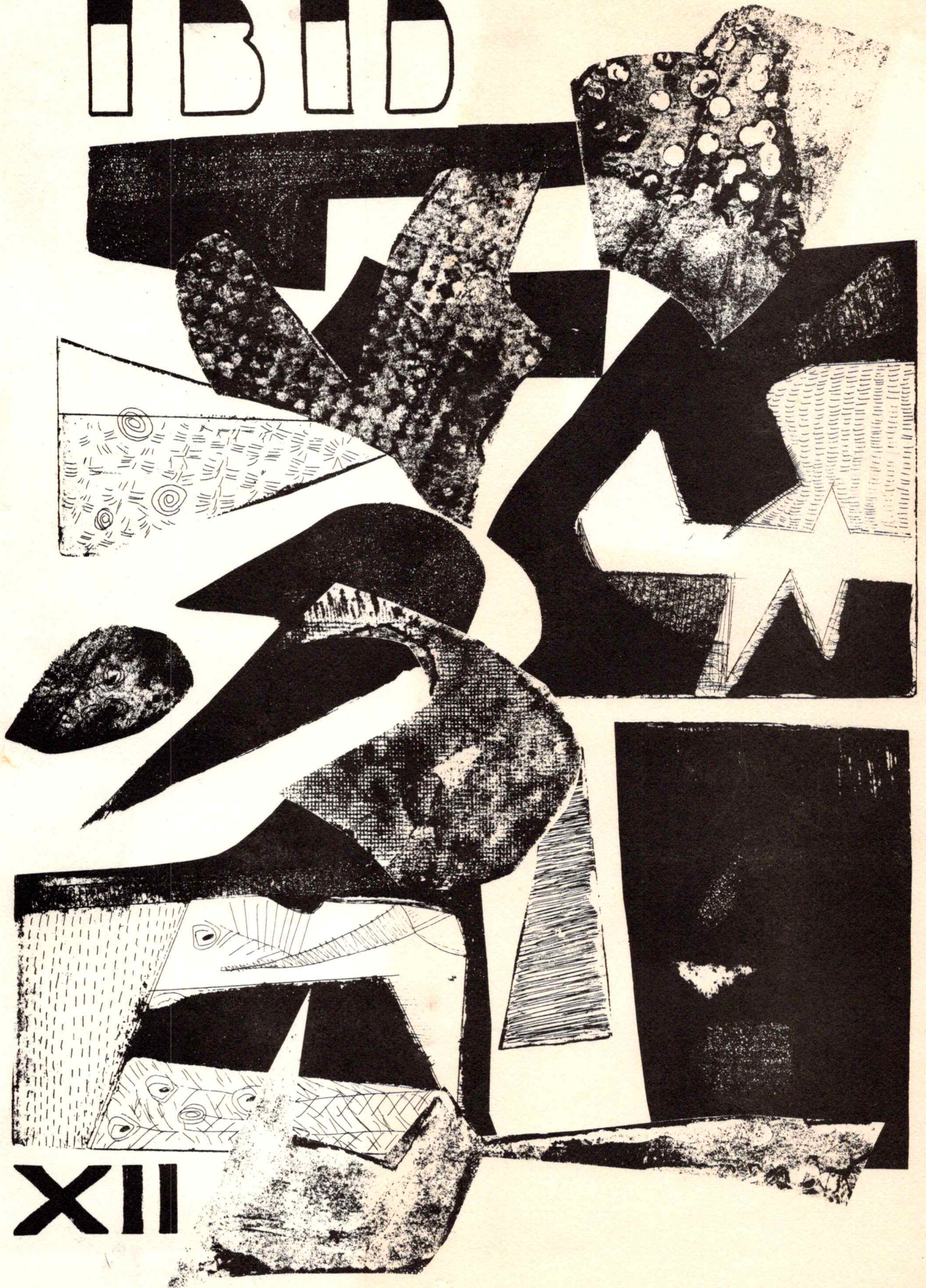


IBID



XII

# IBAD

Published for the Twelfth Mailing, November 1975, of the  
ESOTERIC ORDER OF DAGON, by Ben Indick, 428 Sagamore Ave.,  
Teaneck, N. J. 07666

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## CONTENTS

- Pg. 3 inBENdick, mailing comments on EOD XI
- Pg. 10 The Lame Duck, the column by our Honorary Editor,  
Florida Branch, E. Vernon Smith  
Logo art by Ben Indick
- Pg. 12 HPL's "Charleston" and other publications of The  
Strange Co., a free and well-earned plug.
- Pg. 13 "A Coffin For A Sorceror", faulfic by Ben Indick  
Illustrated by Joseph A. West
- Pg. 37 Two Poems: Introduction
- Pg. 38 "The Werewyf", by Gail White
- Pg. 41 "Selections from 'Gilgamesh: A Tragedy'" by Sheryl Smith  
Illustrations by Shari Hulse
- Pg. 47 "Weird Heads", a Folio of Art  
Brad Parks  
Don Herron  
Sheryl Birkhead  
Bruce Townley
- Pg. 55 "Some Self-Criticism", by H. P. Lovecraft  
(First Printing)
- Pg. 57 Envoi: The Editor
- Front Cover: Collage by Janet Indick  
Back Cover: Cartoon by Ben Indick

150 copies of IBID XII have been printed. Of these, 50 are for distribution through ESOTERIC ORDER OF DAGON, and 100 are for distribution to many of the friends and fan editors in Fandom who have for so long generously given me their fanzines.

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# "in BENdick

+ + Mailing and Other Comments ..... + +

While the primary purpose of E.O.D. is the creative discussion of Lovecraftian and things fantastic in general, emcees also have a place in the proceedings. The wealth of material in EOD XI makes detailed discussion impossible, so I hope none will be dismayed by my cursory look. As always, I'll pick a snippet here and there for mention, assuring each Dagonite, however, that I have read the entire piece. EOD is one of my prime pleasures, and I would not be so foolish as to slight any portion of it!

First things first, however: the election of a new OE! I would volunteer myself, but an OE must be a man of infinite patience, yet sternly attentive to duty and obligation; he must have lots of energy and even more spare time; money must be to him no object. He must have the wisdom of a Solomon, the ultimate faith of a Job. In other words, he must be a veritable Roger Bryant! However, since the original of that mold is resigning, we must be content with mere mortals. Standing wearily out there in the wings is that perennial hopeful, "mfiii." But, are we to have a new Civil War? "J.M." is also anxious, we are told. Egad-- a Civil War betwixt Southerners! All right, men, get your platforms up and come out fighting! -- While we all salute Roger and thank him for his unceasing labors. It was Feb 21, 1973 that he mailed out invitational flyers. Twelve of the original 19 Acolytes are still members (although several have been in and out.) EOD seems to have a strength which will endure. To Roger, who presided, not always without controversy, but always forthrightly honest, Congratulations --- and get those ASRARS in on time, buddy: you're just another Acolyte now!

On to EOD XL m/c's:

Frank Bambara is a veritable anthology this time, with 3 separate submissions, all fiction. He is still waging a vendetta against quotations marks; his Duynsanyesque Llyr is free of them; his 2nd piece, Escape, is one long quotation, 1st person narrative (until a p.s. paragraph.) Finally, for a play, he cannot escape speech, but it's close! The latter two are somewhat alike in theme, but the script is too brief to make

decisions on. I would hope he includes a more substantial portion next time. A quarterly is a long wait to remember episodes.

mfiii: The mischievous Meade is scattering buckshot in this satire. I rather wish he had concentrated on Conan; the laughs I did get would have been doubled. Still, it is no "inflicting" when our C.D. award humorist lays his stuff on us.

Scott Connors has energy and will,

and is planning a super zine. In the meantime, NEOPHYTE is worthy. I would warn that "Pan" is a huge field. Offhand, I recall him in such range as Grahame's WIND IN THE WILLOWS, Finney's CIRCUS OF DR LAO, Forster's STORY OF A PAN-IC, Keller's THE GOLDEN BOUGH, etc. I see Pan as the untamed and untameable romanticism in Man, at his least cerebral and his most vital being. We fear him, and we long for him.

Pan is in Sutton Breiding too, albeit an arm's-thrust away. GSB loves the bittersweet, the might-have-been, the state of dream, but Pan is action. However, in Fiddler and the Maid, dreams are put aside for a shocking, even devastating vision, relentless, cumulative Walpurgisnacht.

Bob Culp's gorgeous cover is a flying carpet to move him from the Far to the Near East, and a tongue-in-cheek tale which is handsomely embellished by Dick Tierney. How could I have thought he was Joe West? (How lucky he isn't! This way we have BOTH of them!)

For Crispin Burnham, Dick continues his foray into the Mythos, and how would you like to meet this here model of Pickman? Me? I meet 'em every day in the dear Bronx. In the story, Sally seems ready to threaten Fay Wray's screaming record in KING KONG. I still got a kick out of it all, but Round Robins make me scream too. Brad Parks recently inveigled me into one, so I finished off his hero! Whereupon Brad, now an estimable 15, dropped the hero into an alternate universe and kept the robin going! Cris, I am ordering TDMR, but ONLY on condition it has no R.R.'s.

Meade is back again, urbane, witty, relaxed and committing the same sin of which I am sometimes guilty -- two d's in odyssey. Maybe we should adopt the Roman form, Ulysseses! NO ONE would use a double-l, ddon't youu tthinck? \*\* If my enthusiasm for EOD persists, Meade, it is because it fills a need for me. Since your fanac exceeds mine to the 10th degree, what's YOUR excuse? Does Penny ignore you?... No comment on Jack Buck, Hjalmar Stoker and Morgan Tiel. Or is that a comment? If Innsmouth II is too discursive, I must say the put-down of Lumley is hilarious. It drives me to MY Jack Daniels! (That blessed spiritus fructi..) I hope you will make the Fantasy Con; look for me, I'll be the only bald redhead there.

I regret I must miss the MinnCon, which is coincident with the Prov. shindig. I'd like to meet Chris, and congratulate him personally on the FULL-FLEDGED zine which is surely appearing in this EOD XII About time, too. We miss your fine full hand, Bub!

Art Metzger's fine Dunsanian tales are most ably captured by Mike Streff. Darned good cover!

Every apa needs a solid curmudgeon and we are fortunate to have such a good one as Reg Smith. (I wish Reg would reminisce about his vast background in fantasy doings. I'm tired of asking Claire to do so!) The Henneberger letters are great, and there must be lots more. I cannot agree with Reg that SaM's ill-fated revival of WEIRD TALES was worthy; despite nostalgia, it had the buoyancy of a lead balloon. Reg, I stick to my guns about Dave Drake: the guy, simply, can write. So can Shiel: do try (again?) HOW THE OLD WOMAN GOT HOME, CHILDREN

OF THE WIND and the infuriating and dazzling LORD OF THE SEA. Reg, AFTER MIDNIGHT was damned good reading all the way!

Speaking of Claire Beck, as I was, I am complimented to be mentioned in the same sentence with E. Hoffmann Price. But as I recall Drake's interview of Price, and the talk of "niggers" I have to laugh, because my fanfic this issue has an ALL-BLACK (all-singing, dancing) cast! Hm. Maybe I should do a script of it, and cast it! I have fine parts for Cosby, Pryor, Pearl Bailey and, of course, old Wiz Geoffrey Holder! ... So who's "R.H."?

I presume our own OE is the "illogical one" who offered the interesting if wacky Lavey article. Oddball, but I will save my \$2.50

Sam Spade meets Cthulhu in Wally Stoelting's fast-paced yarn. I don't think the genres really mesh, reality being the backbone of hard-boiled Private Eye yarns. Let's call it a multiple pastiche! Some of the poems sound as though they would make good lyrics; if folk-rock and protest aren't dead, maybe you could find a composer and a guitar....I hope your youngster is better, Wally.

Another exquisite cover from Harry Morris. I vote permanent possession of the CD Art award to HMJr! The multitude of contents in Nocturne indicates HM is physically, if not financially well. I also have the HPL LP, but haven't opened it. If I do, it's no longer mint! Perhaps I should buy a second; but if I open that one, it will no longer be mint" A third? This

can go on forever! I'll leave it wrapped and READ the stories aloud!

Funny about Randall Larson's "Lefty Feep" that the old character appears twice in this mailing (see Reg Smith.) Also coincidental that your poems do indeed read like lyrics. Give Wally a call.

Defensive Dave Drake tells us at once about the ET mantichore, "Darn it, Maw, let me read it for myself!" Dave is a classicist, and the atmosphere is genuine, until that superfluous, unclassical last line. ..The poem was moving. Where have all the flowers gone? ..Yeah, fanfic is usually grossly amateurish, but what the hell. We do it for our own needs, and if anyone reads it, or, my god, likes it, so much the better. I know my own stuff runs on and on; maybe if I had smaller type, it would seem shorter! Anyway, fanfic or fan-article, this old redhead reads every line, so they're not entirely vanity presswork. Meanwhile, Reg, eat your heart out, Dave writes!

Welcome, Lawson Hill. Your critical review of Carter's poetry is to the point. Carter is a sort of evil genie in the fantasy world, difficult, trying, yet attractive.

Randy Everts' discovery of REH's birth data deserved reprinting for our Acolytes. His mention of films, and Ingmar Bergman, leads me to suggest to our cinematologist, David Abaddin Smith, that a study of the fantastic films of Bergman is in order. From the sublime WILD STRAWBERRIES to the recent CRIES AND WHISPERS, this greatest of contemporary filmmakers deals in fantasy. Imagine what he could do, with his brooding imagery, his taut control, and that stable of actors (Liv!)

with Lovecraft! No Ed Begley strolling through the glass-and-steel campus of Old Miskatonic U., Necronomicon in hand ("Miss Smith, would you please put this Necronomicon away?") Randy's pleasing red cover reminds me of Bergman's *Cries and Whispers* also, and Bergman's use of Red as a medium of mood and expressionism. (Just for the record, I might add my other favorite directors are, #2, that great magician Fellini (the peacock in the snow in *Amarcord* nearly knocked me out of my seat. This is what genius is about.) And #3, that provocative, brilliant and where-in-hell is he?, Stanley Kubrick.

Which segues us neatly into Mr Smith himself. I agree with you completely about Fairbanks' *THIEF OF BAGHDAD*, an incomparable fantasy. I have always loved the Korda version, with Babu and its wealth of miracles, but until I saw the silent film on TV last year, I was unaware of the greatness of the latter... I recently saw, on TV, in tints Chaney's *PHANTOM OF THE OPERA*, the first time for me. While a modern audience can hardly find this unabashedly romantic melodrama "horror", and may, as I did, chuckle at it, it is with warmth and admiration that we view it. It had courage and imagination. One thing I especially liked: at the end, pursued by mobs, the Phantom holds up a clenched hand, as though he held a bomb. The mob falls back. The Phantom laughs, and thrusts out an empty hand at them, whereupon they then destroy him. Characteristic bravado. . . No comments on the others many of which I saw when they were new, and with no thought of being classics. (Then again,

the London reviewers of the 16th Century may have panned Hamlet.) This is a very fine essay you are doing, and the personal part of *ABADDON* is equally interesting. I hope I too may visit Dr Duerr, Dirk and the others down South!

Yes, Dr Howard Duerr, your gracious essay was most interesting, and bore a lovely cover as well! I have not reread *UNKNOWN KADATH* since 1944, when, somewhere in the Service, I read it in *BEYOND THE WALL OF SLEEP*, and loved it. In those days, I carried both *THE OUTSIDER* and *BTWOB* in their mailing cartons from post to post, and it was a deep pleasure for a lonely young soldier to lose himself in those glorious tales. Later, I found it hard to accept the criticism and even brickbats tossed at the novel. Thirty years later, I might feel differently, but I doubt it. Rereadings of *Dunwich Horror* and others have only increased my respect for the strange and ever-fascinating author... By the way, perhaps I too may visit you one day; this past Easter, I spent a week in Florida, busy in Ft Lauderdale and Miami Beach with laws and in-laws (plus an evening in Lantana and Vernon Smith.) Next time I shall try to find Maitland!

Roger Bryant, obviously preparing for leisurely post-OE days to come, offers over thirty pgs in *ASRAR*, and what a pleasing grab-bag it is, too, starting with a paeon not merely to an older Lovecraft and a young Conover, but to the meaning of Fandom itself. I appreciate Roger's nice words about me, and fully understand him. Fandom is a brotherhood, without age barriers. There are no differences

between a 14\* Brad Parks, a Roger Bryant in his 20s, and even that crotchety antique of a dean of ours, Claire Beck! Conover's book is an explication of this truth, as well as in his unselfish production of a memorable piece of book-production. Commercialism has crept into Fandom lately, with a spate of Howard and HPLish things, often of dubious merit, but no one can accuse Conover of this; his "white spaces" are not wasteful, but more meaningful. And, for those who failed to buy the book before publication, \$19.95 is, for a book of this nature, not an unfair sum.

The letters of Hart Crane, as well as the "Esquire" article were indeed treats. Possibly John "Clifford Irving" Wilstach did do a spurious friendship piece, but his facts were not bad, and it was sympathetic. The actual letters make one wonder whether HPL may ever share the repute with which the creator of "The Bridge" is held.... The Quotes were amusing, especially the Iranian bookseller who adjusted his prices to the market value of oil. I think some of our own dealers are doing this as well. A catalog from a Northwestern dealer indicated up to a quadrupling of prices. Recession or not, the sky is the limit for these fellows, and, I guess, there is always someone with the money, so who can fault them?

Good Jim Webbert, forgive me, but you had a couple of grand typos at the end of your mood piece, and I busted out laughing: "he felt tirder" ... "as a reslut". They do have an X-rated sound; does a reformed prostitute who returns to her evil ways "reslut" herself? I'm sorry -- I know I'm a Grand-

master of Typos, and, in a recent TITLE, Donn Brazier had fun with one of mine. \*\* Doreen is, a welcome Dag onite! Heck, she's more or less always been with us, and should receive some sort of status. Perhaps she can head the Ladies' Auxiliary (or, if a woman is a member, the husband can join this same group.) My family remains uninterested in collaboration. I have, it is true, used my wife's art, but it was not created for EOD; she does, however, read my fiction, and even has offered constructive advice. My daughter has had MAEVE BY MOONLIGHT for a month, but I think her friend Roy interests her more. Can't blame her.

Litterae Dagonis, as Tom says, should have its editor's name somewhere on it, but, since the Index tells us (although the "R" remains a mystery) I will merely comment about Collecting that Freud had still other thoughts about it. I often think he is right, especially when I am frustrated in getting something I want.

Thanks to Jim Bass for the purty bumper stickers!

David Schultz, you KNOW your submissions must be typewriter paper size; I'm amazed Raj didn't give you what-for. Well, this once, seeing as how it is such a fine and handsome piece of work, I'll forgive you (and use a folder in my bound version so I can slip it in. It was generous of you to make it available to the Order. The Buck and the Marketplace have not overtaken us all yet! Now-- where's the poetry department?

At this point, we put on our old slippers, light the pipe, turn down the overhead lights, put on some good music, because we have



reached "The Miskatonic." The genial and energetic Dirk Mosig always has some fascinating material for us, and this issue is no exception. An HPL poem and some pleasant Mosigian chat. If Shea's regrettably petulant piece on "Augie" is a familiar dirge, at least James Wade's first snapper, also peevish, is at least funny. The titles "The Other and Others" and "The Other and No Others" are fine satire; Wade's 2nd essay is, at least, gracious, an element Shea might well adopt. After all, there is so much he could say if he'd forget his peeve. His little poems display a greater tolerance, although the "play" is dreadful on all counts.

We are all fortunate in acquiring as an Acolyte the daring Eric The Red Carlson. An old friend of mine, a sometime publisher, a member of that burgeoning Lake States HPL bunch, he may even put out a 2nd issue of "Etchings and Ulysseses" before the end of this year, or decade, or century. In the meantime, his characteristically (as in Rehupa) immaculate job on PROLOGUE will do, even if it repetitiously misspells "repetition." (People who live in glass typoos shouldn't etc, but I only tease the folks I love.) The cover is very beautiful. (One should add that this mailing has more than half a dozen outstanding covers, and at least one, Beck's, is sublime in its mystery.) The innards are fine too.

Tom Collins and I have become close friends, much to my pleasure. He even went to the NJ Oz convention with my family this past July. Tom suggested several items to add to my Jewish essay, and one, by Rohmer, is a strange item indeed. His publishing plans are exciting, genuinely scholarly stuff, well-produced. I don't know if one can make money on non-sensational and non-exploitative stuff, but I hope

eliminates the glitches and gets the stuff rolling....I enjoyed Tom's caustic (at times) m/cs, being, as he indicates, an old softie myself. (My hope is to criticize constructively, and save the harsh words for my patient dog. HPL loved cats, and they are pretty creatures, but only a dog can take real vocal abuse and not care, knowing it is not badly intended. Dear Edna!!) I shall disagree with Tim about the Lehman Colln in NY's Metropolitan Museum. While the wing is the height of self-indulgence, it is at least airy, spacious, and easy on eye and foot. Its early modern section is good, if not really outstanding, and, as Tom says, the medieval rooms are filled with gems and are themselves gems.

Jonathon Bacon offers a haunting cover and some nice neat swipes to and from deC and Dirk. However, I must admit I really don't care much about REH's underwear. I expect some good stuff from this new Acolyte -- don't save it all for your fanzine!

John Gates: As a Draculite, you will be gratified that some young adults to whom I gave a copy reports it holds up well. Indeed, she quit reading it because it gave her nightmares!

Doug Nathman: The Watkins cover ably caught the story. I must say, however, that countdown stories are dangerous. At best, they can build brooding suspense; more often, one day is the same as another, so the reader is tempted to turn at once to the end. To avoid this, one thing must lead into another, not simply tack on. I was, nevertheless, surprised at the end; I had thought surely it would be the end of the hero alone, for

he alone seemed to be on the receiving end of calamities. However, that's my ending and not yours, so you're one-up on me. See you in Providence!

Joe Moudry offers a balanced view on Derleth, perhaps a bit in his favor, and why not? HPL's essay on the evolution brings out in a few pages his idiosyncrasies, from the "pure-blooded Anglo-Saxon rebels of 1775" (actually a fairly polyglot bunch even then) and the "Mexican banditti" who are "half-breed swine", to satire at the expense of these same rebels, and a Hurrah for the Tories... I wish you luck in your quest for OE, but, at this moment I wish ALL candidates luck! ... Your Survey proves what a bullshitter I am. I fear, however, that my let-down in EOD XL will prove my undoing, and kill my batting average. Still, Mr Moudry, estimable challenger and wordsmith, I intend to commit many pages yet, so don't rest on your laurels! Anyway, it is a good job, and may inspire our last-minute Acolytes to do more substantial work. It is possible, you know. Dick's maliciously funny poem and your own m/c's were fine.

Fungoid Finkbeiner pretends he is doing a hasty pudding, but he gives himself away when he prints the same emcee about me twice, proving he has prepared notes! The grotesque art was good, but I am uncertain about the back cover. Paramecia?

Thus, the happy task of reading EOD is complete (with rereading and reconsideration of a number of pieces yet to come.) I can now prepare it for binding, to join ten handsome volumes. I am very proud of them, and thank you all for making EOD so vitally alive.

## IN MEMORIAM: Rich Small

Through EOD and REHUPA, I had only just come to know Rich. he had offered S&S fans a short story, virile and bloodthirsty. I wrote in mM apazine "Cimmeria":

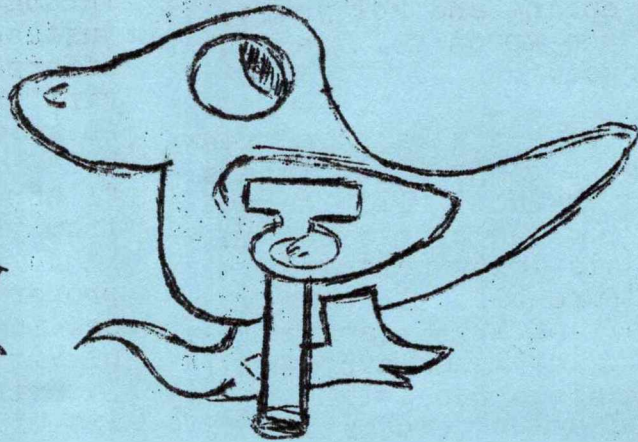
"I hope we can receive happy word from you that improvement is at hand. I admire your courage, so proper in an admirer of our derring-do fiction. I am reminded of Vittorio de Sica's last film, "A Brief Vacation", and one of its minor but memorable characters, an actress whose TB will kill her within a year. She insists on making grand entrances and exits anyway, but once out of sight of other patients in the sanitorium, she feels her weakness and pain. I once had a pharmacy customer like that, a small man of great guts. Hang in, Rich, and, by the way, keep writing for us. You are a blood and guts man, by golly, and my story was a lifted pinky-finger tea-party in comparison."

Rich did not live long enough to see this issue of REHUPA, or the many other encouraging things his friends were to write for him.

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... How quickly we forget... Tonight, having worked on IBID XII, I relaxed with old issues of EOD. There, in #3 was a lovely tribute from Rich for my introductory tale, THE ROAD TO DUNWICH, It had struck a most responsive note in him, and he was deeply affected. Richard had entered EOD in #3, and his neatly printed entries would persist only until his memorable final one... "Why should a young person die?" asked Zorba. His friend Nikos (Kazantzakis) could not answer. Nor can we. But we can remember.... RICH!!!

# THE LAME DUCK



a column in which our Associate Editor speaks about himself and other interesting things: E. VERNON SMITH, ESQ.

(Note: for those unacquainted with Vernon, his cerebral palsy, which has stopped him less than a headache stops you, limits his physical abilities, inasmuch as he is restricted to only minimal use of one arm and one leg. This is why, in his 52 years he has only been able to get a pilot's license, an auto license, become an expert wood craftsman, paint and draw, and write fiction, nonfiction and poetry. He used to putter about Lantana, Florida on a golf cart, on to which he had putt-putted his battery operated wheelchair, but things have changed, as you will see.)

I need a car as much as Ben Indick needs more kids, but the Florida Motor Vehicle Dept., in its infinite level of intelligence has decreed that all golfcarts are banned from the public roads. Of course, the MVD has said nothing about motor cycles, completely overlooking the fact that motorcycles have the highest accident rate in Florida. During the past two or three months, several teen-  
aged cyclists have lost their lives. The result of the new law is that I now have the dubious honor of owning a '71 Toyota. I see this, in capitals, as

## THE RED TOYOTO

(or, The Japanese' Revenge!)

Because of my handicap, I thought I would require special hand controls. This proved incorrect after a little experimenting, as I found I was able to work the accelerator and foot brake quite satisfactorily with my left foot.

The reader may wonder what my driving has to do with H..P.L. Let me just say: it's weird!

The lack of powersteering did prove to be a problem, as it took two hands to get The Red Baron around a corner. However, I went back to my old flying days for the answer: the cross wind turn! Without getting into the technical terms of flying, I'll just say I tried making my turn a little early and it worked!

There were other problems. My wheelchair would not fit in the back seat. We tried removing the right hand seat. This worked, but it was unsatisfactory. So I went out with my little piggy bank and bought a smaller chair, and it fit perfectly behind the front seats.

Like Ben, I consider Sam Goulet one of my best and closest friends. ((Sam is a decade-ago transplanted Michiganiite with a gift of gab enough to convince a Californian to move to Florida! He is 90% heart and humor, and the other 10% isn't bad either. BPI))

And, like Ben, Sam is a bit of a nut. Many times, while riding around Palm Beach County, Sam would shout to a perfect stranger:

"Hey Charlie, how 'yer doin'?"

"Who's that?" I'd ask.

"How should I know! I never saw him before."

"Well, why say 'Hello'?"

"He looked lonesome."

No sooner do we leave the house than Sam says that it is coffee time, so we stop at the local "Li'l General" Store for coffee. "I feel like a cup of coffee," he says.

"You look like a cup of coffee," I reply.

Just for the fun of it, I counted the coffee cups Sam consumed on one trip. Six cups, plus some unscheduled stops.

As we practice-drove, I had to laugh at Sam's attempts to get me flustered. I say laugh because I used the same techniques with student pilots while trying to teach them to fly. I would try every dirty trick I could think of, and Sam was trying them on me.

Perhaps a few words on Sam Goulet are in order. Sam is a Supervisor of a local Motor Vehicle Inspection Station, and although we have a very close friendship, it stops at the inspection station. And that is the way we both want it.

Surprise! Sam and I are talking/a short trip up North. ((Vernon is a transplanted Jerseyite. BPI)) I'm waiting for cooler weather. I enjoyed Brad's cover ((EOD X)). I hope he can develop his own style and not rely on imitation. I read your story ("Die Warlock Die!") and feel you can do better. You have done better.

---E,V,S,

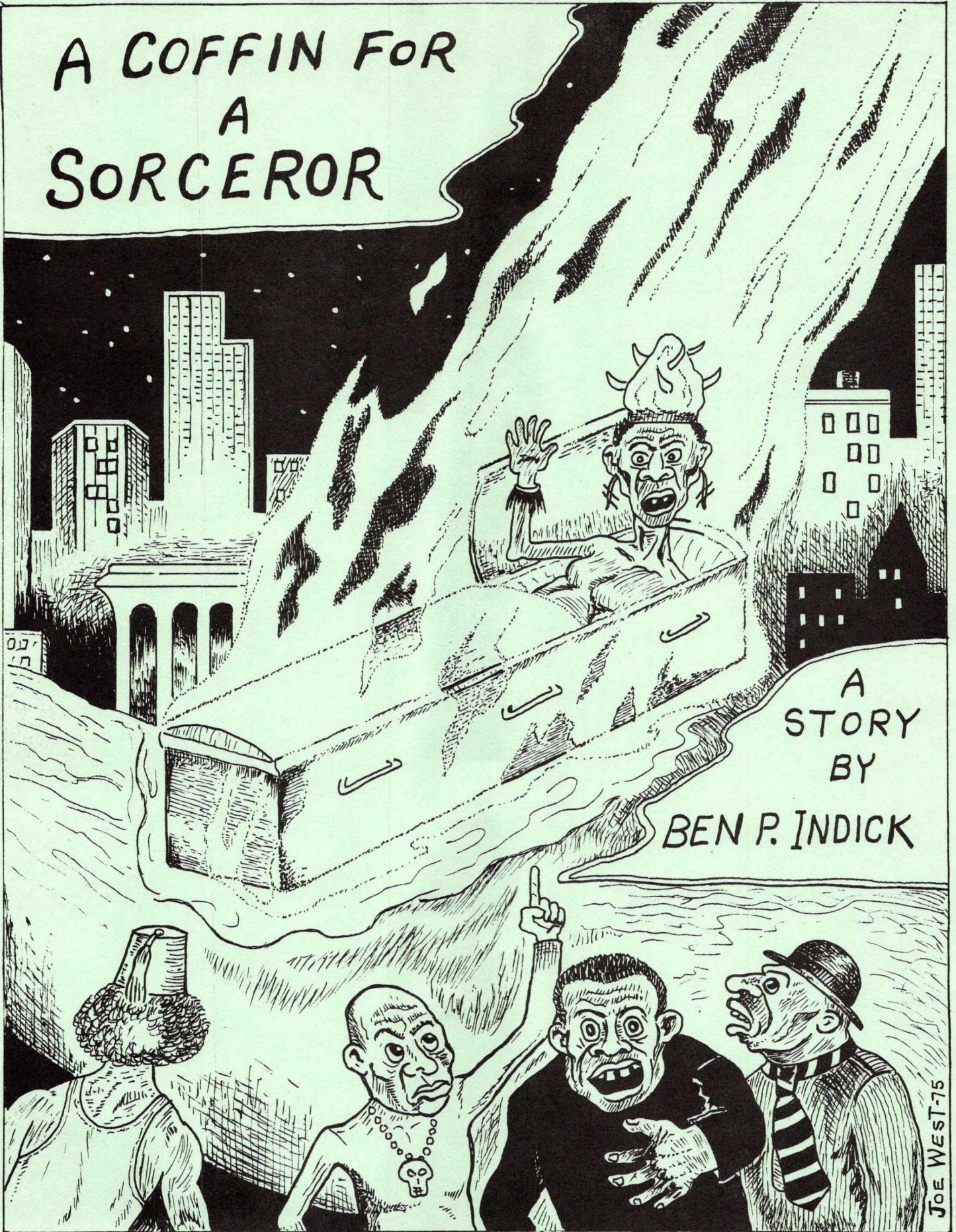
((Thanks, Vernon. You're fired. -- BPI, Editor and BOSS.))

Inasmuch as this issue of IBID will be reaching many readers who are not members of EOD, I would like to inform them (and remind EOD acolytes) of a most important new Lovecraft publication by The Strange Company, as well as list its other publications. Since the publisher is reluctant to advertise them in the public media, I am taking on myself this pleasant obligation.

1. CHARLESTON, by H. P. Lovecraft, is just out. It is a facsimile reprint of the guide to the Southern city which HPL wrote in the thirties, as published originally in mimeo form by Herman C. Koenig, and later reprinted in MARGINALIA by Arkham House. The guide is a warm and characteristically historical approach by HPL, yet is aware of the changes and contemporary situation. It touches on Colonial and Civil War times, and yet alludes pertinently to the site wherein "Porgy and Bess" took place. It contains as well the four pages of holograph material which appeared in the first edition, illustrations and maps in Lovecraft's own hand. Randy Everts has contributed an illuminating introduction, plus a memoir and photo of Koenig. The edition is complete even to a cover-folder which resembles the original, complete to a paste-on facsimile label. It is a beautiful piece of work, in an edition of 150 numbered copies, at \$4.00 each, and the interested reader is urged to write quickly for a copy.
2. If you like my fanfic, you may wish to obtain my pastiche of HPL as letter-writer, fictioneer and poet, A GENTLEMAN FROM PROVIDENCE PENS A LETTER. Published handsomely in folio form at \$1.00, in 100 copies, complete with a photo of Yr. Obdt. Svt.
3. THE SEALED CASSET by Richard F. Seawright is a version of the complete tale published somewhat cut by WEIRD TALES decades ago. A 100 copy folio edition, with bio and photo of the author, this fine story is also \$1.00.
4. SOME FACTS IN THE CASE OF WILLIAM HOPE HODGSON is a biography of the author by R. Alain Everts, with numerous photographs and the short story by Hodgson, "The Riven Night." It is limited to 100 numbered copies, @ \$1.50 and is excellently researched.
5. and 6. Two chapbooks of art and poetry by the inimitable Joe West, whose art is in this issue of IBID, "Galloping Pinwheels" and "Grave Song" at \$1.50 each. These beautiful little books are warm, wry, eerie and funny -- the works and sheer pleasure, to read as well as to look at. The editions are 100 copies each.
7. A BAGWIN'S DOZEN offers weird poetry by Fred Adams, beautifully illustrated, with a cover in several colors, by James Faulkenberg. It is limited to 300 copies, @ \$1.50, and is a most memorable addition to the genre of fantastic poetry.

Copies may be obtained from THE STRANGE COMPANY, P.O. Box 864, Madison, Wisc. 53701. I hope this free plug will prompt orders while copies remain. The most reasonable prices belie the quality and beauty of the presentations!

# A COFFIN FOR A SORCEROR



A  
STORY  
BY  
BEN P. INDICK

JOE WEST-75

# A C O F F I N F O R A S O R C E R O R

a story by Ben P. Indick

Illustrated by Joseph A. West

Central radiod me that Philippe had called. "A matter of great interest and urgency", he had said, and maybe I "could use it." It happened I was cruising on Park Avenue, admiring the flowers placed in big concrete pots along the boulevard's grassy squares, but I knew there was a corner phone on Park and 88th; so, I drove up and pulled my VW van into the Taxis Only square. Phil has gotten some good leads for me, and since my job is to get good TV feature stories, I'm pretty grateful to him. Remember the time he had an axe murderer surrender to me, with the axe still dripping blood in his hands? What a to-do that made when it came on. "Violence on TV!" they all complained. Anyway, I called him at his place.

I gave the code-word and they put me through. No, it wasn't anything disreputable. Just Policy, Numbers. With us, it's a way of life. I once made four hundred myself. Phil sort of inherited his position and wouldn't harm a fly. However, he gets the word on everything going on around town.

"No axe murder this time, Wash," he said, "but it's an unusual ethnic thing. Should go over big with all the whities, and the suburban brothers as well." He chuckled for a minute. Phil likes to have his fun teasing, since he hasn't anything else to do anyway, and I knew I couldn't rush him.

"So okay, what is it? Is the Mayor's daughter marrying that new Abyssinian pastor? Hell, that's not news."

He laughed. "It could be -- he's married already. But no, it isn't that complicated. It's just a funeral." At my groan, he continued. "A voodoo funeral."

I perked up. "A voodoo funeral?"

"On the sidewalk," he continued.

"On the sidewalk?" I repeated, feeling like a comedian's stooge.

"Yeah," he said, "on the sidewalk, tonight, under the moon. Lots of color, exotic, mysterious, and all that 'Magic Island' stuff. Your bosses will like it. No axes."

"Oh yeah, maybe a few sacrifices, what about that?"

"Naw, there won't be any sacrifices. Just a lot of chanting and weird rites."

"And they're supposed to just welcome my coming up and filming it, I suppose? I always thought those were mysterious, hidden rites." I emphasized the words sarcastically.

"Okay," he said, "you don't like it, forget it."

"Hold on, hold on, I didn't say I wasn't interested. But voodoo in New York, who the hell ever heard of that?"

"That's just it, who ever did? Come on, grab a scoop."

In the end, I figured I had nothing else to do anyway, only that miserable blowhard Goldstein's interview. "All right," I told Phil, "I'll give it a try. Where are these voodoo people anyway?"

"Don't call them that," he said, "and they're setting up on Second Avenue and around 136th Street late today."

I thought it over. "That's Spanish Harlem, isn't it? Aren't these voodoo people Haitians? Are they Spanish too?"

"No," he said, "they're French, Black, Creole, that kind of a mishmash, but not P.R. Look, just get on up there, and I'll see you myself later."

I held him another minute. "Say, Phil, you're an Islander yourself, aren't you? Maybe that's why I could never stand you all these years. You wouldn't be -- ?"

He went into an act. "Jes' coz mah folk'd don' come fum 'Bammy don' mean Ah'm no blacker'n yo, Massuh Bones.-- My last name's 'Devalle', comes from 'Duvalier.' Mumbo-jumbo will hoodoo you! I'm busy now; I'll see you around six." He hung up.

I went back to the van, ignoring a burned-up cabbie nudging my tail and cursing me out, and radioed Central. I told them I couldn't make it to Goldstein's interview. He's the new head of District Council 37, the city employees' union, a dull chowder-head given to blowing his stack if you ask the wrong question. I suggested they send Marie Loo, our new little Polynesian, who's cuter than I am anyway. I know Goldstein, and he doesn't like smart blacks, but Marie is something else. Anyway, I told them I expected I might come up with a good local feature piece for tomorrow's six o'clock show. They told me to shove it and do what I wanted.

Second Avenue uptown is a mess. They're building a new subway, and the whole street, which like all the avenues is big enough for a parade anyway, is all torn up. The pavement is gone for a good mile and replaced by broad wooden planks the breadth and length, covering the excavation. Workmen's booths with flags.



surrounding ladders dotted the road and the one-way traffic had to weave along the way. Not that it scared traffic away, just slowed it down. The street is lined with ancient tenements and rusting fire escapes hanging off them, over rows of dilapidated stores, half of them empty anyway, greasy spoons, thrift shops or just covers for shady stuff. The east side of Harlem is mostly Spanish, and the people usually amble around in animated conversations or just sit on stoops leading to the flats. You will also find junkies huddling together, swaying and looking forward to their next fix. The endless traffic ignores them, and I usually do too. It's not good country, whether you're black or Spanish, so you mind your own business if you can.

That's Spanish Harlem. But voodoo?

Not that it surprises me really. This town has everything else, from Shinto Temples on Riverside Drive to Buddhist-whities on Times Square, black synagogues, scientologists, God knows what else. For sure, there are immigrants from every Caribbean island, even if there are no palm trees and tropical pools. Most of them are illegal, coming in as mock-Puerto Ricans, whoras citizens have free entry. Why they leave one crowded island to come to another is their business. I think I'd rather drink Planter's Punch near a West Indian lagoon, but they keep coming anyway. I guess Haitians are no exception, on that jammed island sharing mutual dictatorships with its sister country.

I coasted along the street and didn't see anything special going on. Still, Phil usually knows what's going on, so I drove downtown along the avenue and then came back up along First Avenue, cutting back in and retracing my path. It was still too early to park, free of daytime parking restrictions, but I stuck my "EMERGENCY TV" sign in the window and pulled the van in anyway, on the corner of 137th St, behind a rattletrap Buick and a shiny purple Caddy, a pimp car for sure. It was only six, and the moon was a few hours away. I checked the back; my small camera was there, but I'd have to wait for Philippe to see if I could dare use it. I got out and looked up the sidewalk. I made a show of locking the door if anyone was watching, but I wanted it ready to get the camera quickly if I had to. I went into a candy shop and bought some cigarets. The shopkeeper gave me my change without looking at me, but I felt he had sized me up. He was a brother too, so he couldn't have anything against me. I picked up a racing sheet and ropped some change on the counter. He didn't even look at it, just kept talking to a crony. I walked out, but I sensed he had picked up the change, and I felt his eyes quietly on my back. There were people milling about, and I didn't want to be noticeable, so I just stood there holding up the building and reading the sheet. I made a note on it, studying it, but I noticed there was now a knot of people a few stores away, pointing to the sidewalk and gesticulating. This could well be it, I thought, and picked another horse.

They were measuring out a space in front of an herb shop, pacing and counting, a square whose corners they marked with chalk. A few of them went into the shop and brought out some large staffs. These were ornately carved in a dark mahogany-like wood, and even from where I stood, I could see bands and figures on them, with one wider band circling up and surmounting the top with what must be a serpent's head. Maybe they were only tourist stuff, but I had the feeling the Met would pay a small fortune for them. They inserted the staffs into stands and set one up at each corner of the square. While some of them were setting them up, others were jabbering in what sounded like French. They didn't even seem to notice my attention, and the junkies at the corner could have been miles away for all that each cared about the other.

Now several lengths of clothesline rope were brought out and strung from one staff to the next. These were then festooned with bits of colored cloth and garlands of flowers. The scene was becoming downright colorful, there in the hazy smog-ridden air of New York City. I tell you, I love this crazy, impossible, beautiful town! Why else would I be standing here ready to get sacrificed, for all I knew? A swarthy man, Spanish, ambled out of the candy shop and glanced at me. I glanced back and then returned, maybe too hastily, to my sheet. I made a few marks on it and studied it carefully.

Someone nudged me gently and I jumped before I saw it was Phillipe, jaunty in his jeweled beret. He winked at me and grinned broadly and I relaxed. He pulled out a race sheet of his own and put his nose into it. "Gonna start soon," he mumbled, pointing nowhere in particular to a horse. I nodded and checked it off on my own paper. "Haitians all right," he said, "soon we shall see the big Poppa and Mamma, Papaloi and Mamaloi."

"Do they usually have funerals on the sidewalk?" I asked.

"All I know is this is a very special head man and they want it under the moon."

"Doesn't the city complain?"

He inclined his head. I followed the direction. Across the street, two cops were walking slowly, carrying their walkie-talkies. They seemed to be ignoring the whole thing, but were surreptitiously watching. The people were lugging baskets of flowers and fruit out of the store, and strewing the square with them until it was a garden of color on the drab and cracked concrete. A flashy black dude with a sister and a white girl came out of a building across the street, nodded at the cops, and then climbed quickly into the Caddy and drove noisily off. From the store, a huge black came out, no brother of mine, baby, and surveyed the street. His eyes touched my van, and then me, and my van looked lonely on that corner, and I wasn't certain I was glad to be here.

It was getting on twilight now. Phil pushed my shoulder. "Get your camera, he said, "the show's on soon."

"They won't mind?" I asked nervously.

He laughed. "Where's that brave newspaperman jazz I always hear about?"

I went to the van and took out the camera. It was really pretty small, but it seemed to be about a yard square and weigh hundreds of pounds. I went back to Phil. He was talking to a white-haired man in maybe his fifties. His face told me he was one of the natives, if I can call them that on 2nd Ave., 136th St, N.Y. Phil pointed to a big spade coming out of the store carrying four thick candles. "Getting ready," he said. "Joseph," he said to his friend, "this is Wash." Joseph smiled yellowed teeth at me. I smiled back. "He's my contact here." Phil smiled too. "A first generation American boy like me forgets things. Joseph doesn't. He'll explain."

The spade was sticking a candle on to each of the serpent-headed staffs. An enormously fat old woman, wearing a flowery old robe, waddled out, licking her lips and inspecting the arrangements.

"Mamaloi," whispered Joseph.

"Head magic woman," whispered Phil.

"I could guess," I whispered.

The old woman must have been satisfied. She nodded approval, and swam back in, followed by the big guy.

I heard music. Several musicians had appeared and others were lugging long cylindrical drums out of that inexhaustible shop, three big drums with hides bound tightly across the tops, a fringe of hair at the edges, and tied to small sticks projecting around the circumference. They were apparently carved from tree trunks, and were ornately designed.

"Maman, Papa and Boula," said Phil, tambour, drums. They have names, and the mama bear is the biggest here."

Several men pulled up stools and shoved the long slim drums between their legs and began a rhythm. A concertina joined them, then a flute, and the people began singing and clapping their hands in time. It was a good-natured crowd and their hearty clapping and body shaking indicated high spirits.

I nudged Philippe. "Are you certain this is a funeral?"

Josephe answered for him. "Life and death are one in vaudun, voodoo, not far apart."

"Do you always do them up this big?"

He shook his white mane. "This is in respect to le Grande Papa, our chief papaloi, a great sorcerer and devotee of Dambala, snake-spirit, in vaudun. He die yesterday,"

He looked at me. "Last week," he continued, spitting emphatically on the sidewalk, "bocor die, evil man, evil sorcerer. His people steal the coffin le Grande Papa brought from Port au Prince. Special made for him. He save it five years: till funeral." He smiled maliciously. "We take care of it for Papa. He will sleep well." He looked at the herb shop. "Papa, you no need worry."

We climbed the small stoop and I took some shots. No one seemed to notice. They were too busy with the music. The flutist was dancing, and soon the people had formed a line behind him, in a serpentine fashion much like the staff, weaving and circling, and throwing flowers into the square. The drumbeat was insistent and potent, and I felt something tugging inside me as well, a deeper root than Haiti, something both of us shared, a century, a millenium ago. I felt the wild freedom and primitive beauty of our ultimate homeland, Africa. I focussed on the flute-player, a slim, tall black, his head shining, his hips swaying beneath a varicolored sack he wore. Phils saw my intent.

"A boubou, you call that," he said. "Dress up your show with some good ethnic." His eyes turned with mine to a girl who was slipping beneath the rope, and dancing within the square, while the folk lined the four sides, cheering, singing, clapping. Her body swayed with the rhythm, arms outthrust, hips swaying, long slim legs flashing and her white buckteeth endearingly displayed in a wide grin. A young man joined her, and they circled each other. She threw off her modish clogs, and he pulled off his bright blouse, his body glistening beneath the street lamps. The guitarist skapped and twanged, and the flutist piped, and suddenly the boy lifted the girl, high, and she wrapped those supple legs around his chest and their fiery eyes sparkled. My camera was my eyes, but I wished I could be there, holding that snake-slim waist. Finally, the dancer let her down gently, and she lit with a hop without missing the rhythm.

Josephe nodded approvingly. "Celestine, daughter of mamaloi. Great-granddaughter of le Grande Papa." He nodded again, and watched the dance, until the drumbeat abruptly stopped, and all became silent.

At the entrance of the shop stood a way-out character indeed, a short fat man, wearing a tall stovepipe hat, festooned with ribbons. "Papaloi," whispered Josephe, with respect. I swung my

camera promptly to him, noting the light was dramatically good. Indeed, he was preening in it. He wore a uniform with braid and epaulettes, rather tattered, even several sizes too large, and yet not ignoble.

"Could be from the army of old Toussaint or Henry Christophe himself!" mumbled my American Haitian, who seemed on the verge of joining the throng. I could feel Phil's tension. The papaloi's age was indeterminable, but in spite of his size and rotundity, his was a commanding presence. He raised both arms, began intoning a song, beating at his breast. Everyone took up the chant, imitating his actions. The song became triumphant and joyful, and the emotion of the crowd, now filling much of the sidewalk, more than a hundred souls, real soul too, I mean, mirrored this.

From the sides of the papaloi four little girls danced out, little black pearls, bearing coconut shells, each with a little pool of oil in it and a burning wick. In turn, each held hers out to the papaloi, who dipped a finger into the oil, somehow without being burned, and traced a rude cross on the forehead of the child. He looked up into the sky, at the round disk of the low-hanging moon, and snapped a lordly finger.

At this, the old woman re-emerged, dressed now in what seemed a travesty of wedding gown, bedecked with beads and shells, her glistening face topped by a headpiece in which were interwoven flowers, eggshells, bread, bones, and unimaginable other articles. Fetiches, I suppose, charms and the like. Crazy, and yet, not comic, somehow. She was carrying a lighted candle and with it she lit each of the candles atop the staffs. A scent of bay filled the crowded air, and the crowd sighed. Candles were lit throughout the throng, a sea of little lights, and the air was fragrant in this island within an island.

For a moment I forgot where I was, panning my camera around, until within the eyepiece I saw the street, and the endless traffic, slowing down to rubberneck, horns impatiently blowing, never quite stopping. Across the way, the same policemen patrolled, watching without interfering. The wooden planks of the street echoed cavernously as the cars rumbled by.

The singing had ceased, and the crowd was silent. The papaloi and mamaloi stood side by side within the square, looking up the broad avenue at the traffic or beyond it. All the eyes were with them, and Phil and I looked up Second Avenue as well, not knowing what to expect. Minutes passed, and behind me only the candle lights flickered and the scents curled, but no one moved. I saw Celestine standing behind the mamaloi, and her eyes caught mine and moved upstreet again. The crowd waited, and no one moved. Passersby in cars ogled and kept driving.

Then I noticed several blocks away a big black hearse weaving

between the traffic and the workmen's cubicles. It ignored the traffic lights, raced through the intersections and screeched to a halt across the street, where the two cops, judiciously, had decided to walk to the farther corner. I saw them talking into their two-way radios and listening, shaking their heads and studying the dark sky. The crowd surged to the curb, but the papaloi grunted, and they remained on the curb, straining and impatient. From the hearse, the driver and two men leaped out, and through my eyepiece I could see them urgently pulling up the planks, prying them loose, at the roadside. I looked toward the policemen, one of whom had started toward the hearse, but was restrained by the other. Once they had removed a few planks, the men dashed to the rear of the hearse and I saw them remove a long object draped in heavy white cloth, and unceremoniously dump it into the hole. At once they replaced the planks, and stamped them down. A shout of approval came from the assembled celebrants, and Josephe pounded our backs and laughed until he cried.

"Damn' ol' bocor!" he yelled, "think he can cheat Papa!"

Meanwhile, the men had removed a carton from the hearse, and were showering its contents, whatever they were, upon the planks, glittering bits of objects, accompanying the dispersal with curses I could hear faintly over the traffic. This accomplished, they looked at the crowd in what must have been triumph, and shouts rose back and forth. After a minute, they rushed to the back of the hearse and pulled out a tarpaulin-draped box which could be only one thing. With no regard for the incessant traffic, they rushed it across the street, between the cheering, kissing crowd and into the herb shop. The papaloi and the four little girls the old lady accompanied them inside, while the drums resumed a gentle rhythm, and the crowd hummed and moaned along.

In a few minutes, the children came out, wearing white bridal-communion gowns and veiled, bearing candles. Behind them, the men came out bearing the coffin. A rope was let down, and they brought it into the center of the square. They bowed and withdrew backward, while one of the kids stood at each corner, like a little angel with her candle. The papaloi came out, and proceeded to inspect the coffin, while everyone waited expectantly.

It was heavy and ornate, encrusted with some earth. The old man tapped at it, traced its designs, and finally slapped it with both hands joyously. Immediately the place was a bedlam of cheering, laughing and whistling. People were slapping each others' backs. Josephe, clapping as well, said "Is truly great papa's own coffin! Ol' bocor finf his own box, if he can!"

As the papaloi reached for the lid, the crowd hushed. Even Josephe looked apprehensive. Squeaking, it came up, and, at last,

it lay upon its hinges. With a deep breath, the papaloi popped his head into it, sprinkling some liquid and mumbling. "Ha ha!" he emerged, hands high in triumph, whirling and shouting in some dim French.

I looked at Phil. "Something about 'pure' or 'clean'," he said, "and something about 'evil' too, I think."

"'No longer evil'," Josephe added.

The fat little man, looking both preposterous and noble in that outfit, was walking around the square. At each staff, he held up his arms and addressed the serpent head.

"Domballa Oueddo, nous p'vini." This was as close as Phil could get it, "Oh Serpent-God, we come." Each time the crowd chanted it with him, and added "Ay-bo-bo!" After the final staff, the door of the shop opened, and out came the mamaloi. The old man bowed to her and took a ribbon from his hat and placed it in her headdress. Now she said "Domballa Oueddo, nous p'vini" and this time four men came out carrying a long large object wrapped in a white sheet, the old magician sure.

I looked at Phil, and he nodded to the open coffin. The men entered the square, while the candles cast wavering shadows and the body seemed to grow. They deposited the body within the box, while the flute wailed to the rising moon.

Now the assemblage of mourners began entering the square, in a long single file, passing the coffin, saying a brief prayer, intoning the name "Dombala" and depositing something within the coffin, a coin, a handkerchief, a hat, even a shoe. Gradually, the box began to fill. One handsome woman, wailing in a sense of personal loss, actually pulled off her blouse and pressed it against the corpse, her breasts hanging low as she bent. She walked proudly off, and my camera recorded the entire scene, lingeringly, I must admit. At that moment, I felt very much a voyeur, an intruder; but, as a reporter, I try to be immune to that. Otherwise, how do I get a story?

A few of the folk hung back, whether from unwillingness or inability to give, which I doubted, or from superstitious fear, which seemed more likely, and the arm of the preacher-man rose in its braided sleeve to beckon them in. Shaking, they entered, and contributed. The little man's eyes swept around and locked onto mine, an eerie feeling for me, because mine were in my camera's eye. Rather embarrassed, I put it down, but his eyes were still on me, and his arm rose majesterially, pointing at me with firm intention. Philippe hurriedly grabbed mine and pulled me forward. I was reluctant.

"Hell, man!" I whispered, "I ain't no voodoo! My people came

from Georgia!"

Phil pulled me along. "Tonight your ass is as black as any island nigger!" he said in street talk, and I came along.

I climbed over the slack rope, and conscious of every eye there (they must've seen me there all night; what'd they figure me, the dude taking wedding album pictures?) I looked into that heavy coffin, on to that body now covered with gifts, an inconceivable array of junk; even, I noticed a few strangely shriveled dolls. I hoped they were dolls, for when I looked up, there was big mamaloia almost on top of me, her hands twisting a bit of cloth in a very deliberate manner, and my throat was suddenly feeling tight. I reached into my pocket quicklike, and threw in some coins. The crowd sighed and only leaned forward. I swallowed a lot of air, which was getting painful, and looked at that cloth in her hands, which somehow looked like a little man, and the neck was under her heavy thumb. I threw in my pocketknife and a nail clipper while the crowd stood frozen and breathing and sighing. I could hardly breathe! Hell, I thought, not my camera! I looked at mamaloia in supplication. She stared coldly back, her thumb flexing, and I wiped the sweat off my neck. I had an idea. I unstrapped my twelve-buck Timex, and held it over the coffin, my eyes pleading. She smiled, and I dropped it in. What cheering, whistling, shouting! I swaggered from the square and waited for Philippe to rejoin me. In a minute he was back and we looked at each other and laughed softly. His beret was gone.

The preacher-man was lowering the lid now, and no sooner was it closed, then the music resumed, and the crowd began its dance. I got a few minutes of shooting in when someone grabbed my hand and I looked into the dark and brilliant eyes of Celestine. The hell with the TV audience, I thought, and handed the camera to Phil. We whirled into the throng.

I like to dance, but this was something else. We hardly even touched, but our bodies grooved right on each other, hip to hip, leg to leg, eye to eye, and we could have been dancing by ourselves, and maybe we were. I could see only that bright red mouth, that fine nose, those shining dark eyes. Celestine!

A voice came through. It was the old man, pointing straight up, to the big round moon, high overhead. When I looked down, Celestine was at his side and I was forgotten. I went back to Phil. He handed me the camera with a leer and was about to say something, but stopped when he looked into my face. "It's time for the burial," he said instead, and I didn't say anything.

Mamaloi led the way and six strong men carried the coffin behind her across Second Avenue, while the cars honked in vain. The papaloi followed her, then the kids and everyone else, strung out across the street, and the traffic backed up until they were all crowded around the hearse, and the cars could hardly





squeeze by. I could see two men opening the doors of the hearse, but then there was an awful commotion, and I couldn't make it out. People were screaming and running back across the street, traffic or no. I couldn't figure it out, until I saw four new characters. They were coming out of a store across the street. "Coming"? They were, like, stomping out, stiffly, big guys, but pale, like ash. They were placing themselves between the hearse and the coffin, still on the shoulders of the pallbearers, but pretty darn waveringly right now, I thought. The crowd was screaming and wailing, and I saw Josephe cross himself.

"The dead-alive!" he kept repeating, "the dead-alive!" I looked at Phil, perplexed, and he looked back at me, bothered, slapping his temples, unable to believe.

"Holy Little Mother of Jesus," he said, looking at me helplessly, "zombies! Zombies!"

Whatever they were, the four of them, a head taller than the tallest man there, were all pointing to that coffin, stolen and restolen, and clearly what they wanted. The papaloi gaped at them, chin hanging, and his wife pushed and shoved uselessly at him. The zombies moved forward and the pallbearers moved backward, the coffin wobbling on their quaking shoulders. The crowd had fled back across the street, but the cars could hardly dare get by, with people running and shouting. The cops had come to life, and were blowing their whistles, --- from the end of the block.

Then the mamaloi pushed her husband aside and waddled in, past the pallbearers and up to the four cadaverous figures who hung over her, slowly coming on. She screamed hoarsely at them, then reached into that weird wedding-gown of hers and came out with a salt shaker! Howling curses and threats, she proceeded to shake that salt all over them. At the touch of the salt, they broke ranks and fell back. The crowd cheered. I checked my readings and kept shooting. It was insane but it was great! Zombies! Oh baby, how would that go over with dinner and the six o'clock news! She would toss that salt and they would hold their arms up and retreat. Finally she drove them back into the store, and, for good measure, threw the salt shaker after them. The people streamed back across the street, and, with a cheer, the coffin was loaded into the hearse. The doors were shut, mamaloi and papaloi squeezed into an adjoining car, and soon the whole crowd was piling into cars. The hearse took off followed by a cortege of old heaps with flags and bandanas flying from the windows. I got it all.

Josephe interrupted me. "Come," he urged, "we go to burial cemetery." Phil nodded and we hopped into my old van. I climbed behind the wheel and turned to put down the camera, and faced

a big, icy cold hand around my throat. I followed the hand and sure enough it belonged to one of those zombies. My eyes were bulging so hard, I could see 180 degrees, and across the street as I suspected, the other three were digging up the planks, and, at last, coming up with that long object Josephe's people had so unceremoniously dumped there.

And not once did that big hand leave my throat or let me move, while Josephe and Phil just sat there, petrified.

The three came stomping across the street, and I could swear I heard a few accidents, probably at the sight of them, but I couldn't move my head. They opened the van and pushed the body in. The sheet over it slipped a little and I could see a withered, ugly claw of a hand, but then the hand turned me around in my seat, and pointed straight forward. I turned on the ignition, and glanced back once at the body. The fingers, sure enough, seemed to clench and unclench in fury, but it had to be the shadows fooling me. The hand tapped my neck, and I shifted fast and got into the traffic, with no idea of where I was going. I looked at Phil.

"Joe?" he asked.

"They want to go to burial cemetery. You got salt here?" he asked me. I shook my head sadly. "Then you better go, and damn fast." We drove off, fast.

The arm was my compass, pointing right past my nose. We barreled down Second Avenue, lights or no lights, police whistles sounding, to 59th St and the Queensboro Bridge. The arm told me it wanted to go to Queens, so we swung on to the twinkling necklaces of the old bridge, on to the LIE. My guide managed to point out the BQE connection, and soon we were at that complex of cemeteries between Queens and Brooklyn, which is a sea of tombstones seen from the Brooklyn-Queens-Expressway. I was given an exit and, finally, we were going through the gates of what was obviously a Roman Catholic cemetery. Ahead, I could see a long line of parked cars, ribbons still dragging from the windows. It was our Haitian cortege. That arm still urged, and I edged the van past the line to the site of the burial. The hand pointed down to the brake, and I stopped the VW fast enough, and in that same motion, had my camera and was out the door; somehow, Phil and Josephe were ahead of me already.

Up ahead, I could hear mixed joy and sadness, and a shout as someone saw us running. I wanted to warn them of my non-paying fares, but I couldn't get a word in. Candles were hung everywhere, and shadows flickered on all sides, as they ushered us up to old mamaloi. She turned to welcome us, and I saw her

face drop in dismay as she looked past us. The word got around fast, and soon there was pandemonium, as everyone discovered in our rear the four zombies were approaching, this time with their old master in their arms, plodding toward that coffin which I saw was as yet unburied, in the clearing ahead.

The old woman wasn't stopped long. She held up her staff and shouted something in Creole; it stopped them for an instant, but then they just kept plodding ahead, the air about them dull and dismal like a fog.

Now she was angry. She grabbed a firebrand from a follower and threw it at them. It struck the first and fizzled right out. They plodded forward. Unfazed, she took another, but this time, more collected, she touched it to a serpentine staff.

"Dombala!" she shouted, pointing her arm wide to the four. The head burst into flame, an eerie flame which undulated and twisted snakelike down the staff and hissed at the dead-alive things.

There was a movement from the trees and bushes and suddenly the earth was alive with snakes, real spitting snakes who closed in on the zombies. For a moment, the four of them stood, expressionless as ever, but stark still; then the snakes closed in on them, around their legs, and brought them crashing down. They dropped their bundle heavily, and, staggering up, broke off into the woods, and among the tombstones, into the darkness.

"Domballa rules," whispered Josephe, "he will return them to their graves, to peace."

All alone now lay the shrouded figure, and perhaps the dancing candleglow caused it to seem to shudder where it lay.

The Papa/loi charged out with a group of men and began digging a hole in a bare area. Before long, while the figure twitched in the firelight, it was several feet deep. Other folk, along with the mamaloi began pulling at the body, dragging it to the hole, and inadvertently pulling it partially free of the shroud. They fell back before the shrunken leathery like skull which stared at them, deep empty eyesockets, but with something of light within them. I hoped, and didn't believe, it was only the reflection on bone of the fires. They threw the shroud on again and pulled the corpse to the rude grave and without pausing hurled it in. It clattered in and they threw curses after it. The mamaloi brought a plastic Clorox bottle and poured out its contents, singing a curse with it. It may have been holy water of a sort, but it still smelled ammoniacal to me. I hoped it still had some antiseptic powers. They threw in some amulets and some garlic, which I could smell, and then shoveled back the dirt, stamping it down.

This finished, they returned to the other funeral. They hammered in some pegs so that the dead man should be protected from enemies, and then relaxed. Beer flowed, rum, wines, and the flute and concertina sounded up again. Celestine appeared from nowhere and embraced Josephe and was in my arms, but only for a moment. Dambala must have been in her too, for she just slithered away from me and was lost in the dancers, beautiful ebony against the bonfire they'd lit. A small group was parading around with a banner of the Virgin Mary, only they kept singing a song about a goddess "Erzulie," their "version of the Virgin" as Phil explained to me, wise guy. There were other saints too, some of whom I don't think the Catholic Church had known or might even approve of. Someone grabbed my arm, and I found myself dancing too, whooping it up with them. One hell of a funeral!

At last, exhausted, I fell out of line and took some shots. The revelers were falling back into groups again, and the music was just a sighing song over the silence. After all, it was past midnight, and time to inter that box and go home.

I heard a rumbling behind us. I looked back uneasily toward the rude grave of the bocor. It couldn't be, of course. I mean, how many times could he come back? It couldn't be.

Only, the ground was rocking, and I couldn't tell myself it was the firelight. It was rocking! I jumped up. Enough was enough. I was getting back to my van, and to the peace of the city, with its muggers, bums, and junkies, but Phil grabbed my arm and brought me spinning down.

The ground burst open and the hideous head of the bocor appeared, then his skeletal arms, pulling at the earth until he was altogether free, wobbling and holding out long spider fingers. He didn't waste any time, just saw that box there and started moving in on it. The papaloi got up gamely and started to stutter something, but the old devil just looked his way and the fat old man crumpled like somebody hit him in his belly. At this, the mamaloi held up her staff, shaking like she was in a wind, but one look from the old dead-not dead man seemed to light it up, and in a minute the whole thing was in flames. She dropped and began crying and shaking, her hands in front of her face. The whole place was quiet as, well, a tomb!

The only sound was the shuffle of that figure approaching the bier, its eyesockets gleaming.

The papaloi had guts. "Go 'way!" he shouted, "you no want' here. This box ours, not yours. Belong our Master!"

It was of no use. The people fell away as the finger-twitching bocor dragged himself along, and I could swear he was drooling, in anticipation.

One figure suddenly rushed back toward the coffin. With a shock, I realized it was Celestine. She was struggling with the lid, sobbing and gasping.

"Papa, great papa, help us!" She was beating on the heavy lid and crying, unable to budge the pegs. The papaloi and his wife gaped helplessly at her and the bocor plodded on.

I handed the camera to Phil, without a word, and ran right past the old demon to Celestine. Somehow I pried the pegs loose, splintering the fine molding and not caring. I yanked them out, one after the other, and I knew I was yelling and hollering and didn't even know what I was saying, and didn't care. I threw the last one down and we raised the lid. In the box, still littered with the treasure of debris lay the body.

"Papa!" cried Celestine, "rise! The bocor is here!" She plunged her slim arms into the coffin and began yanking out all the junk, jewels, dolls, and whatnot, and then I realized the stuff was stirring by itself. Celestine fell back, and I held on to her.

Scarce twenty feet away the skeletal magician was relentlessly approaching, but now, as though waking up from a deep sleep, the great dead papaloi himself was sitting up, and actually climbing from his tomb. With a shock I saw that he was wearing my Timex! Out he came, gewgaws falling at his feet. He was as stiff as one of those zombies.

The bocor halted, his ancient body rustling in the night wind. His skull had tilted, and its sockets were right on Celestine. She held her hands to her throat in pain, and choked for breath. I seized her shoulders but she could not see me. Her eyes were fixed in fright on that bocor. I faced him and his eyesockets touched mine. I felt the girl's rigid shoulders relax, but all I could see were those black holes, and pinpoints within them, and more. Great flames, red and billowing, burning at me. He was upon us, and his bony arms encircled me. I felt as if my guts were being sucked out of me, and I was just an empty sack. His face was right against mine, and all I could see was fire.

What was I doing here, I thought, but I couldn't move. Then an icy cold hand ripped me away, and I just collapsed, blubbering and clutching the earth, but empty. I couldn't feel anything; I just lay there, while over me le grande papa and the bocor grappled and then fell right on top of me. I buried my face in the grass. They rose, still locked together, then the bocor pulled free and stumbled to the open coffin.

I heard my name called, from miles away, over and over. I wanted to be away, far away, but it insisted. It was Celestine.

She was holding my hand and trying to make it close on something. My hand was butter; how could it hold anything?

"Take it! You must, you must!" Her voice screamed at me desperately. "Please, Wash, you must!"

Must what? I wanted, God knows what, to be away, to be dead; I didn't want anything. I couldn't feel anything. Except for her hand, her face pressing against mine.

I looked at my hand, at the stick it was holding. It was one of those pegs, smooth and pointed. I stared at it numbly, at her imploring face, at le grande papa behind her, at the whole mob hushed and staring, swaying.

She pointed at the bocor. "Kill him, or --" she swallowed hard, "or you will be in him!" She pulled me half up, and I could feel her tears.

I managed to get up, to leave that soft bed of grass, and fell forward to the coffin, tumbling against the bocor. In a fury, he turned against me, his mouth a fanged maw, and his fingers tearing at my blouse. I could feel the claws ripping at my skin, and I knew he was after nothing less than my heart. I heard a voice, cavernous, behind me, le grande papa, and I could understand his words: "Go back, go back, from dirt came thou, to dirt return!" The bocor hesitated and, with what strength I still had, I drove that peg into his chest, as into a rotting cabbage, pulled it out and stabbed again and again, and as he fell, I ground it in, cursing in a language I did not know, under a coldly glaring moon which must have glared a thousand years ago in different lands and different times. In my own suddenly strengthened anger, I stabbed still again, until I realized I was stabbing at the earth. Beneath me was just the peg, quivering in the ground, in a pile of mouldering rags and dust.

Who was I, after all? Is Time such a meaningless thing, and we, what are we, souls united in it, weaving forever, back and forth?

The crowd was all over me, and Celestine was embracing and soothing me. I could hear Phil, and saw him waving my camera. "I got it all!" he shouted, but I didn't care. All I could see was the sad face of le grandé papa.

"You are one of us," he said, taking my wrist. I felt a sense of comfort, of being complete again. Mamaloi and papaloi came rushing up to embrace him, but they held a lifeless body in their arms.

Others cleared the coffin of its contents, laid in it the still form, and replaced the gifts. With subdued wailing, they





resealed it, all except for that one peg which still lay stuck into some limp rags on the ground. At last they deposited it in the earth and covered it. The papaiōi gathered up the rags and fed them to the fire, and a quiet crowd gathered up its baskets and picnic remains and returned to its cars. I could hear the engines coughing and the cortege returning to the city and the 20th century.

Phil and Josephe were waiting, with Celestine. "C'mon," said Phil, "it's all finished." Celestine took my hand, and looked silently at my wrist. The Timex had reappeared.

"It's his," I said, and started to take it off.

"No," said Celestine, "he gave it to you, to remember."

We got into the VW and drove back, leaving stone cherubs and virgins overlooking the still tombstones. Phil drove.

After a while, Celestine spoke softly. "You will show this on the TV, and what will the people say, the whites in their suburban homes, and your American blacks in theirs?"

I smiled. "They will say it was an exciting story, and will wonder how such trickery was filmed."

"And you too will wonder, and disbelieve, won't you?"

"Maybe. After all, this is New York, and 1975. It isn't a small island in the West Indies, or even dark Africa itself. Who would dare believe it?"

"And surely you will forget me too," coquettishly and yet plaintively, "with all those glamorous people you meet?"

"I might," I said, smiling.

She was twisting a bit of cloth in her hand, and I felt a familiar tightness in my throat.

"I hope not," she said, smiling also, eyes gleaming.

I reached for the cloth, and gently straightened it out and put it into my pocket.

"I think not," I said, laughing, and, reaching over, sealed her warm lips with my own.

The end.

Some notes on this story:

The entire notion arose from a remark a young man made while we were driving down Second Avenue, that he had once seen a funeral held in the open there. The rest is mine. New York has not too many Haitian people, and most of them live, I am told, on the West Side. However, in such a mobile society, surely, they will have traveled, especially to the no-questions asked crowded east of Harlem. For references to voodoo, I consulted the most famous source, William Seabrook's "The Magic Island" (which gave me many of the names and expressions.) In addition, the dancer, Katherine Dunham, has written a fine autobiography of her years in Haiti, "Island Possessed." She has a respect for Seabrook, but disparages his wild romancing, and the more legendary aspects of vaudun, as she prefers to spell voodoo. She does not deny that it has certain magical elements, for she shared in some of them.

I also read many of the splendid West Indies tales of Rev. Henry S. Whitehead, who was surely aware of Seabrook. Finally, Richard A. Loederer's "Voodoo Fire in Haiti" gave some clues. However, I do not pretend to have recreated a genuine voodoo scene; all the incidents are constructed in an attempt to capture the ambience of both the exotic voodoo and the very real New York scene.

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By chance, I have, somewhat after preparing the above note, come upon a New Yorker magazine article about New York's Haitian community. In terms of New York City's 10,000,000 inhabitants, 300,000 is not large, but is sizable, especially since most are admittedly illegally here. Inasmuch as many are refugees from an authoritarian government, deportation of such aliens, while carried out, is a distasteful procedure. It follows that those who remain here maintain a low profile, to avoid exposure. Such an event as I have described in my story would, in consequence, be unlikely, except that Voodoo, as a faith, is still important to them (although with the superstitious elements publicly expunged -- the article makes little mention of magic, but that would scarcely be bandied about) and such important personages as I have described would deserve their full emotion. The immigrants maintain a class structure as on their native island, similar to the black/white situation among Americans. They have no problems with black Americans, but do have difficulties with Puerto Ricans; as non-Spanish-speaking Caribbean folk, they are expected to speak Spanish for jobs in the Garment District, and see no reason why they should. 85% of them believe in Voodoo (Catholicism being the accepted religion in Haiti, but actually a blend.) In Voodoo everything has life, and Reality itself is seen through a dream. This essence, along with their humor, I have tried to capture, in fond caricature.

## Two Poems

"The Werewyf" by Gail White came to my mailbox with no note nor explanation. I learned later, however, that Gail had sent it on the suggestion of Sheryl Smith, who felt it would be appropriate in a magazine devoted to the weird. It is short, and, to me, strangely effective, in its understatement and its suggestive quality.

"Gilgamesh" appears as a result of my admiration for its author, Sheryl Smith. Sheryl is not shy. She admits to being 27, the product of a "lower middle-class ghetto", who realized during a "mystic experience precipitated by a college prof's lecture on aesthetics" that she was "supposed to be a verse tragedian." She began writing verse drama immediately after graduation; "Gilgamesh" was her first completed play. Her second, a Byzantine drama, was "Volund", and she hopes to complete a third, "Prometheus", this year. In the meantime, she is translating and adapting Goethe's "Faust", as well as translating Wagner's "Das Rheingold." If all this sounds pretentious, or dilettantish, I can assure you it is not, for I have read much of the work. It is powerful; indeed, I have often called it "virile" to Miss Smith. She has a trick of mixing in contemporary slang and phrases as metaphor, which is jolting. (See VII, Line 2: "rash-ass melodramatic hoyden".) She is reluctant to break the dramatic line simply to offer a beautiful poetic line; however, she can do it when she wishes. (See I., line 5: "like a late star falling / it was, but a star estranged from the sky-flame") This lady is something else!!

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To make it a trio, the artwork for these poems is by another lovely lady, Shari Hulse, of Oregon. Those of you in RAPS already know of her talent; others will be seeing cartoons she has sold to Richard Geis. She has a gentle and lovely line. I found her illustration for Gail White's poem moving and pensive; she chose to look at the human side of the fantastic situation. (I regret my stencil was not a good one, and the work is accordingly poorly reproduced. I debated using it, and decided it was at least clear in its essentials, and these are the human relationship.) The other drawing, while not intended for "Gilgamesh", and, indeed, not of its era artistically or thematically, nevertheless catches, at least for me, the very air of mystery and secret beauty which is representative of fantasy, and such a marvelous epic as the great Babylonian legend. The drawing is one she hopes to use eventually in a book for children which she is writing with her husband Chris; anyone who is conversant with art and drawing knows that getting away with this type of drawing, an object seen from beneath, is mighty tough stuff. Tiepolo did okay with it, but I doubt that Shari will become a ceiling-painter. It is a privilege to present this exquisite drawing in IBID.

--- Ben Indick



## THE WEREWYF

Gail White

That she is unfamiliar with his bed  
does not explain her restlessness tonight.  
He has seen dogs writhe in the trap like this,  
and snap their heads so hard from side to side...  
now she is at the window looking out,  
and the moon's light turns red upon her eyes.  
He goes to her, touches her, says Come back,  
and there is no more sound. Only the wind  
moves the white curtains, and a dark shape runs  
under the moon; nothing else calls or stirs.  
One lies upon the bed, but not the bride.  
Blood stains the pillow, but it is not hers.

Illustration by Shari Hulse



SHARI  
HULSE  
1975

# Selections from GILGAMESH: A TRAGEDY

A Dramatic Treatment of the Gilgamesh Legend

by Sheryl Smith

## Introduction

Gilgamesh is the hero of a classic Assyio-Babylonian epic poem dating back to at least the 7th Century B.C. He was a legendary city-king of Uruk in ancient Sumer, whose strength was matchless. His half-divine nature, however, was so troubled that his violent ways grew oppressive to his people, and they prayed to the gods for help.

The gods responded by creating another who would be the equal of Gilgamesh. This was the beast-man Enkidu, who was set down in the wilds and lived with animals until a hunter discovered him. A whore of the city was sent to seduce and civilize Enkidu, so that he could become the companion of Gilgamesh, and thereby divert that hero's strength from doing harm to his people.

The heroes performed mighty but blasphemous deeds together. Ultimately they encountered the goddess Ishtar. Gilgamesh chose to spurn her. As revenge, she had the gods punish the both by killing one of them. Enkidu was chosen, and, after a lingering illness, died.

Enkidu's death grieved Gilgamesh; further, it pierced him with the realization that he too must someday perish. His desperate striving to forestall his demise led him on a perilous journey through Kur, the gloomy Sumerian underworld where the dead lie in dust, transmogrified to bird-shapes with mangled wings; and thence to the floating isle of Dilmun, the earthly paradise, where Utnapishtim (i.e., Noah) dwelled contentedly with his wife. The couple had been placed there for their piety, as sole survivors of the Flood, and were the only humans who would never die. Learning of his quest, Utnapishtim told the hero he must go sleepless to prove his worthiness for eternal life. But, the hero, weary after his journeys, could not do this, and he was sent away. Even the marvelous herb that grants youth till death, given him by the pair as consolation, was snatched and eaten up by a snake. Thus, Gilgamesh returned to Uruk, and wrote his whole story, and died there.

by Sheryl Smith

I. Description of the birth of Enkidu  
(A Hunter is speaking)

Back a month of mornings

I was setting traps near animal water.

Finished, I stretched and my eyes thrust

toward the pre-dawn sky, saw a shape, a lump

of darkness cross it; like a late star falling

it was, but a star estranged from the sky-flame,

allied to the night between: ice-black it glared,

yet along its swathe rainbow fires lingered.

Like a thrown thing it curved 'round the rayless sunball;

I watched while it hung, grew in plunging,

I screaming leaped from its burgeoning shadow,

and the earth moved behind me. I looked again as the sun bloomed,

expecting chaos -- fallen star-smash,

landscape's ravish; but my vision rose

to meet merely eyes of distant ice, pre-dawn color:

more rainbow fires -- another waker...

I thought him a god, but my awkward worship

bred in those orbs incomprehension,

scarce-divine puzzlement.

Finally he snarled, pushed me away

with a bothered cuff that broke my collarbone --

huge he is, great, I swear, as Gilgamesh -- ;



through thick bright hairs        shone his skin, livid;  
 embrous and blank his eyes.  
 Down in my pain, fascination's promptings  
 slit my lids -- I watched him.  
 He was new, new        to the self he studied!  
 I viewed there a second        primordial moving --  
 in fear: for what pantheon-        promise preserves  
 this old recension?        He tried, and learned embodiment.  
 His eyes I saw twice        compare my prone form  
 with his young-sun shadow; but from something, contempt  
 or shame, in the end        he cast his gaze eastward;  
 with great-ape's gait        he fled to some beasts, who permitted him.  
 This mime confirmed        what my insides told me:  
 he's man -- the sole one of earth's animals  
 can himself deceive...

--- from Scene II

## 2. Enkidu's Death-Dream

I imaged sky        behind conclave of glowing people,  
 phosphorescent like fungus.        These as foes claimed me.  
 Their gem-massed organs        and fingers shook;  
 they pronounced sternly        my new-born ending,  
 and I feared before these        unweaponed ones; fightless  
 I trembled at death-words striking.  
 Then I woke. And the moment        was airless, and needed none.

Vpid was, silence,        nothing-stuff locked  
 and guarded by mad,        stirless dust.  
 Dark I stared at,        blank, flat black.  
 I bedded on wings        grown of me, bone-mangled,  
 pain should have coursed them, convulsing me --  
 but I lay full-eased;        pain was not, no sense  
 came in the reign        of-dust and nothing;  
 even the dream-shed        horror fled me,  
 thought vanished, stilled;        I, Enkidu, void --  
 not I, beingless --        helpless, unwaiting,  
 stone-crumbling All...        Then breath befell me,  
 and my gaping eyes drank stars.

-- from Scene IX

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### 3. Gilgamesh's Description of Kur

No scenic route, Kur's throughway. --  
 This place of ebon        air's hatchery,  
 that nourishes vacuums;        this plague-culture,  
 man-butcher        to the risen nations;  
 flusher and flesher        of misdecayed fears,  
 of insane disgusts;        gorge of dark dreams,  
 demesne of the darker Dreamless --  
 or so I've heard said.        Thus far, confirmed  
 is the darkness only.

from Scene XII

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## 4, Gilgamesh's Description of Dilmun, the Earthly Paradise

...Savorable setting,  
 this isle of rooms. Here's fine-cut nature,  
 here's wildness faceted, gem-work set off  
 by the tree-hung curtains, the groves, basalt-thrusts,  
 glens, grottos -- all insular awes  
 of Earth-miniaturist clumped as divine  
 museum-cum-playground. No doubt we live men aren't expected:  
 such wonder-clutter thus suddenly seen  
 without transition from agoric waters  
 must strike humans breathless.

-- from Scene XIII

## 5. Realization of Mortality

(Gilgamesh speaks)

Position can't save me: were I Uruk itself  
 I'd fall to powdered dry-rot!  
 Though fields corpse-sharded and bleeding burials  
 strewed my finale; though a Tigris glutted  
 with flesh-red bribe poured my ablutions  
 for tainted roots; though I, as snaggle-jawed city,  
 ate rivals in vengeance; all meat, all blood,  
 all nourished vitality'd turn in my craw  
 to grit of ghouls, choke me on substance  
 of moldering, morbid ordure.  
 For nothing endures...

6. Gilgamesh outtake--The hero describes a phenomenon seen  
in his travels

I saw what is called the ocean: water  
like a dragon diseased. So far at least  
as sight goes, its sinuous blue-swell wrackings  
moil. The monster gnaws quiet rocks  
and spits up eternal ichor, salty  
elemental poison  
All lifetime of earth will it writhe; near-forever  
its breath-grind of dying.

7. From the Soliloquy Before Sleep  
(Gilgamesh speaks)

Yet who is this Gilgamesh, this high-mulatto,  
rash-ass melodramatic hoyden,  
hate-graced forever? At even life-turn's  
eternal juncture, who am I to be free of deathwish?  
'Tis madness devouring remembrance, and eats  
like the sea receding; for reason it leaves  
distorted sketches of doom like dark serenity.  
What I was, I am -- and am not,  
oh who knows, who knows where the windswept being,  
the deep-set rooted, lies?  
As deep in the complex folds of man  
as man in the layered earth shall lie  
suffused -- ach, still! -- at finish.

----- Sheryl Smith

# Weird Heads

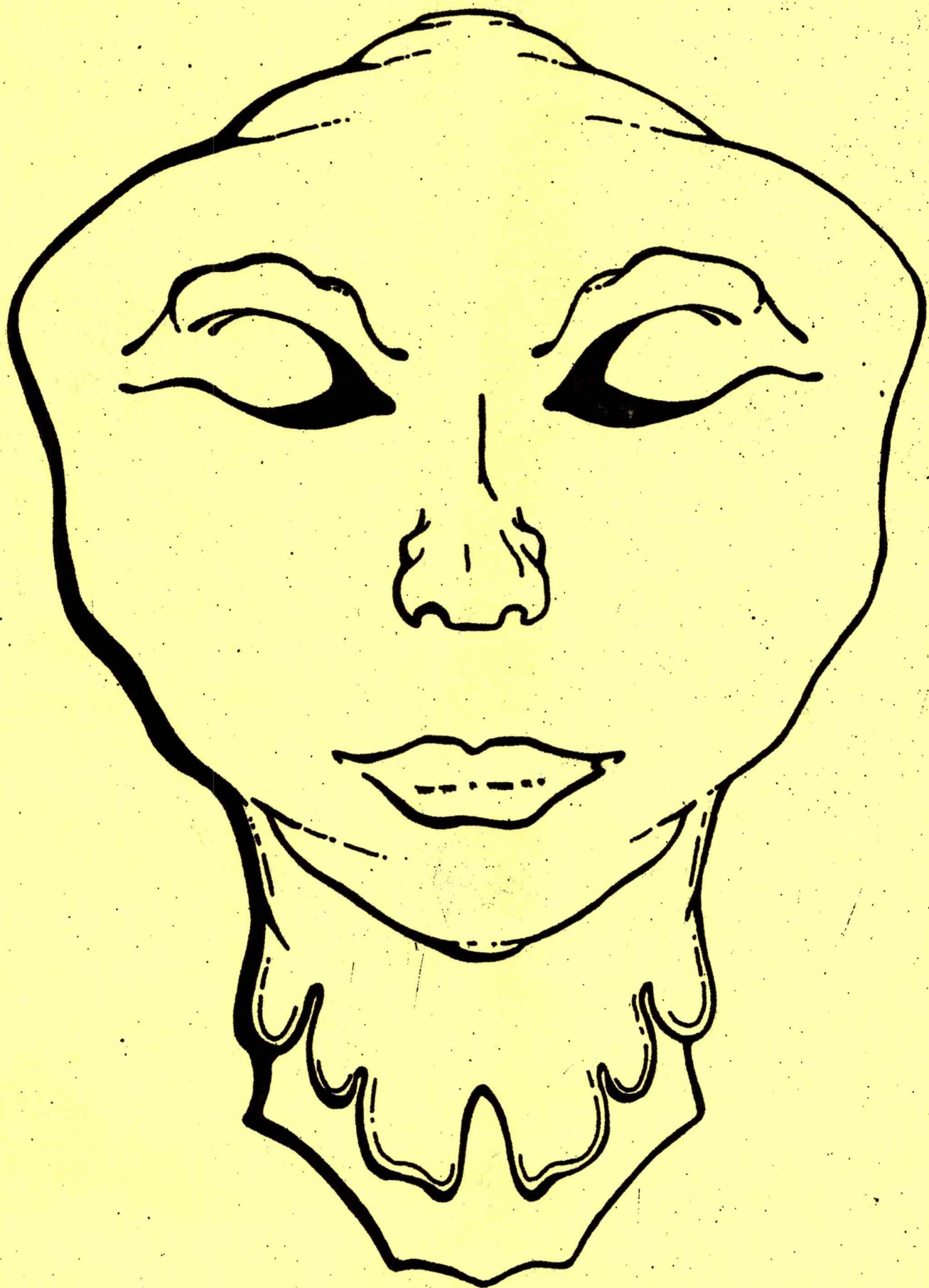
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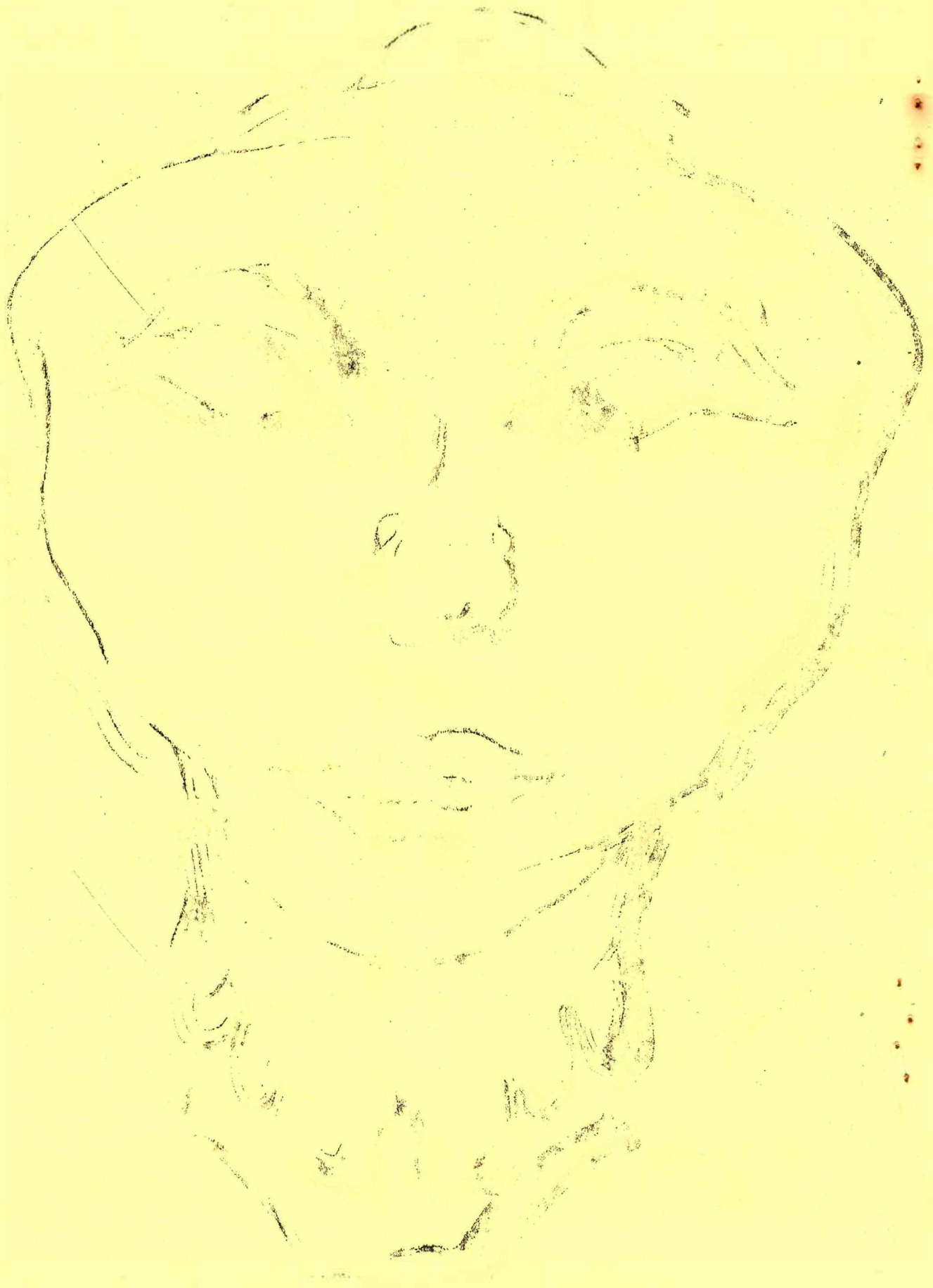


MIDDLEBURY  
dedicated to Cheryl Smith













MEANWHILE -  
BACK IN THE  
COLLECTIVE  
UNCONSCIOUS

HARDLY



~~Handwritten scribble~~

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# SOME SELF CRITICISM

by

## H. P. LOVECRAFT

### PREFACE

In the following brief commentary on some of his own work, H. P. Lovecraft is far more critical than many of his readers. This commentary, previously unpublished, was written in 1929, and is printed with permission of Forrest D. Hartmann of the law firm of Hill, Quale and Hartmann, representing Arkham House Publishers of Sauk City, Wisc., literary executors of the estate of the late H. P. Lovecraft. The manuscript itself, however, is from the personal collection of Gerry de la Ree, and IBID wishes to thank Mr. de la Ree for his generosity in making it available to the Esoteric Order of Dagon.

"In the Vault" was written to order, as it were -- to please an old gentleman who asked me to write a tale about an undertaker locked in a vault & escaping on piled-up coffins -- & I never do well with other people's suggestions. However, I fancy I've written just as poor things independently. "From Beyond the Wall of Sleep" is detestably mediocre, & "Cool Air" doesn't wear very well on re-reading.

What is more, I myself greatly dislike "The Hound". I find it, nowadays, melodramatic & overstrained. The real fact is I find a curious rawness & immaturity in all the stuff I have written up to the last two or three years. This ought not to be, considering my age (40), but it is so none the less. The reason probably is that I was too glibly self-confident about my work in earliest youth. I had a sort of superficial fluency, & mistook that for maturity -- so kept right on using the same kind of tone & imagery from year to year, & not mellowing with age as I ought to have done.

Stuff that I have written in my thirties has in many ways retained the rawness & naivete that ought to have been shed before twenty-five. You will see it in the affected atmosphere of "The Tree", & the mawkish overtones of "The Quest of Iranon". The thing

that has helped me shake off this incubus is, without doubt, my critical and revisionary work -- which compels me to analyse a vast array of diverse and immature writing very closely, & to pick out flaws & weaknesses for correction. Bitterly as I hate this work, it has done me good by compelling me to pay more attention to the fundamentals of the writing process -- so that I ought to bless it instead of cursing it. Gradually I have come to recognize, in the mss. of others, certain characteristic faults & extravagances of my own -- trite phrases and images, overstrained situations & denouements, mawkish & artificial tone, etc. -- & to correct these tendencies in such little writing as I am still able to do amidst the pressure of work.

"The Colour Out of Space", written only 2½ years ago, is the earliest thing of mine which I can regard as in any way a finished specimen -- and I should certainly give the older stuff a very extensive revision and toning down if it were ever to be collected in book form.

Hope you can make out "Sarnath" -- of which I haven't any typed copy. I really ought to change that name to "Zarnath" or something else, because after writing the story I actually came across the name "Sarnath" in Dunsany -- whose system of imaginary nomenclature is surprisingly like my own, although I devised mine before ever hearing of him.

I was rather gratified this Fall to find that I have been included for a second year in the three-star Roll of Honour in Edward J. O'Brien's short story year-book. Last year it was for "The Colour Out of Space"; this year for "The Dunwich Horror". O'Brien also gave a lesser ovation to my "Silver Key" -- which was also mentioned in the O'Henry Memorial Prize volume for 1929.

I haven't written a story since "The Dunwich Horror", being utterly driven to the wall by revisionary work. I am, however, trying to get my revision programme cleaned up this winter so that I can get at some more material of my own.

(( --- H. P. Lovecraft ))

## ENVOI

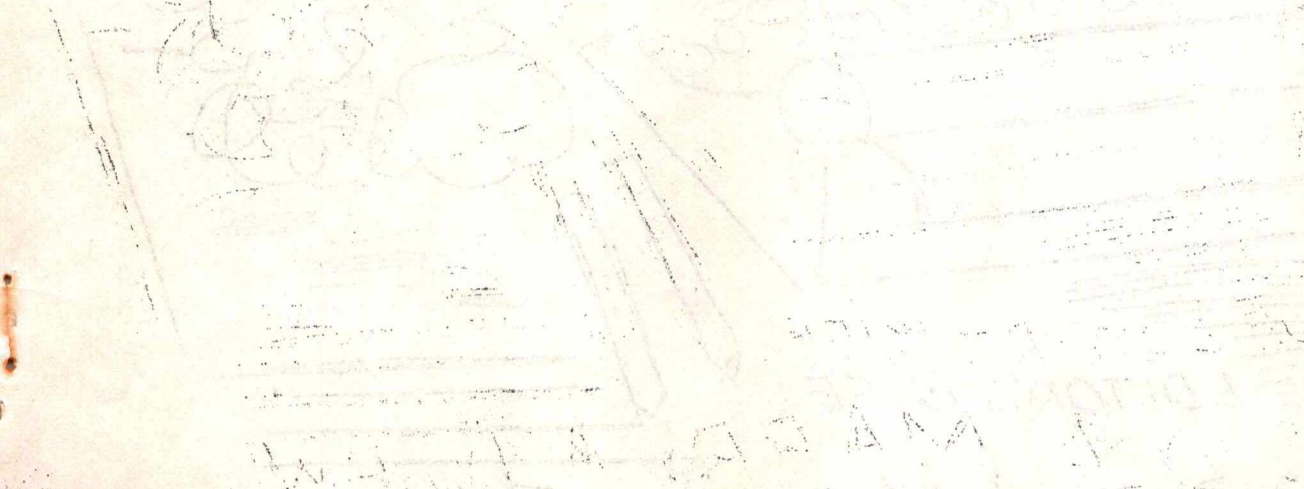
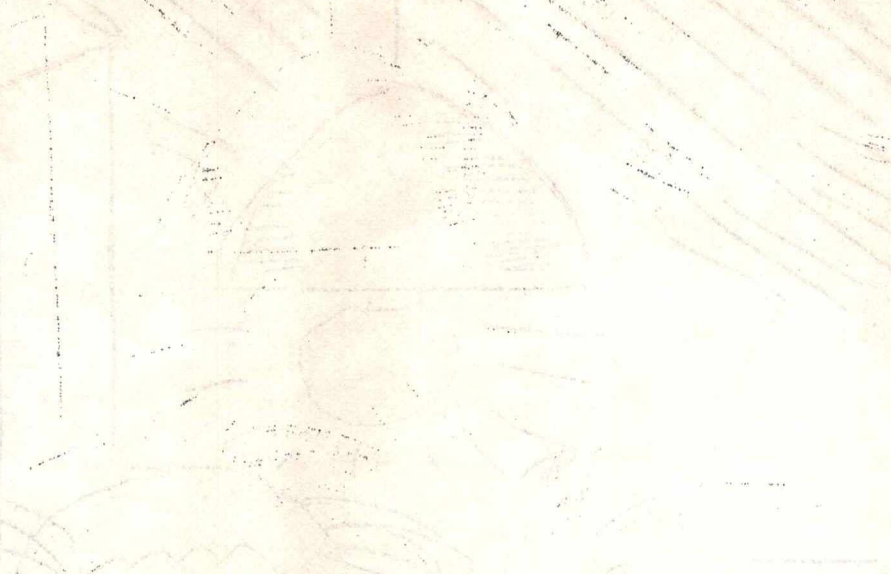
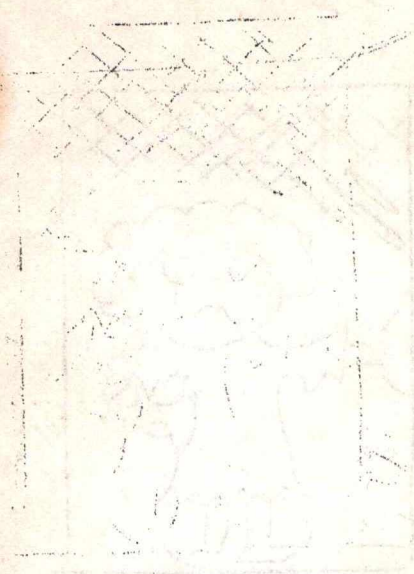
The Esoteric Order of Dagon is now into its third year, and in this brief time has already established itself as one of the most interesting amateur press associations. It actively encourages research into the life and works of H. P. Lovecraft, and, indeed, into all aspects of weird literature. Original fiction, poetry and art are the essence of the group, and the a.p.a. may well have another acronym than E.O.D., that being S.P.O.T., Society for the Promotion of Original Talent. It has been a unique pleasure for me to be a charter and continuing Acolyte in this exciting and inspiring group, and if anyone is interested in joining, I would gladly furnish details.

This issue, which is larger than my customary contribution, is intended not only for the members, who have had to put up with my fanfic since the initial mailing, but for many of my friends and faneds in general fandom, who have for years generously given me their own fanzines. I debated the inclusion of my emcees on EOD XI, which might seem to be of more limited interest, but finally retained them in this full mailing because they may serve to display the wide range of active writing and creativity of EOD. Obviously, I am proud of the Order. It would be unfair not to note here the individual who initiated it all and patiently saw it into birth and growth, Roger Bryant. My appreciation, Rajah.

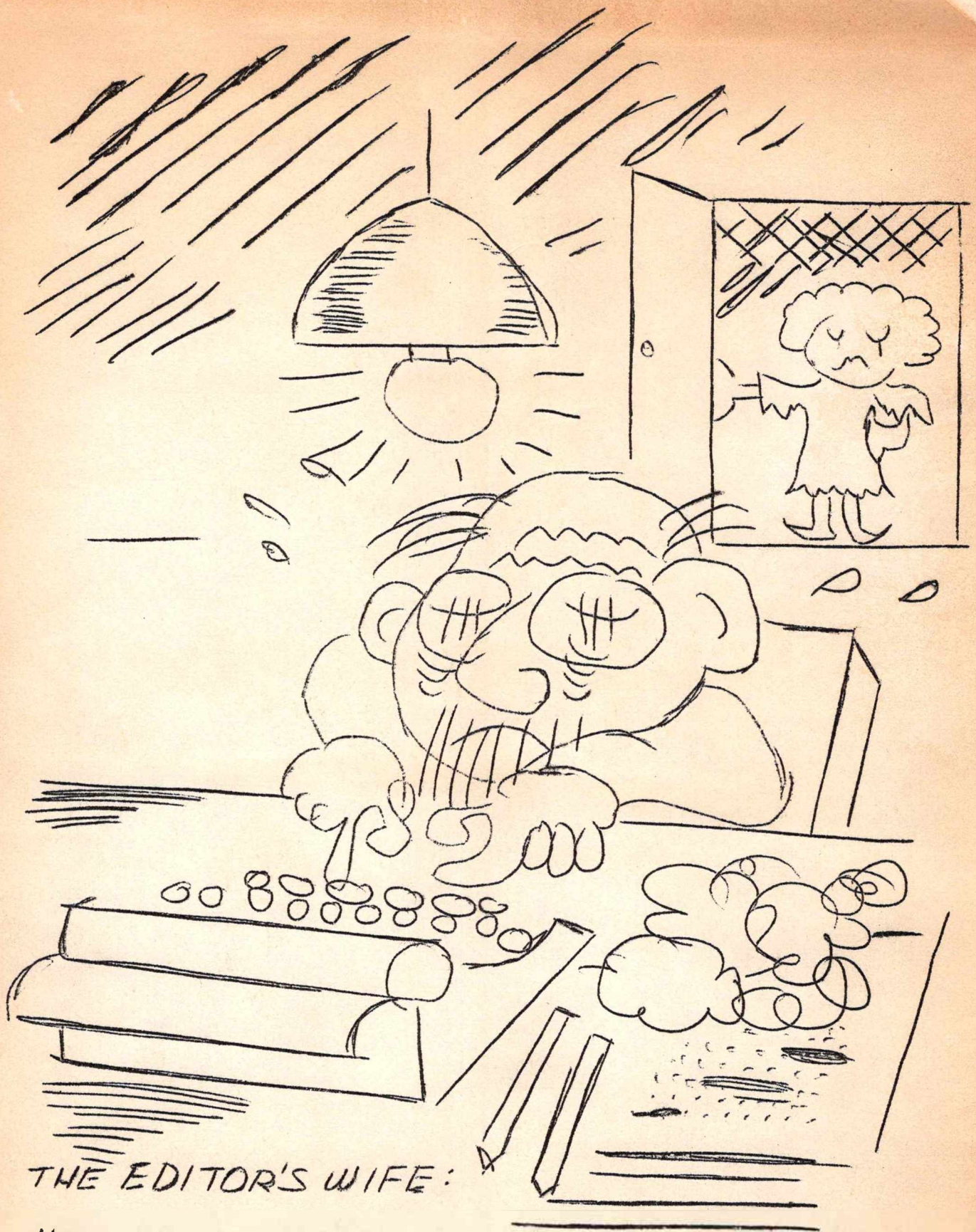
I would like to thank my many contributors for this special issue: the poets, Gail White and Sheryl Smith; Gerry de la Ree, who generously provided the brief but fascinating appraisal of his own work by Lovecraft; and my artists, Joe West (who took time from a hectic schedule to give me, from a most sketchy outline, three delightful and humorous illustrations); Shari Hulse; a quartet of wonderworkers, Brad Parks, enfant terrible; Don Herron, now organizing a new a.p.a. devoted to Clark Ashton Smith and Robert E. Howard; Sheryl Birkhead, who must be soon awarded "officially" for the talent everyone knows she possesses; and Bruce Townley, the Freud of Fandom. My wife, Janet, gave me the collage which graces the cover. I am proud to say that Janet has had a one-artist show this summer of her steel sculpture, was awarded a prize in New York City for one of them, and will shortly have another on display in a show in the Big Apple. One day, somehow, I'll manage to have as a cover for IBID a full-color reproduction of one of her paintings. I hope I may be pardoned some vanity if I say that, with the exception of Joe West, all these artists appeared first in EOD in the pages of IBID. No, I do not pretend to have "discovered" them -- just to have given them a new "market"!

Finally, I hope you have enjoyed this issue. Fandom and Fanac have provided me with more than a hobby, and with scores of friends. For this I am grateful, and if IBID XII repays it in some small measure, I shall be grateful.

*Ben Judick*



DID YOU KNOW A THE WRITER



THE EDITOR'S WIFE:

"DID I MARRY A TYPEWRITER?"