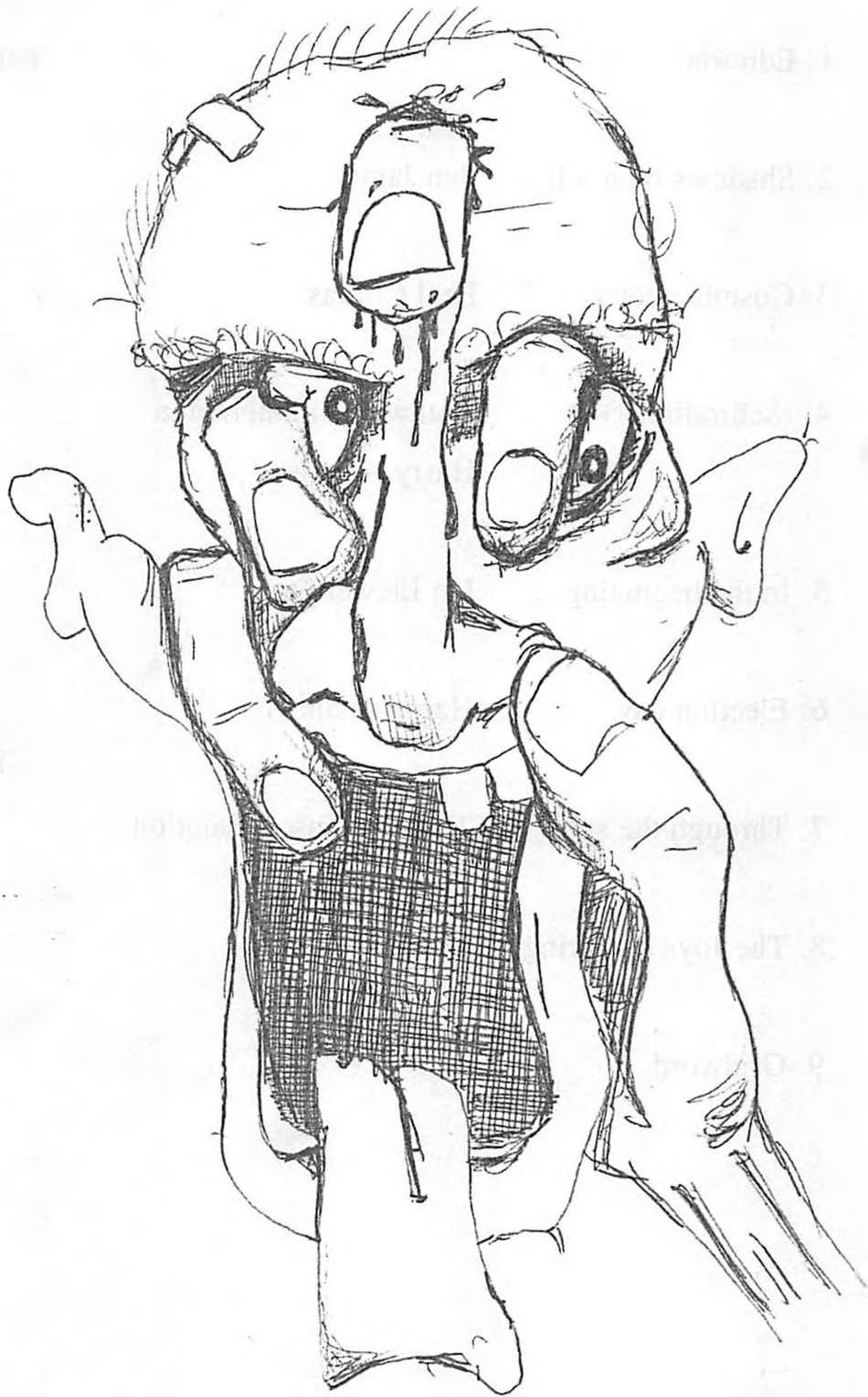


Finger Cramps



Fantasy, Science Fiction, Science Fantasy, Speculative Fiction

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Illustrations and front cover by Conan.

Editorial

This is the first proper publication of this magazine. It started life as a college based magazine with much the same format, but without the benefit of good print quality. Another innovation, for us at least, is the addition of illustrations.

There will be (hopefully) an issue every month, depending on how well this issue sells. There will be competitions, a feedback page for your letters and comments on the magazine, life, the universe and everything. It is also planned to have interviews with authors, reviews of appropriate movies and the like.

We will thrive if you, the reader (or even your friends) submit manuscripts. Long stories may be split into serials. Artwork is always welcome. If you wish to illustrate then it would be better if you gave us your address so we can send you copies of the manuscripts for ideas. Any manuscripts you send in will be returned if you wish, just send a stamped, self-addressed envelope along with your manuscript. If you do submit a story, please, double space it (ie. write a line, skip a line, write a line...) and only print (write, type, whatever) on one side of the paper (we have to edit the suckers you know!). If submissions are sent on 3.5" disk in ASCII format, PC compatible, then you will be praised as a saint and a leader among men, don't forget a SAE for return of disk.

On to the magazine, what is it? What's it all about? In essence this really is a fanzine, a FANzine is written by and for FANZ, in this case mostly science fiction fanz. Don't for a minute imagine that we all sit around with zogabons on our heads making silly hand gestures and watching re-reuns of Star Trek on cable TV for days on end, only stopping for toilet breaks or burger-runs (some of us do, not all). We print all types of literature, pulp, pulitzer (and pornography). Any topic is acceptable, drug induced hallucinations, mass hysteria (this is the phenomenon encountered in a church when the priest announces that there will be a benediction at the end of the service), social commentry, philosophy, anything that your frontal lobes can suggest to you, we have it.

The address to send your comments, submissions, telephone numbers, bust size, paychecks etc...

Finger Cramps
71 Saint Fintans Road
Sutton, Dublin 13

Shadows on a hill

The breeze gently rustled the tree leaves, their shadows casting a flickering checker-board pattern on the grass, it was soft and damp on Traol's cheek, warm breath redolent with green smells and quiet sounds - the hum of insects, the grasses' whispering, the wet laughter of the brook beside him. Traol ducked under a weeping willow's drooping branches and sat at the base of it's trunk. Surrounded by shimmering green walls he relaxed and pulled his legs, carefully, into the lotus position.

Resting the backs of his hands on his knees he focussed his eyes through the greenness and onto the distant, brown hills, breathed slow and deep, in and out, eyes growing heavier. As they closed, Traol clenched his left fist, the thumb resting on the first two fingers.

As he always did initially to deepen his concentration and to loosen the last threads of resistance, Traol let his mind drift through his environment. He sensed the tree spreading around him, drawing life from the earth to give it to the sky. The grass beneath him was a vast ocean teeming with life, life which was pinpricks of light insinuating itself as his sense sharpened. Birds flashed through his expanding mind like bolts of energy, wheeling and tumbling. Fish were darting pulses of coolness in the sparkling flow of the stream. Solar energy irradiated his sphere of consciousness, seeming to melt and dim as clouds billowed slowly past. His mind encompassed the entire field and every living thing in it was known to him.

A dragonfly darted to and fro amongst the bullrushes. Traols' sphere shrank - concentrating his consciousness on the insect. He felt it's iridescent body quiver as he enfolded it's tiny, sharp life : He touched it's perfect simple mind, peering through it's multi-faceted eyes at the suddenly kaliedascopic world. A suggestion of movement and he could see a dozen images of his own still body fill his vision. With further subtle prompting the willing insect soared in great wheeling arcs through the trees, made imaginary bombing runs on the unsuspecting trout lazing in one of the still ponds of the stream.

A sudden sensation of laughter at the periphery of his perception caused Traol to immediately release the dragonfly and rapidly expand his consciousness. He discovered Katlyns golden aura coalescing beside his inert form. His mind swirled and dipped like a sheet blowing in the wind and he wrapped his mind about hers. Undulating within him, her aura became suffused with orange light, and they embraced. Her cool intelligence washed over him as her warmth filled him and their essences merged completely, fusing into a homogenous spirit.

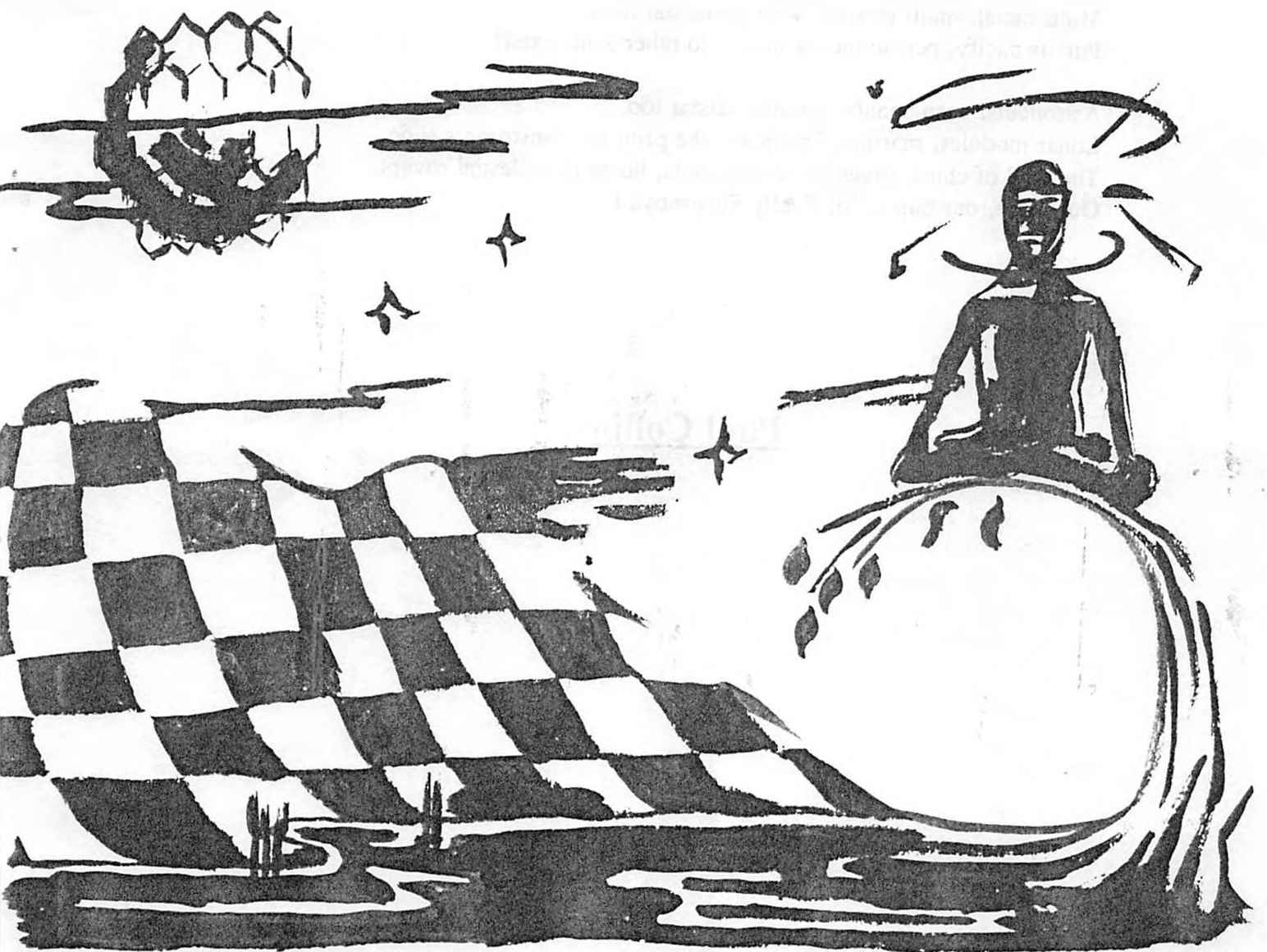
The intensity of their union was like a supernova - fierce waves of energy exploded in a climactic eruption of passion leaving an intense circulating core of emotion and complete understanding. The feeling was of utter fulfillment, it was suddenly seeing with absolute clarity and breath-taking vision. The entire universe rocked and shook, and realigned itself into a new simpler place. The feeling was of ecstasy.

But it was too much, too powerful for even their minds. Their latent abilities could not yet fully comprehend the enormormity of this existence, so their minds reluctantly broke apart, orbiting each other, launching occasionally in silent communication. Words, thoughts, actions - all were unheeded and unneeded.

Hours passed as their psyches drifted together unknowingly. The air became chill as the sun set and droplets of dew formed on the grass. Their minds briefly enclosed each other for the last time and Katlyns' aura dissipated like pollen in the wind.

Traols' body twitched and he unclenched his fist. He rose stiffly to his feet and stood blinking in the cold twilight. He brushed unsteadily through the damp branches of the willow and made his way to the gate of the field leaving a dark uneven track in the grass behind him. He plucked a large bunch of daffodils and held them in his hand as he walked back to the village. Stopping at the graveyard he placed the fresh flowers on Katlyns' grave, then continued his journey homewards, threading his way inexpertly through the darkness.

Ben James



Cosmic Poetry

Supernova ! Quasi - pulsar asteroidal dust.
Mega - massing vapour clouds for which whole systems thrust.
Solar Flarings, erstwhile comets, lunar crashing droves,
gaseous masses, liquid planets, clad in vaporous robes.

Dinosaurs and pre formed reptiles, evolutions broth.
Archeopteryx arise ! Take flight above the sloth.
Warm blood mothers, eggless offspring bravely rear bipedal,
Eons waiting, growing, thinking, omniverous, procedal.

Multiplying and dividing, evolving wait anew,
The anthropoidal march threatens to knock the scales askew.
Multi racial, multi tasking, with genocidal twist,
Purists pacify, peruse the vacuum : do other souls exist?

Astronauts, cosmonauts, sputnik, telstar too,
Lunar modules, martian chronicles, the print of Armstrong's shoe.
The wall of china, greenhouse cloudings, home of celestial rovers,
Our mark, our home, 'til finally Supernova !

Paul Collins

(Schrödinger)

It seemed to Geoffrey Joshua Pemberton III that today was going to be another boring, ordinary day. Not that he minded boring, ordinary days, in fact he quite enjoyed lounging about the place, taking 40 minute naps every 10 minutes, gorging himself over the culinary delights which were laid before him and whenever he could, staring into a big, open fire, looking at the yellow flames dancing merrily, as he puzzled over some of the more tricky problems that quantum physics had to offer. Yes, Geoffrey Joshua Pemberton III was your average, ordinary, rather uninteresting, everyday four-legged cat. Unfortunately, he didn't know that his world-line was about to take a twist for the worst.

It all began quite innocently when he was disturbed from his slumber by a pair of neanderthals. Initially he was quite annoyed that the two, degenerate homo sapiens had awoken him, until he spotted the saucer of milk which had been laid before him.

"Here pussy pussy", chorused both the neanderthals, who were at the time down on all fours, making incongruous, insensible noises. If he didn't know better, he'd have said that they were both making a rather pathetic attempt at imitating a cat. These neanderthals obviously had the combined IQ of a lump of cat turd. Trying his best to ignore their presence, he came out from under the table and proceeded to lick up the immaculately delicious, white liquid. The two neanderthals were still standing over him, looking down at him with big white, cheesy grins on their unfortunately mis-shapen faces.

"A little privacy would be appreciated," Geoffrey squawled, facing the two men. The neanderthals continued staring at him. "Hey, can't you guys take a hint?"

"He's a cute little thing, ain't he Danny?", said one of the pair. Both showed no signs of moving. These guys were obviously lost causes.

"Hey, who performed the lobotomies guys", Geoffrey said, quickly losing patience. They didn't move.

"OK, it seems we're having a little communication problem here"

One of the pair, the short, round person lent down over the cat. "Enjoying your milk pussy?", he asked, smiling.

"How can I put it to you," Geoffrey continued, searching his mind for the correct words, "Please, if you would be so kind, I would be extremely appreciative if you both would fuck off!!!"

"Be a good kitty and drink up." It was the short, fat one again, and to Geoffrey's horror, he placed his hand on and ran it up and down Geoffrey's back.

"Unhand me you perv", Geoffrey shrieked.

"Come on now, stop acting up on us and finish your milk," the fat one said, "it may be your last."

Geoffrey thought it better not to say any more. He did not want to suffer the humiliation of any further molestation by the short, fat neanderthal. Thus, gathering what pride he could, he returned to the task of licking up his milk, ignoring the two neanderthals with their cheesy grins.

After finishing off his saucer, he felt altogether drowsy. Yes, a mid-day nap was in order. In fact, he felt quite light-headed. He would head over to the table

and take a snooze. His eye-lids were becoming unimaginably heavy. No, perhaps he would take a nap right here. The last thing Geoffrey saw was the face of the short, fat neandertal gazing at him. After that he was blissfully unaware of everything about him.

Geoffrey woke feeling like a soccer team was skipping rope inside his head. He lay where he was trying to massage his brain back into action by thinking about playing with wool or sitting in front of the fire or chasing mice. Eventually he screwed up enough courage to open his eyes. He found himself inside what seemed to be a shoe box. In one corner he could see a hammer sticking out of a complex looking arrangement of gears and levers. Underneath the hammer there was a phial of some liquid. Once the box had stopped spinning about him Geoffrey, curious as always, went over to examine the strange objects. He pawed at the complex arrangement of gears and levers with the hammer thrust into it and then sniffed carefully at the phial. Neither excited his curiosity much.

Deciding that he didn't like the box much, Geoffrey started miaowing stridently to get out. This box reminded him of the one that took his uncle Algernon away to be 'fixed', his uncle was never the same after. Geoffrey was more than a little scared. He tried scraping a hole in the box, but it was too tough. A clicking noise from the hammer device first alerted him of his trouble. He turned in time to see the hammer fall and smash open the phial, filling the box with the smell of almonds. Geoffrey tried desperately to pass through the side of the box to escape what he was sure was danger, but , the cyanide released from the phial quickly robbed him of his senses, Geoffrey Joshua Pemberton III expired, convulsing and mewling, from cyanide poisoning.

* * * * *

Geoffrey heard a faint click as he was pawing the side of the box. He looked over to the corner of the box where the click had come from and saw a strange sight. A ghost image of the hammer had fallen away from the real hammer. Geoffrey stopped pawing the box immediately, remembering the last time he had broken something. The ghost hammer fell towards the phial, smashing it into thousands of ghost fragments which flew around the box, whizzing past Geoffrey and forcing him into the corner. The box filled with a faint smell of almonds. Geoffrey's fur stood on end when he saw a ghost image of himself falling away and onto the ground before him, twitching convulsively before lying still, mouth open in a ghastly grin.

"Aggh!", said Geoffrey, "Agggghh!", he repeated for good measure.

The dead figure of himself still lay on the floor in front of him. It was more than a young cat could bear, to be faced with his own mortality like that.

"Mmmh!", he said as he fainted onto the floor of the box.

* * * * *

The two physicists were excited.

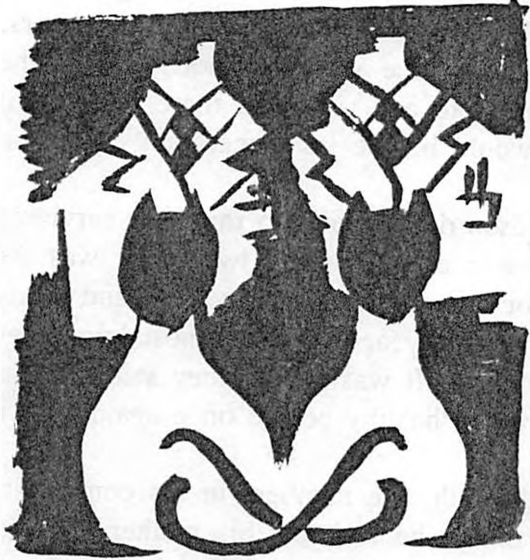
"Do you think it worked?", the fat one asked the bespectacled one.

"Who knows Danny", he replied rubbing his bearded chin, "The experiment has never been tried before. It's all theory. If it did we'd be famous! Imagine, our

names might be spoken in the same breath as Einsteins, Rutherfords, Darwins. Think of the talk shows! The sponsorship deals. Think of the groupies!!"

"Err, lets not get carried away, Breeon", said Danny, helping Breeon down off the desk. "What if it doesn't work?"

"I know a good primary school that needs a couple of maths teachers"



Sobered, the two physicists made their way to the lab where they had set up their experiment. They unlocked the door with great dignity entered solemnly and switched on the lights. After making the appropriate entries in their log books they went to the cupboard where the experiment had been left. They opened the doors and took out the box, carrying it to a lab bench and setting it down. Both were trembling slightly in excitement and anticipation, awed by the momentous occasion. They approached the bench, pious as pilgrims.

"You can have the honours Danny, your eyesight is better than mine"

"Fair enough, where's the scissors?"

They removed the sellotape and string which had kept the box shut. The lid was now free to be taken off. Danny hesitated.

"I'm scared Breeon, I don't know if I can do it. This will mean such great changes to society. It changes the whole way we look at things. I mean I have children, can I do this to them. Have I just been selfish bringing them into a world of turmoil and chaos! Upheaval, Destruction..."

"Danny, Danny, calm down", Breeon grabbed Danny by the shoulders and shook him until he stopped ranting and his thousand yard stare was replaced by the normal feverish, half-out of focus glare. "You really do talk some shit sometimes. I don't think you should have had that last cup of coffee"

Breeon turned back to the bench and addressed himself to the task of opening the box. He reached out and lifted the lid slowly off the box, pulse quickening in anticipation. He whipped the lid aside to reveal the contents of the shoe-box. What confronted them shocked both scientists. Inside the box was not a live cat or a dead cat, but both!!

Geoffrey Joshua Pemberton III stood looking up at the two scientists with interest (he had been locked in a box for a day), not far from him was a very dead Geoffrey Joshua Pemberton III lying in a heap.

"Hey! What kept you guys? Got any milk? My mouth feels like a bulldogs armpit!"

Rothwell Zimmerman

Harry Adams

In the Beginning...

The day before the war started, Mrs. Anne Richardson gave birth to her fourth and last child - a boy called Neil. Fourteen hours later the entire globe was engulfed in a nuclear holocaust. Within a day it was all over and after two years, the first survivors emerged from their shelters. The war had more or less the predicted effects on the earth and a few others to add :- one of these was that it made the entire human race sterile. This would be the last generation of human beings to exist.

The years went by and Mrs. Richardson did her best to raise her surviving two boys in the harsh conditions of post-war earth. Of the two, Neil was the strongest and healthiest and was admired for his normality by the weak and sickly community that had come to live together over the years. He was a nostalgic image of what people used to be like in the old world. It was a pity, they said, that he could not have any children, to try and breed a healthy people once again. But it could never be.

As Neil grew past adolescence and youth, the numbers in his community gradually dwindled. By the time he was thirty, he had lost his mother and last surviving brother - both of whom died painful deaths, consumed by numerous tumours and cancers, until they faded into corpses. Neil remained healthy. He could see the last remnants of his community grow feeble and fade practically overnight, until, at the age of thirty-six, he found himself comforting the last dying member of the clan, a middle-aged woman who was inches away from the end. When she finally slipped away into the eternal sleep, Neil found himself in terrible isolation. As far as he was concerned, he was the last man alive on earth - he would never talk to anyone again. From then until the day he died, he would have to be content with himself for company. The years went by and after an initially shaky start trying to fight off lunacy and apathy, Neil taught himself to cope and accept his position as the last man on the earth. In fact, his mental development increased rapidly, since with no distraction besides keeping himself nourished and warm, he was free to think all day. People used to inflict this sort of isolation on themselves in the old world all the time, to sort out their problems. Imagine what a lifetime of constant reflection and thought could achieve for a man.

As Neil progressed through middle age, he found himself becoming more and more at peace with himself and could feel wisdom growing inside him. Each day he would retreat to his cave and reflect on his existence and the existence of everything around him. He soon lost all concept of time, and age, so engrossed was he in his new vocation. Around what would have been his sixtieth birthday, a wonderful thing happened. Neil was sitting in his cave in the afternoon enjoying a meal of various roots that he had collected the previous day when he felt a strange urge to relax his arms and place his hands down by his side. Then, hardly believing what he was doing, he actually levitated the food up slowly from the plate and towards his mouth. His mouth opened and received his food. Neil immediately realised what had happened - his intelligence had developed so much that he had now reached the stage where his mind had physical control over nature. The implications were staggering. Over the next few years, Neil meticulously perfected

his new-found talent - soon he could lift rocks and think out where his favourite food grew. But one thing that he noticed was that the more his mind developed, the more his body deteriorated. By his seventieth year, Neil could barely walk and no longer had the strength to dig up his precious roots - but this problem had long been solved - he could bring anything he wanted to him just by willing it. Soon Neil realised that he could also levitate himself and began working on this aspect of his development more than any other - and all the time his body grew weaker and weaker - and all the time he felt himself becoming more and more a part of the world around him. He was soon able to carry his dying body anywhere he wanted, using his fantastic mind. As each day passed the more at peace he was with everything and the more his physical self faded. Then, one day around his seventy-fifth year, around the time when his physical form would finally give up and die, the ultimate stage in his mental development finally occurred - he could not find anything to feed his excuse for a body, and the old, almost forgotten instincts of physical survival began to nag him and disturb his peace. In a desperate mental effort to find food he managed to actually create a piece of edible vegetation beside him - he could now create things from nothing!

His elation was so intense at this moment that he did not feel the last light of life fade from his corpse. Instead he rose into the sky and effortlessly saw and felt everything on earth at once. And now he must create - he created the things he had heard about as a child - things that had existed in the old world, like trees and animals and flowers - beautiful flowers. And he cleared the air of the last remaining poisonous reminders of man's last destructive imprint on earth. He made birds fly in the sky again and put fish in the sea - he was glad his mother had told him so much about the old world. And finally he created his most difficult and beautiful entity. Finally he created man and woman, in the image of what Neil Richardson used to look like in what seemed such a long time ago. When it was all done, he looked on everything he had made and he saw that it was good.....

Ian Llewellyn

Election Day

The door closed. He looked up. The stranger stood there, in the doorway, clad in voluminous robes, with a heavy cowl pushed back from a pale, but imposing face. Moving to stand in front of the table, his figure seemed to absorb what little illumination there was in the room, drawing in both light and straying gazes.

"Can I help you?", asked the attendant.

"Yes", came the reply, in a voice like winter winds stirring decaying autumn leaves, "I've come to vote."

Momentarily taken aback, unable to take his gaze from the figure before him, the attendant absent mindedly mumbled and shuffled papers in front of him.

"To vote", continued the figure, "my name is..."

The stranger paused for effect, effectively, the attendant felt his heart skip a beat, "...Richard Maguire."

The attendant mumbled something vaguely reassuring and ripped his gaze to the page of registered voters in front of him. With a strange sense of relief he found no Richard Maguire.

He sighed, "I'm sorry you're not registered..."

Maguire grabbed the paper.

"There, there I am, Richard Maguire, 71 Scotch Place", the figure seemed to relax as if reassuring itself of it's own existence.

"Just find a free cubicle and cast your vote, remember it's a secret ballot"

"Ah yes", chuckled the figure, "secret", he pursed his lips and put his finger up to them in a sushing motion. Sweeping over to an empty 'cubicle', he drew the curtains with a grin, shortly a low chuckle was heard to emanate from the cubicle. It soon built itself into a hearty, although unhealthy sounding, belly laugh. The curtains burst open and the stranger strode out, tucking a quill pen inside the sleeve of his flowing robes. He thrust his voting slip into the ballot box and strode towards the door. A woman stood in the doorway, mouth open, staring at him.

"Remove yourself woman, I have more secret ballots to cast"

He left the building and climbed onto a large black stallion which he turned down the road and galloped away.

Inside the building an insidious rustling was rising from the ballot box as if the votes were whispering mischief.

Harry Adams



Through the snow

He stumbled and fell to the snow. A few moments passed as he lay in stasis, before wearily gathering himself up and continuing.

Only an extraordinary effort of will kept him moving, wearied as he was now almost beyond his limits. He needed to see his family. His loved ones became the focus of his existence, love for them urging him on. Yet with every step he slowed, the wound in his leg caused pain to rip like tsunami throughout his being. Blood still poured freely, weakening him further, leaving an all too obvious trail in the snow.

They would surely get him, he thought, but he struggled on, refusing to concede to defeat and death. His pursuers weren't so far behind, closing all the time, their hollering and yelling clearly audible across the otherwise silent, snowy plain.

Somewhere in the distance, wolves howled.

He had tried to mislead and lose the men. Yet the opportunities to do so in that bleak, white expanse were few. His only hope was to reach the forest, so painfully far away. They wouldn't follow him in there, for night was not far off and he knew they feared the silent gloom of the trees.

Glancing back he could see, miles in the distance, a dark smudge that was the small town. He hadn't been welcome there. He had known that that would be so before ever entering the place, yet his family were hungry, near starved. He had no choice.

He had barely escaped alive. Careful though he was, he had nevertheless been spotted. A shotgun bellowed and crying in pain and misery, he had turned and ran. A hunting gang soon gave chase on foot.

He paused, listening to an inhuman howl that rent the dusking air.

In the forest the wolves were running.

Slowly the pain seemed to ease and his weariness lift. A soothing darkness beckoned warmly. He slipped to the snow. The baying of the hounds returned him to consciousness.

For what he knew would be the last time he resurrected himself and fought his slow way to the forest. It was not so far now. He could even see individual trees, the silent front ranks of a mighty coniferous host. From within echoed the plaintive howling of wolves.

He swayed. His legs buckling, his breathing labouring heavily, his body quivering.

Behind him came the fierce barking of dogs as they finally spied their quarry. Men cursed excitedly. They had him. A volley of shots was unleashed, but none found their target.

"Hurry dammit, before he gets away."

He crawled into the forest. A shot or two thudded into the trees and the snow, then the firing ceased. He crawled, body swimming, kept crawling. Then he lay still.

The men cursed their luck, deliberated, then laughing, headed home.

In the forest the wolves had found his body. They keened all night at the far away moon.

That Dickinson Emotion

The Joys of Spring

The voice crackled in the headset.

"Eh, this is Mike here Dave, we're getting some dangerous readings on the screen here from your part of the city. I think it's about time you headed back to Headquarters, over".

Dave touched the pad on the side of his helmet.

"Yeah Mike, I've got one more signal on the scanner, and I'd like to check it out. I should be home within the hour though, over."

"Ok, but be careful".

The headset fell silent. Dave turned his vehicle into yet another dim, desolate street. The wind whistled through the skeletons of the buildings that loomed over him from either side sending dust and papers swirling around the rubble. He didn't hold out much hope for the person who had sent out this signal. It was now over three weeks since the Seevid Process had been put into operation in the city and the chances of anyone surviving after this much exposure were slim. Why could some people never listen to reason? The official evacuation of the survivors had occurred more than two weeks before the process had begun and in five years or so, the city would be habitable again. There were always a few who would not leave in time and although the Seevid rays were short lived, their effects were worse than the radiation itself. However, it was Dave's job to investigate every signal he came across, even if at this stage, the vast majority of them came from the wrist of a corpse.

"This looks like the place", he murmured to himself and he brought the vehicle to a halt. He was at the entrance to a subway. Getting out of the vehicle he checked the dial on his wrist to make sure his protective suit was fully charged, and without delay he hurried down the crumbling steps into the gloom. He took Mike's warning seriously. It didn't take long to find the girl. When he spotted the flashing red light he made his way over to where she lay, covered in newspapers, next to the wall. She gave no sign that she was alive at first, but on looking at her face, Dave could barely discern her eyelids flutter as if she was dreaming. She seemed to be in her early twenties, but she was so soiled and bedraggled, it was difficult to tell. He touched the side of his headset and spoke into his mouthpiece.

"Come in Mike, this is Dave. Do you read me?"

"Yea, this is Mike, over."

"Looks like we got a live one at last. Tell Doc to get his equipment together, I think we'll be able to save her, over."

"Ok Dave, we'll be ready. See ya later."

Dave reached down and took the girl up in his arms as gently as he could. She moved her head slightly and smiled, almost as if she knew she were being rescued.

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"Daniel! Wait for me"

She scrambles along the path as fast as she can, the slight incline making her gasp for breath. He was always running away. She stops for a moment to catch her breath and have a look around.

Ahead of her the path winds its way erratically up through the pine trees. Through a gap in the woods behind her, she can see down into the valley from which she has just come. The thin line of the path meanders its way down, in no hurry at all, until it disappears in the long grass of the valley. The air is warm and fresh with springtime. She notices with joy the way the soft breeze sends ripples through the grass, making the valley floor resemble a great emerald lake. She glances up at the horizon, at the crisp contrast, not blurred yet by the haziness of summer, between the clear brilliance of the snow still clinging to the mountain tops, and the deep azure of the sky.

Having seldom seen such beauty growing up in the city as she did, her heart goes out to the scene at once. She can't help laughing to herself as she hears the pleasant sounds all around her and breathes the clear scent of spring flowers.

"Mama! Look what I found!"

As she turns around her smile widens, seeing little Daniel come scurrying down the path. He carries something, and despite his speed, he handles it with care. As he approaches she can see that it is in fact a flower. He comes to a halt panting and hands it to her, pride sparkling in his eyes.

"Look Mama! I found it!"

Hugging him to her, she inhales the fresh fragrance of the crimson petals and closes her eyes.

It's very quiet. Where have the birds gone? Seeing and hearing nothing, she concentrates on the sweet fragrance of the flower. It seems to her that spring in its entirety is somehow encapsulated in this soft fragrance. It represents both the buzzing of insects darting between blossoms and the way light dances on pools of rainwater, as well as capturing the majesty of the mountains and the energy of the mountain streams gurgling happily to themselves as they carry down the melted snows when winter turns to thaw.

Why is it fading?

She continues to breathe deeply straining to recapture the magnificent aroma. No, it had gone. She must open her eyes. Gasping in dismay, she stares at her hand. The flower is gone and in its place lies a small red mushroom. A mushroom?

She looks about her in consternation. The wind starts to whistle through the trees. It is cold, and Daniel clutches her leg. A mushroom?

Wrenching her gaze upwards, she sees clouds approaching. Dark, brooding, unnatural clouds that hang heavy over the land. A mushroom?

Recollection hits her like a shockbolt. NO! The heat...the people...the noise...it all comes back to her.

DANIEL !

Looking down at her son she gasps in utter horror. His little curls, red cheeks and cute smile are all gone. She stares down into the empty holes of his skull, which leer back at her accusingly.

It's your fault ! Why did you bring me into this world?

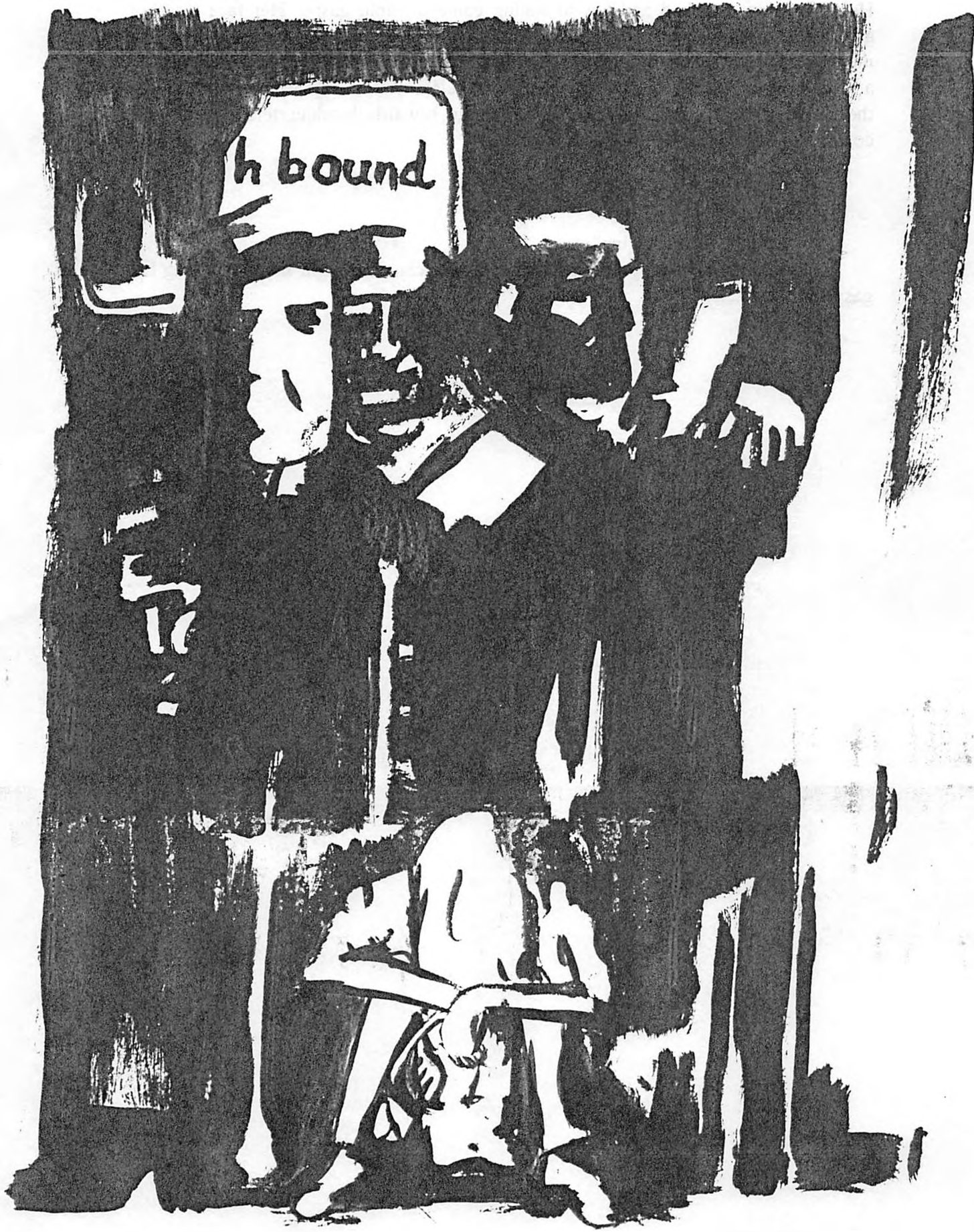
She can't take it any longer. Clutching her head in her hands, she falls to her knees. She screams.

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h bound



Dave slammed on the brakes, his heart thumping. The girl's scream had shattered his concentration. He turned around in his seat to see if she was alright. Her fists were clenched and her breathing came in rapid gasps. Her face was hot and feverish. Dave was puzzled by her sudden outburst. He checked his wrist monitor to see if the local radiation level had increased. The digital display showed a level well into the safe zone. She started to relax. With no time to sit and ponder the cause of her outburst, Dave set off again towards headquarters, wishing he could take off his helmet to wipe his forehead.

* * *

"Daniel ! Wait for me".

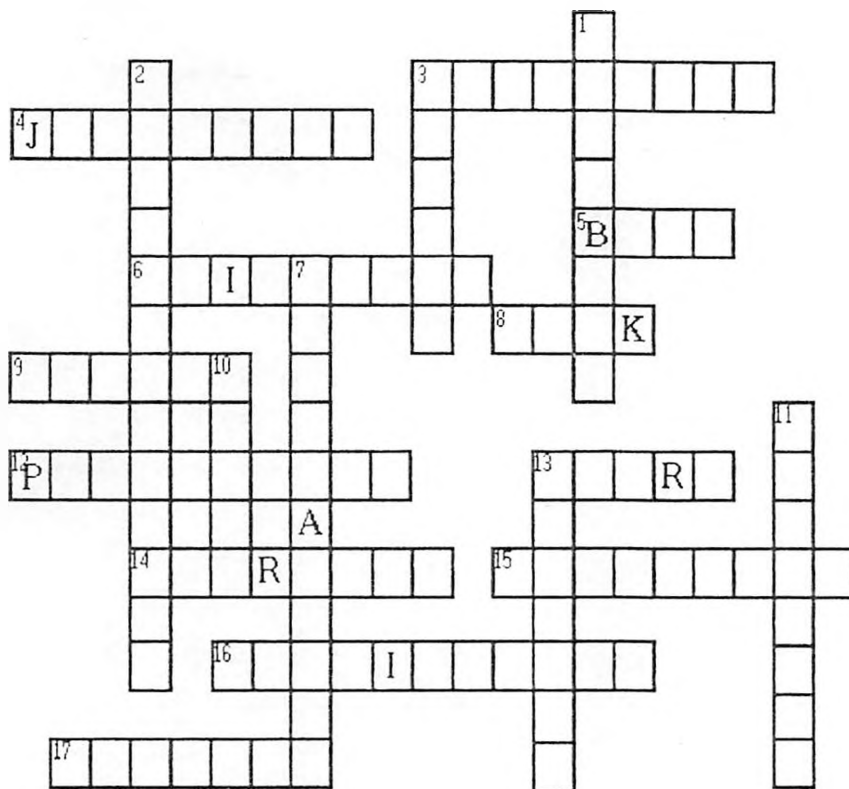
She scrambles along the path as fast as she can, the slight incline making her gasp for breath.....

Conor Hughes

Science Fiction

Author

Wordgrid



Name :

Address:

Across

3. Outlaw of techno-age?(9)
4. Masculinely named, female author of the Exile saga?(6,3)
5. From Eon to Eternity?(4)
6. Schizophrenic Scotsman?(4,5)
8. Svlad Cjelli of Douglas Adams (dagger)?(4)
9. Doctor of Biochemistry with love of machines?(6)
12. Type of mind of 9 across?(10)
13. Wrote of planet on turtles back?(5)
14. This science-fiction writer is not electro-plated, may be an Australian (...silver)?(8)
15. Never mind the watchmen, what about the writer?(4,5)
16. Author with line in strange book titles (battery powered wool providers)?(6,1,4)

17. First names : MERCURY. More than one hole dug in the ground and bricklined to provide drinking water? Wrote of Time machine?(1,1,5)

Down

1. Chronicles?(8)
2. Created 'the matrix' in his books?(7,6)
3. 1998+3 and also 1998 +12; but still a mystery?(6)
7. A monster of animated corpses, untied? This author (and Mary Shelley) is responsible.(5,6)
10. Hailed by some as the father of science fiction? (precious stones)?(5)
11. Clean, metal, rodent writer?(8)
13. Undeniably, the father of modern fantasy?(7)

Our first competition! To enter is easy, just fill in the grid above using the clues provided. The clues are for Science Fiction authors names or some of their gimmiks. Send your completed entry to :

Finger Cramps Competition
71 Saint Fintans Road
Sutton, Dublin 13

Entries must be in by the middle of October (ie before October 15). If your entry is the first drawn out of the hat (or box, or whatever), then you win the grand prize : a 5 pound book token!!! (hey come on, it is our first issue!)

Author
W. H. ...

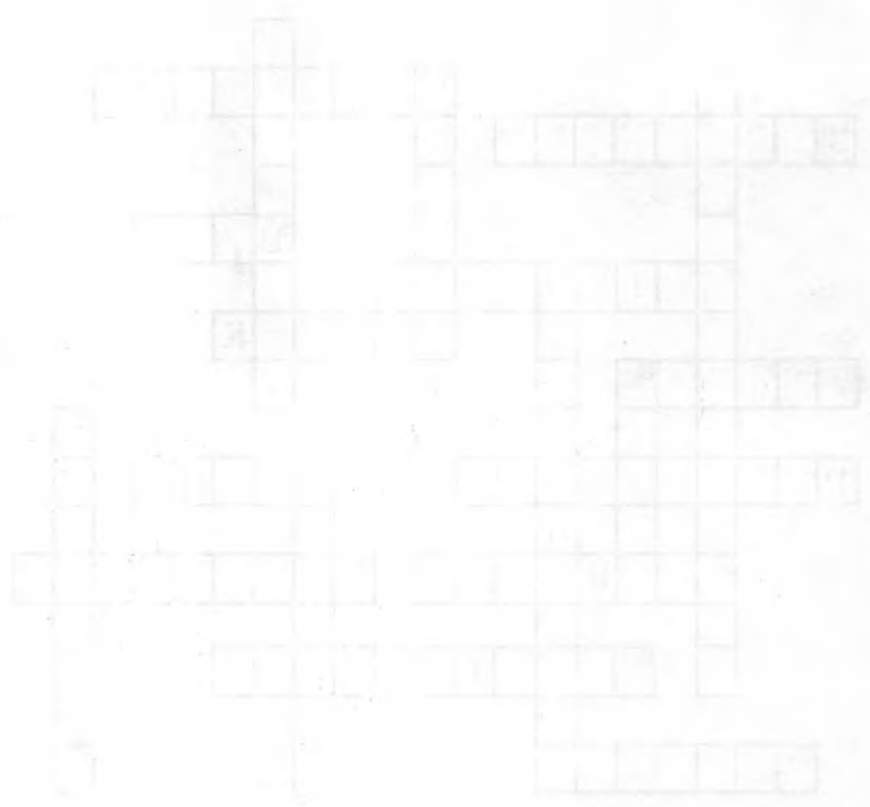


Fig. 1
Detailed description of the part shown in Fig. 1, including dimensions and material specifications.

Fig. 2
Detailed description of the part shown in Fig. 2, including dimensions and material specifications.

Fig. 3
Detailed description of the part shown in Fig. 3, including dimensions and material specifications.