bastion of American Capitalism, the Museum of Science and Industry. Among the many rhinestone and pusbutton exhibits, there is the Colleen Moore Doll House.

Colleen was a child star long ago when she was young enough. She must have been pretty good at it, because her doll house is a castle. A huge castle. If you gutted it

Gas Giants -- II

and put it on its side, you'd have a walk-in closet. Un-gutted and rightways-up, it is an astoundingly ornate, detailed and just-plain expensive... well, doll house. I can't imagine anyone actually playing with it, but it is very good for gaping at.

I was a veteran jump roper in my day, a traitor to my sex, I guess, as far as those roles go. But I can't remember any of the old patter except the climactic, "Salt, vinegar, mustard, pepper, red hot PEPPER!" as the jumper endeavoured to reach the speed of sound. These days, the ropes are being used by older brothers and others who have hopped onto the physical fitness fad, having read something about how jumping rope will increase endurance, lower weight and improve sexual performance. Nothing's simple any more. (Careful there, Jim, you're among exercise people. I mean, how do you think we maintain these four perfect bodies that made readers of this sterling publication swoon with delight? -- AK)

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HARRY ANDRUSCHAK has some cutting remarks about kids

I notice that this issue's theme is kids. YUCH! I don't like kids. My distaste extended to the point where I got a vasectomy operation even though I'm single. It is not easy for a single person to be cut, but I did it eventually. I hate kids.

As for childhood games, I never was any good at them. Also, I was brought up in England. Our primary games were Football and Cricket. Football you know better as soccer, and cricket? Well, this is sorta hard to explain to anybody not part of the British Empire. It is a ball game, played on a field, with a batsman (or rather two) and a pitcher (actually two, or perhaps more) and each team is 11, and...

Back to square one. Read about the game in the Encyclopedia Britannica if you have access to one. When, at the age of 14, I came to the U.S., I faced a whole new series of games, most of which I ignored.

My main activity was in the Boy Scouts -- camping and hiking and all that -- but not much organized sport. And I became more and more of a bookworm, read more and more science fiction and wound up in the U.S. Navy. End Childhood.

One thing I was good at was Cats Cradle -- and not just the two-person version, but the elaborate designs one person can do on a single loop of string. Dover Books publishes a couple of books on the subject you might look up.

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DAVE "Teddy Bear" HALL laments

I walked on London Bridge. It's in Arizona now, you know, and it's tremendously tacky. No shops, no crumbling gargoyles, nothing. Just an ornate grey bridge over a man-made lake, surrounded by a retirement home using London Bridge as their hype.

Sorry about your teddy-bear, though. Did I tell you the State of Texas has that down as my alias? (No, but in case there was any trepidation among the faithful, I should point out that Joyce's poem in Four Star Extra #2 was in memory of a childhood friend, and was not meant to suggest that something Untoward has happened to her current Teddy Bear which, as some of you know, goes by the name "Burbee." -- AK)

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BLUE JAUNT



# CRIME ON MY HANDS

Despite the enthusiasm of the other members of this menage a quatre, I don't love a mystery and in fact feel it possible that there may be something vaguely unclear about the entire genre. Not that there's not excellently written fiction in the field, and oodles of suspense and tons of thrills. But, when you come right down to it, almost all mysteries concern themselves with, shall we say, the more sordid aspects of society. In short there is violence here, and perhaps even worse, a distinct taint of the criminal element.

Mysteries would be alright were it not for these two things, but for some unimaginable reason authors will insist on populating their novels with thieves and cutthroats and brigands whom one normally wouldn't like to encounter in polite society, so how can I take them to my bedroom and allow them to lurk on my night table under my reading lamp?

Yet through some curious stroke of fate, I have always been surrounded by people who did not share my distaste for these threatening villains and almost as threatening detectives, and so over the years I have been exposed to a great many mysteries. My own mother, as god-fearing a woman as ever lived, was none-the-less a fan of Edward G. Robinson, and as a child I suffered through the great classic detective movies of that era, longing for the story to end so the comedy would come on.

Watching these detective movies began to have its effect, and I developed a grudging admiration of the moll. Slinky, usually blonde, sexily dressed, and carrying a foot-long cigarette holder with which she'd stabbingly punctuate every remark, I determined that this could well be a career opportunity for me if I could only learn to tolerate the bad man with whom blondie always seemed saddled.

A little later I realized that being a lady spy seemed to provide most of the benefits of this mode of employment, while getting rid of most of the unpleasant aspects, particularly since I determined quite early on that if I were captured I would immediately tell all.

The kids in the neighborhood had all heard of spies when I was six years old. One of the older girls we played with had heard her parents saying



JOYCE KATZ



## Blue Jaunt - II

that many German spies had gone into hiding after the end of the war, and to us it seemed most logical that there could be a few lurking about in Poplar Bluff.

We therefore one Saturday morning organized ourselves into two search parties, and went out to hunt the spies who were probably hiding in our neighborhood. The other group went to the school playyard--a sensible place for any spy to hide on a Saturday morning since it was deserted. The group I was in checked out all the empty garages and storage sheds and peered through the windows of the vacant house on the next block. All that day, or at least until lunchtime, we patriotically did our best, even crawling through the storm drain that tunneled under our street. All we got for our troubles was slightly muddy and quite a bit disappointed, and after lunch we forgot that game for something more rewarding. So much for my career as a slinky blonde counterspy.

After reading a few girlish detective gothics, I went on a regular tear about the neighborhood searching for a haunted house or a strange light in a window..something, just anything, mysterious. For a little while I practiced writing secret messages in code, but I never seemed to have anything very important to say and, worse yet, no one to pass the messages to once they were written. Larry Wilson and I did work out a system where we could signal one another of danger by flashing a pocket mirror--and that was pretty exciting, but unfortunately there was never any danger, so we ended by using the mirror flashes just to tell each other "come here" which we could have done as easily by shouting from my backyard to his.

Each Sunday night the radio would further reinforce my growingly negative view of the genre, as Sam Spade and Nick Carter slugged it out with nefarious gentlemen every week, proving to me that violence was inescapably connected with detectives, and molding my opinion that perhaps I should aspire to a lifestyle other than the one they represented. In their dramas, there wasn't even a bright future for a good gunmoll, each of whom I observed usually cried a lot before the evening's show was finished.

About that time, a lot of the people Dick Tracy hung around with started having bugs flying around their heads; and this just finished it. I knew that any lifestyle which brought me into contact with those guys was not for me.

Thus I left behind my ambitions to seek my fortune in the world of crime, either as a good or a bad guy, and turned elsewhere for career possibilities, (settling if memory serves me right for that of mountain climber, which did seem to be a very high calling.)

However, that was not the end of my contact with the netherworld of pursued and pursuers as the world seems to be full of men in wrinkled rain-coats, some of whom are detectives and some of whom are not but are equally interesting in their own way.

Only this past week I had an encounter with a real private eye, when an inspector came into my office. Even if he hadn't introduced himself, I still would have known. He had a shifty look in his eyes, and a suit that looked like he had slept in it for a week. His tie had genuine gravy spots,

Blue Jaunt - III

like a character from a Mickey Spillane novel. He whipped out his camera and took dramatic studies of the floor. In my mind's eye I could see the chalk-mark outline of a body.

Unfortunately, the mundane facts were just that some carpeting had been damaged, and he was investigating for the insurance company that was bound to replace it. But why let truth interfere with a good fantasy; it's easy to imagine more sinister reasons for his actions.

In an effort to be more in step with my co-editors, I had Arnie recommend some detective novels to me, promising to give the genre one more honest try. I've now gone through three of them, by Ross MacDonalld, Michael Crichton, and Donald Westlake. I am ready to grudgingly admit there's some real talent in the field, and I will undoubtedly read more.

But I can't get my heart into it until they start writing mysteries without crime, starring detectives who aren't violent, searching for perpetrators who aren't dishonest.

-- Joyce Katz

(Continued from page 15)

CHARLES BURBEE (not a stuffed teddy-bear) comments

I rough-drafted a fine note to you people on the occasion of the #1 issue of your sterling fanzine. But because I did it in longhand at 4 a.m. and laid it aside for later typing, it is no longer available for copying purposes. Why did I do it that way? Well, I now live in an apartment with paper-thin walls and my typer is kind of noisy. Why 4 AM? Because I am usually awake at 3:30 because I must go to work at 5 AM. It is no longer available for copying purposes because I am a rotten housekeeper and my kitchen table is an ungodly mess of papers, books, magazines, letters, fanzines, sales slips, file cards, clipboards, notes to myself, unedited 8mm film, pornographic advertisements, Fiat repair manuals, and that rough draft is somewhere in there.

So here we are at #2. The World of Kids. You know, when I told Cora--yes, I visit her every two weeks or so--that you guys were going to do a one-shot with that theme, she said "Why don't you get the old gang together here and we'll do a one-shot with that same theme?"

I at first thought this a splendid idea. But my enthusiasm waned after a while. We may yet do it for the August FAPA mailing, but I doubt it a lot.

Anyway, I was wondering what you people would do with that theme. You left me gasping in wonder. All those games you played. I never heard of any of them at all. I never even heard of Schaefer's Beer, although right now I am longing for a frosty cold bottle of it.

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And that's about all we have space for this time around, although Paula Watts deserves Honorable Mention for a note, which was a little too personal to fit in the letter column. I, Arnie, also want to apologise to BILL ROTSLER for misspelling his name all in caps last issue. If it's any consolation, I believe I misspelled my own name at least once in the very same issue.

ARNIE KATZ



# SOUND AS A DOLLAR

The elegantly dressed waiter gently laid our check on the table. Ignoring the debris of the just-completed meal, he deftly placed the accounting halfway between my dinner companion and myself. Servitors at the better restaurants are so discreet.

As the waiter moved to stand a, well... discreet distance from our table, my fingers did not hesitate. With a will of their own, they swooped across the white expanse of the tablecloth to snare the check with a gesture that was faster than the human eye could perceive. I felt like I was in one of those multi-image comic book sequences Carmine Infantino used to draw in The Flash. You know, the one in which the Flash, while still in his Barry Allen secret identity, catches the falling glass of water without spilling a drop.

Now I'm a pretty generous fellow, even if I do say so myself. I give with a smile and always share my toys. Yet I knew that I would ordinarily have sat there in Philadelphia's Bookbinders restaurant steeling myself for the kind of check that results when one's guest has begun with oysters Rockefeller and gone on from there. I do very well with my writing, but I'll have to do a lot better before a c-note becomes petty cash.

So as I cavalierly stacked the twenties on the bill with what I hoped was the proper savoir faire, I wondered about my burst of bravado.

"Sure you don't want to split it?" offered Sandy Goldstone, my photographer on the story I was covering.

I chuckled benevolently, for I am always at my most benevolent after a good steak. "Relax," I urged as I waved away his suggestion, "I'm on expense account." And as I said those magic words, "expense account," it all became crystal clear. I'm as quick as the next man with someone else's cash.

As we strolled through the historic restaurant, admiring the antique photographs and drawings which line the paneled walls, my thoughts drifted to the man who first pointed me down the Yellow Brick Road of high life on the cuff: Johnny Dollar..

Johnny was the insurance investigator hero of CBS Radio's "Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar" mystery series. Known as "the man with the action-packed expense account," Dollar recounted his first case on February 18, 1948 using the voice of Charles Russell.

Although network radio was about to expire as a result of a case even Johnny couldn't break -- the one in which your family's first tv set arrived -- the show was the essence of radio drama. Perhaps it was all the more precious to those who admire this vanishing artform, since it was growing in strength even as the classics of the "golden age of radio" were fading into oblivion. "Tom Mix," "Superman" and "Little Or-

Johnny Dollar -- II

phan Annie" were all before my time, but Johnny Dollar was always there, shining through the miasma of easy-listening deejays and "housewives' home companions" like Carlton Fredericks and Galen Drake,

"Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar," in fact, had the distinction of being the very last radio drama to abandon the network airwaves. Dollar penned his final expense account on September 30, 1962, just one half hour after "Suspense" called it quits.

I've heard the lead character was rather corny during the show's early years. For example, the writers made Johnny live up to his surname by having him pass out dollar tips to anyone who would stand still long enough. Not only was this more of a tribute to Dollar's generosity than to his sense of style, but it must have made his pants pockets bag alarmingly.

This open-handedness was balanced by a streak of impatience which endured long after the detective became more careful with those silver dollars. If you've watched Archie Bunker hector Edith to "get to the pernt" of one of her interminable stories, then you've got a pretty good idea of how Johnny treated people who didn't give him the information he needed fast enough. Sometimes the investigator reached such a crescendo of frustration that he would bolt from a room before getting all the data he would need to crack the case. I guess he liked the extra challenge.

"Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar" had turned hard-as-nails by the time I began listening in the mid-1950's. Bob Bailey played Dollar in the best tradition of Black Mask magazine. Some of the scripts were written by Blake Edwards, who went on to greater fame as co-creator of the "Pink Panther" series of detective movies.

Although many rate Bailey tops in the role, my favorite was the actor who handled the part during the show's final two years, Mandel Kramer. Now a "voice over" announcer on numerous TV commercials, Kramer was well-suited to the show's material. His manly voice resonated with good humor and his Johnny Dollar could trade quips as well as left hooks with the best -- or worst -- of them.

I believe Kramer's Johnny Dollar was the template for every dope-smoker's favorite sleuth, Nick Danger, Third Eye. To listen to "Head Them off at the Past" is to hear unmistakable echoes of Kramer's Dollar. And speaking of echoes, no one knew how he made his voice do that back then, either.

The show's unique feature was its method of narration. The half-hour would begun with Dollar scraping together an expense account report for a recent client. As he entered each item on the list, he would tell the radio audience how he came to spend the money in that fashion. They never told us how the detective's clients took some of his more outrageous expense claims, but there was a suggestion that the ace investigator was not above burying a particularly loony expense item under a more prosaic heading to slip it past the accounting department. Presumably, the folks at Hartford Life Mutual felt they were getting their money's worth.

And then, one Sunday evening, it was over. Perhaps Johnny, grown paunchy from too many expense account meals, joined the home office staff of one of the companies which employed him as a freelance investigator. Perhaps he became vice president of customer services, or some such. It's nice to think of him that way, lolling through his semi-retirement, disturbed in his peace only by the occasional three-martini lunch. On his unlimited expense account, of course.

-- Arnie Katz

# FOURPLAY ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

(Continued from page . Still Arnie observing the code of silence.)

ain't coppin' out to nuthin'. So don't tell them you heard about it from me, okay?

Bill: My first heavy detectic trip involved "77 Sunset Strip." I had an Edd "Kookie" Byrnes sweater. 77 Sunset Strip (snap, snap). I even had the album -- the single was not enough -- that featured "Kookie, Kookie (Lend Me Your Comb)" by Edd and "friend" (Connie Stevens!). And the show had Roger Moore, who's married to Ann-Margaret these days, so you know he's still got it.

Do you remember "Hawaiian Eye" with Anthony Steele? I can still hear those dulcet island strains -- early "Adventures in Paradise" -- and that L.A./Hollywood soundstage/Nelson Riddle type theme. With Poncy Ponce -- and Connie Stevens as "Cricket"!

Arnie: Have you even considered that, with diligent effort, Connie Stevens could become the ofay Iris Chacon? I have the 45 rpm version of "Kookie, Kookie". I'm not sure what this tells our readers about our musical tastes, but I'm not sure I like it.

Charlene: Now wait a minute here. Roger Moore was the Saint and is now James Bond. Roger Smith is married to Ann-Margaret. And Lord Peter is married to Harriet, Nick Charles to Nora, and I say don't forget the great detective couples, which is the name of the game here, folks.

Bill: And as the Werewolves of London howl in the distance... "What is that damned howling?" an exasperated Lord Bongolli finally asked, after the baneful sound had been heard in London for a good fifteen minutes.

"I thay," commented Percy, "thounds like a... wolf!"

"Or perhaps," the mysterious Oriental, Dr. Yogami, offered, "a lost soul."

Arnie: "Or perhaps," said the-man-with-the-action-packed-expense-account-who-is-against-Carter's-plan-to-kill-off-the-expensive-lunch," it is the voice of Warren Zevon.

"hmm, perhaps," Professor Yogami said, his piercing Oriental eyes narrowing to mere slits of Asian inscrutability. "Perhaps not."

"I say there," Percy put in enthusiastically, as he waved his arm in the air and bounced up and down on his crane-thin legs. "I see Lon Chaney walking with the Queen."

"God's blood, man, what is the boulder doing with Her Majesty?" Lord Bongolli thundered, his jowls shimmering with impatience.

"I believe they're doing 'the Werewolf of London'," Percy informed his companions. "Yes, by dash, that ith Lon Chaney junior danthing with the Queen, doing 'the Werewolf of London'."

"Ah, so-o-o-o," the wily doctor hissed. "Then it is not in that dollection in which we must seek for kirrer of Duke Gellad."

