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MIK

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COVER BY MIK. (Mike Higgs of the Brumgroup).

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NATTERBOX.

(being a sort of introductory editorial).

August 1964

59 The Fearnings,
Crabbs Cross,
REDDITCH,
Worcestershire,
England.

Well, hello. Welcome one and all to this 'arena', known as LINK. This is primarily intended to be a femme-fanzine -- although You Blokes are as welcome as anybody else.

Us Girls would like to introduce ourselves; this is Beryl Henley nattering, and I'm (sort of) in charge around here. Which means that I'm responsible for much of what is perpetrated in these here pages. Anyone wishing to hurl appropriate insults should therefore aim them in my direction (address above). Thank yer kindly, sir; bless yer, lidy.

On my right, the Gt. O'Reed, otherwise Miss Mary Reed, ~~the~~ the Bane of Banbury. Aged 19 and engaged to a Brum-BEM. (Hi, Pete!). Mary is ~~not~~ famous throughout British fandom as the instigator of allegedly mad letters ... there is more on that particular subject further on ...

On my left, a lesser-known example of the breed: Miss Anne Campbell of Bicester. 20 years old, she is Mary's Number One Pal - and from here on in, you'll know her as "Haggis."

Later, we hope to ~~boldly~~ persuade other femme-fen to contribute to LINK - perhaps Miss Julia Stone of Chipping Norton, (of whom more - MUCH more! - anon!). Also I'm stalking Simone Walsh of Bridgewater for some of her pungently witty gems!

Doreen Parker is also featured herein, and will probably make sundry appearances in future issues. LINK-2 will carry a short story by Tony Walsh - his first, I believe, in any 'zine. (Scoop!). There will be more maddery from The Terrible Tribe-Trio, and the conclusion of our suspenseful, breath-taking, brilliant, topical, magnificent - ch, shurrup, Henley! - serial, ONE HUNDRED AND ONE UNICORNS.

We had to let The Blokes in here and there, though - if only to perpetuate the myth that "We can't do without 'em." LINK is Mik-illo'd throughout, including the cover (for which grateful thanks and subservient salaams, O Michael!) (Flame! - well, we might require his services again!). Archie Mercer also crops up now and again - but dammit, Archie crops up in everybody's 'zines, so we couldn't very well keep him out of ours!

The primary aim of LINK is humour. All types. So laugh, damn you! Constructive criticism and helpful suggestions will always be received with thanks - especially from those more experienced in 'zine-production than we are. (Which means almost everybody - I'd never typed a stencil in my life till I tackled LINK!).

Our united thanks to Charles Platt for duplication, etc., also to a number of bods who offered and/or rendered other assistance - especially Ken Cheslin, who raced gallantly to the rescue when I got in a right mess with the stencils ! Any errors are probably mine.

We were hoping to put out this first issue, at least, free of charge, but, having planned a modest 12-page issue, the damn thing ran away with us ! So, rather than be driven to robbing banks, singing on street corners, or sticking up stage-coaches, we propose to charge a bob for it. OK ? That doesn't, of course, apply to contributors, fellow-members of PaDs, 'zine-traders, etc. Oh, and writers of loc's - yes, even SHL's, Gray !

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PEBBLE IN THE POOL

This is the department of "let's start a discussion/argument/fight." Subject: the dearth of humour in sf. Some years ago, I saw a film titled, "When Comedy Was King." It featured snippets from old slapstick films - Laurel and Hardy, Buster Keaton, The Keystone Kops, etc. A remark made by the commentator has stayed with me ever since: "Whatever happened to laughter ? There used to be so much of it around."

Having laughed myself into fits over Eric Frank Russell's "Nuisance Value" and "Next of Kin" (also titled "Plus X"), I tried to think of other authors in the sf genre who had managed to do the same thing. They are few and far between, more's the pity. Edward Mackin's "Hek Belov" yarns can usually produce more than the odd chuckle, and other authors have occasionally forsaken their usual serious vein to write the odd mirth-raiser - for instance, Brian Aldiss's "The Primal Urge."

We'd like to hear of other examples; we'd also like your opinions on whether sf is inclined to take itself a bit too seriously.

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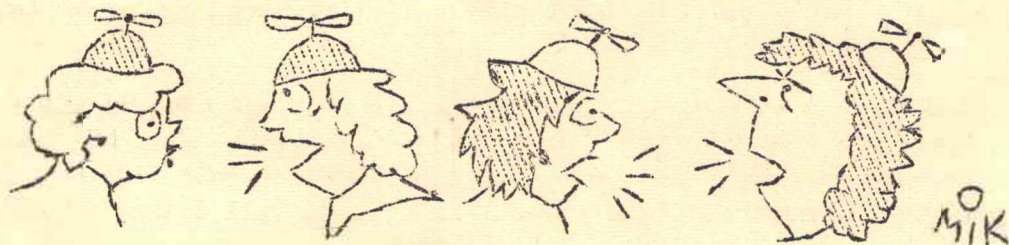
and that's all in THE NATTERBOX for this time. Here we go, then and may you never be the same again

++ Beryl Henley.

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This is LINK No. 1, a PaDszine produced to entertain, annoy, amuse, irritate, edify, infuriate and otherwise boggle the collective mind of fandom

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All I did was ask Mary Reed to come up and spend a weekend with us after the PeterCon. Bring friend Haggis as well, I said, if she'd like to come. Only leave it for a week or two, I said, until I get this flippin' show off me back.

What show? Well, for a number of years I've been a member of a mad gang calling themselves the REDDITCH REVELLERS. I've been secretary, script-writer, sometimes producer, general adviser, healer-of-breaches, sorter-out-of muddles, row-referee and general dogsbody. I've had at least one part in every show presented by the RRs - in fact in one show, coupla years ago, I had no less than six spots. It was a variety show called AUTUMN REVELS. Somebody said it ought to have been called AUTUMN BERYLS and this was ridiculous.

The most recent show took place on the evenings of April 21st, 23rd and 25th. It was something in the nature of an experiment, and was called REVELLERS OUT WEST - a show with an original script (written by guess-who), and a country-'n'-western basis.

I had only one part in this show ... well, it makes a change ... but this turned out to be the female lead. (I hasten to add that I don't do the casting; that's the producer's job). I found myself in fevers, playing the part of "Little Passion Flower," the unwed and somewhat ancient daughter of "Big Chief Hole-in-the-Head."

Since I intend getting a full-time job in September, I decided that L.P.F. would have to be my last public performance. Oh, sure, I told 'em, I'll write more scripts for you. (I've already started on the next, as a matter of fact. See, there's these four blokes who've got to find the four key keys, and oh, all right. I just thought you'd like to know ...)

Mary wrote, gimme the address of the theatre, just in case I can get up to see the show. So I sent it to her and said, lady, that's no theay-ter, that's a flea-pit (oh, sorry, Mrs. M., sorry I called your flea-pit a flea-pit ...)

The thlot pickened. On Friday April 10th, Pweston dropped in. Crafty sweep ... I thought he'd come to kneel at me feet and be enlightened or something. Aha! I see it all now. The upshot was, Mary was to be invited here for the 25th, and please could Pete come an' all, he'd sleep on the floor in the living-room? (Thinks: I could sell 'em some tickets). OK, I ses. Glad to have ya. Both of ya.

Comes the Round Robin. Which Mushy (that's Mary) calls the square Peter. And Archie calls it the triangular fred (trifred for short), And Chris Priest called it the round cuckoo because everybody on it is, except him (so he's jumped off now). And Gray Hall calls it the round dodo, and our John (my younger son, a precocious infant of 11 years) calls it the pentagonal Pete, and its instigator, Charles Platt (Zeus forgive him) calls it the dreadful duodecagon. And who was it called it the rhomboid Remus? - and that will be emphatically enough of that, thank you very much!

In my contrib. I mentioned that Mary was coming here on the 25th, adding: "... and no, I'm sorry, I can't put anybody else up, the BSEFG will probably be sleeping all over the house as it is." So I promptly get a letter from Graham Mad Hall, salaaming and grovelling and begging, could he FER-LEEZ come up that weekend to meet Mary and show her his locoeng hair? ('Cos Mary digs long hair on blokes. Flips over them Strolling Bones - er - Rolling Stones).

Well, I thought ... there's always the coal-'ole. Turned the page and read: "And please could my friend Dikk come too?"

A great light broke upon me. I suddenly realised that this was meant to be One Of Those Weekends. It was going to be bigger than I am (which means gargantuan), so there was simply no use my fighting it. I stopped worrying, relaxed, and let myself be swept along by events. Believe me, it's the only thing to do; that way, you're ready for anything.

Certainly Gray and Dikk could come up for the weekend, and I would get them some tickets for the show, and no, of course I'm not twisting anybody's arm

Letters and 'phone calls flew back and forth; arrangements were made, altered, cancelled, and finally left hanging in mid-air. Which fitted the pattern, of course. I didn't know what time anybody was due to arrive, whether they'd be drunk or sober, on foot or on horseback or what. And I didn't care.

Bob (my husband), who likes things well-planned and cut-and-dried, was going slowly demented. "But what time are they coming?" "No idea." "Are they all coming together?" "Dunno - but I doubt it."

Tuesday night - the first night of the show. A bit of a shambles, as usual, but the local reporter said he'd enjoyed it and could he have the address of that little dancing girl with the dimples? He could not. (I'm sure he didn't believe me when I told him she was only twelve. She was, though). Thursday night, there was a hold-up in the proceedings, which resulted in a riotous scene - Clive Hughes was hastily shoved on-stage by his brother Don, before he (Clive) had had time to get his trousers on. Good job he was wearing shorts ...

Came Saturday. I raced around most of the morning, giving the place a lick and a promise, sorting out sheets and things (I 'ate 'ousework!) Round about 1.30.p.m., I had the feeling that I'd forgotten something important. What was it? Oh yes - the midday meal. Nothing suitable in the pantry; I thought, hell, I'll have to go down to the shops. Then I remembered I'd gotta go anyway - hadn't fetched bread or bacon or coffee or anything ...

Gray had said that he and Dikk would have their lunch (liquid variety) at the Fleece Inn, which is at the top of the long, steep hill which leads down-and-up-again to our place. (I have to draw maps and things for new visitors ... don't I, Charles? It's a devil of a job fearning your way around the findings ISN'T IT, KEN?).

On my way to the shops, I decided to make a detour to the bottom of said hill. Gray had said, about 2.p.m., but I had a kinda feeling (I'm a bit sitcnik, see ?).

There were two chaps walking down the hill, one fair, one dark. The former was wearing dark glasses. Now: were they Them? No, a bit too young, I thought, as they indulged in some playful' sparring. I dunno, though ... they walked past me and I watched them to the bottom of the hill. Saw the blond one vault the metal fence (which it had taken me 14 months of nagging to persuade the Council to erect - it's to stop the kids running blindly into the road). They proceeded up the lane, and I suddenly made up my mind it was Them.

I broke into a gallop to catch 'em up. (Believe me, that's worth seeing!). Came up behind 'em and hissed, "The disguises don't work - they're rotten." They swung round and eyed me warily - and who shall blame them, subjected thus to the full blast of the Henley personality for the first time in their tender young lives? Why they didn't scream, I'll never know though they say they've never been the same since.

They looked interrogatively at each other. (I'll swear those two are telepathic ...). "I have got the right people, haven't I?" I asked. "Gray? Dikk?" The dark one said, "I'm Dikk. He's Gray."

I'm not quite sure why, but that didn't work, either. It's a gag which they apparently try on everybody they meet. Gray is the dark one, Dikk the blond.

In triumph I led them to No. 59, designated Ye Olde Timme Shacke, where they deposited sundry books and impedimenta, then announced their intention of returning to the Fleece until we had disposed of our dinner. Well, that was understandable ... after the shock they'd had, they must have been in dire need of a reviver or three. Come to think of it, they did look decidedly sledge-hammered and I think Gray was regretting his threat to 'it me for what I'd said in the square Peter about Modern H'Art. (I'm a solid sort of body ... well-padded, like ...).

But they did come back, half-an-hpur or so later. Settled themselves on the settee, and divided their attention between the TV (football: what else on an April Saturday afternoon ??) - and amicable argument with me. Nothing very world-shaking, just general natter.

Mary and Pete arrived at about 5.15. As they passed the window, I shot out of my chair and with a whoop of welcome, rushed to the front door. Cries of joy and screeches of laughter as we embraced - me an' Mary, fools, not me an' Pete! - and the Radiant Reed-Warbler was at last under me tin roof. The three chaps greeted each other a little stiffly, but there was no show of spleen or kukris, so I turned my attention to The Mush.

The next hour is a mad blur in my memory. I was trying to pack my things for the show, put some make-up on, get the tea and feed everybody, talk to everybody, and teach Mary the Tribe X Marching Song. I never got further than the first two lines.

(Those two lines ? "Hurrah for Oxo, what a delightful smell / The stuff that ev'ry self-respecting Tribester has to sell" Now you're none the wiser, ARE you ??).

At 6.30, the RRs producer, Colin Jones of Bromsgrove, arrived in his small van to haul us all down to the theatre. He and his girl-friend Jackie (one of the dancers in the show) occupied the only two seats in the van. We five took over the back of the van, together with my travelling-bag, tape-recorder; Colin's guitar, record-player and amplifier; Jackie's caseful of stage clothes, Colin's ditto, and sundry small props.

We were a bit pushed for space, acksherly ... weren't we, souls ?

Saturday night of a Revellers' show - anything goes. There was one scene in which Don (a born clown) was supposed to fall into a water-hole, off-stage. Tuesday and Thursday nights, obliging bods sprinkled him with water before he re-entered. Saturday night, he copped for the lot - bowls of it, buckets of it ! I dropped an ad-lib line which I'd been saving for weeks, and ruined me Injun Dad's war-cry. "I call braves !" he ranted, "and we make war on these paleface weaklings ! Too long they have trodden us down !" "Pore soles !" I howled. Collapse of Chief.

At the end of the show came the presentations. I disappeared behind a large bouquet from Colin, and another from the stage-manager and his wife. Finally, Colin held up a box. "This is for Beryl," he said. "I was asked to keep it till last." "Is it ticking ?" I inquired nervously. He swore it was, so the box was hastily ~~passed~~ passed back-stage.

The Fearsome Four came round to join us. (They all looked a bit dazed). "What's in the box ?" they demanded. So we investigated.

Loads of cotton-wool. "Goody !" I said, "tonight there'll be enough for everybody to get all the Leichner's off." (I'd gone home in full "war-paint" on the Tuesday night, and scared Bob silly). Under the cotton-wool ... oh, lor' ...

Two tins of herring roes and a tin of crab-meat, all wired up together and wrapped in the shape of a bouquet. And a card: "A Bouquet of Roeses and Things from a Distant Admirer."

It was a dead give-away, but how had it GOT there ? "Mushy !" I hooted. "Did you bring this ?" She was mildly indignant. The other three also disclaimed any knowledge of its arrival. They even insisted that they didn't know who'd sent it. So I told them about a certain post-card I'd received last December, which said: "P.S. Crossed any good Crabbs lately ?"

(If that's cryptic to any of you, my address is: 59 The Fearnings, Crabbs Cross, Redditch ...)

I related a few other withering puns on the Crabbs theme. 'Nuff said.

Mercer, you fredlike fool ...

And then I heard Colin's stifled laughter, and recalled the elaborate Mercatorial plot which had resulted in my innocently passing on Colin's address.

I cleaned my face and changed my clothes, stopping to have hysterics every five minutes, then we all piled into Colin's van again. It was a bigger squash than before, because this time we had all our costumes, props, etc., to say nothing of bouquets - Jackie's as well. And one of the lads from the cast begged a lift. Cries of "Oh, me ribs !" as Colin stamped fiendishly on the brake-pedal to throw us a.o.t.p. Murmurs of "getcha foot outa me mouth, Mush." An' all like that.

We decanted ourselves finally - Gray and Dikk had been sitting (?) on Colin's case, and it warn't 'alf a foony shape ! - and fell into fifty-nine.

Coffee and conversation all round. Well, I suppose it was conversation - everybody talking at once, Mary eating daffodils, Colin alternating between snogging with Jackie, and insisting that he wasn't going homo till next week, 'cos he was in the doghouse after an argument with his Mum. Bob manfully trying to act as if this kind of maddery went on every night of the week.

About midnight, Colin and Jackie and young Finch (the extra passenger) mooched off. The chaps began eyeing the two easy chairs and silently resolving that "somebody's got to kip on the floor, and it's not gonna be me ...". I showed Mary into the small bedroom, our John having graciously consented to her having his bed. General re-shuffle of the usual Henley sleeping arrangements. Surprise for the three chaps. The settee revealed itself to be a bed-settee, and a respectably-sized sleeping bag materialised from Dave's cupboard.

(Dave is my elder production. The visitors hadn't yet met him; he'd been at Rugby all day, train-spotting. He returned after we'd left for the theatre, and was in bed when we got back).

"Pyjamas ?" the three said blankly, when questioned delicately re their baggage. They would all sleep in their clothes. I eyed the clean sheets gracing the bed-settee. "Er -" I said, tentatively, "you will - er - take your shoes off, won't you ?" Magnanimously, they would and did.

So I left them to sort themselves out and bed down. Gray and Dikk took the settee, Pete wriggled into the sleeping-bag on the floor. I went to bed, but not to sleep. So much to think about, and anyway it was a bit early for me - two a.m. is more in my line.

I'd just about drifted into limbo, when a wild yell brought me upright in bed. I was the victim of awful visions. Gray had strangled Pete with his one-and-only tie. Pete had clobbered Dikk with my Tony Newley L.P. Gray and Pete had snuck up on each other, and Dikk had got trampled in the mêlée. Mary had found one of John's poltergeists under the eiderdown. (I'd threatened him what I'd do if he didn't keep his damn poltergeists away from her camels ...). The Phantom Piper was back. Next door's cat had fallen down the chimney. Somebody had been dreaming

about me. ... I waited for clanking chains and ghastly moans, but there was only silence. So I finally went to sleep.

Early Sunday morning, Dave got up and went out of the front door to do his paper round. The slam of the door woke the josts - or, guests, and there were soon sounds of activity. Mary got up, so I got up too, not without more misgivings, - WHO was going to be missing or damaged or what? - and went to count heads. "Stand ~~at~~ still while I number yer." All present and correct. I inquired about the screech. Blank looks all round. Nobody had yelled. Nobody had heard a yell. Foony looks at Beryl. (No, I didn't do it myself. At least, I don't think I did ... if I had, surely they'd have heard my foghorn voice?).

So I wandered into the kitchen, where Pete was being resourceful and making coffee. I got busy and produced sundry assorted breakfasts to specific orders. It sounded as if everybody was livening up. While dashing about and making like a housewife, I heard snatches of the saga of the dreaded Green Henry. Fandom may consider itself hereby warned: Green Henry is Watching You! He goes around stealing people's accords, see, and hence the saying, "They were all of one accord."

I wondered aloud (with one foot ready to run), why does he pinch accords anyway - was it to play 'em on his accordion? (anguished moans).

Pete was muttering curses because John kept beating him at the match-games. "What's up, Pete?" I asked, "met your match at last?" And didn't realise I'd perpetrated a parsley gun (which is what one uses to pepper Green Henry with - or do I mean to henry green pepper with? - I dunno ... anyway ...), until further cries of protest rent the air. (I always thought air was free ...).

Then we decided to inflict a storm of postcards on Archie. (I wonder what the proper collective noun is, with regard to postcards? Well, "storm" will do, in this instance.) We warned him about Green Henry - just in case Archie isn't G.H. in ~~disguise~~ disguise (but he seems to be a worthy candidate ... Bristol had Better Beware ...). "Lock your doors at night, hide your accords from sight, it could happen to you ...". Gray's pc said that G.H. had last been seen disappearing down the Bristol Channel on an ironing board. Dikk's said that ~~W17~~ was dangerous and habit-forming. Mary drew a cryptic "WANTED" notice, and insisted that she was "cackling under the flatbed." Pete moaned that our John was doing awful things to his ego. I made up a putrid rhyme about the "rooses."

Bob's pc said: "HELP!"

Around noon, Dikk and Gray said they'd have to go, which was a pity because I'd laid in enough supplies to feed a small army. However, I couldn't persuade them to stay, since I gathered they were expected at Dikk's home or elsewhere in Brum. But they must have very resilient minds because they said, yes, they would like to come again.

So off they went, and shortly afterwards my father arrived. (My mother was at the time in Dorset, nursing my sister through the after-effects of 'flu). Pop likes young people and gets on well with them; he cottoned on to the Green Henry biz, and gravely agreed that it could be serious. He's an amusing raconteur, and started telling Mary and Pete about some of the daft letters he's written to newspapers in his time. On hearing the tale of how he spoke to the magnolia bush "in my strong

Birmingham accent," whereupon said bush "quivered and sank into the earth in despair,"
- Mary had hysterics.

We all put away a thumping great dinner. I hope this made up in some measure for Pete's disappointment that I'd not had time to make a batch of flapjack. And around 3.15.p.m., Mary, Pete and Pop set off up the hill together to catch buses. I sent off the postcards, and returned to a house strangely quiet.

It had been One of Those Weekends. But it had also been entirely my type of weekend.

I wonder why the people in the adjoining bungalow emigrated to Australia a month later ?

++ BH



WHAT MAD LETTERS ??

Mary Reed said that every time she was introduced to one of her "letter-hacks" at the PeterCon, she was greeted with: "Oh, so you're the one who writes all those mad letters !" Mary can't understand this, and, frankly, neither can I. To prove that her letters are as sane as anyone else's, and might well be featured in the "Sunday Telegraph," the "Financial Times," or the "Scream Weekly," I append a suitably edited copy of one of her early letters to me. (I've only cut out the swear-words and other people's Dreadful Secrets)

Watering the Cress,
Tent 71, etc. etc. etc.

Monday Nite.

Beryl, my beloved pearl of wisdom,

Sob ! sob ! waagh ! Hold me tight ! Tell me you are true !
Alas ! alack ! Fickle men ! Woe ...

For why these "greeefstrooked" screams ? Becos I just found out that Jane flew out to see Paul over the weekend. Oh ! Jane !! The worst four-letter word of my life is Jane. (Another is "work"). What have I done to deserve this ??? TELL ME !!!

What about Charlie Cornflake then ??

This is a missive, which you can reply to if you haven't already written, else you can reply when next you write or whatever you like. Like ...

Ta ! for your articles, you booful child ! That one of Ricardo in his nightie don't look now, but I pinched his pyjamas and used them to strain me elderberry wine ... doesn't George write nice ? All slangy ... "great pawful !" Somebody heard some Scouser talking on Sunday and said it reminded them of moi ... sick innit ? Oh Lord ! Jane ... mutter mutter ... sob ... curses muttered threats ...

Lovely pic of Gritty - does't want it back ? Didja see him on "LS" on Sat. ? Lovely lad George calls Ricardo "a good skin" ...

I wrote a mad piece about the B'les & sent it to Johnny Dean ... so you'll prob. be reading glaring, lurid headlines 1" deep GEORDIE SUED BY BLUSHING BEATLES or I WANNA HOLD YOUR WRIT ... or someat ...

I wuz asked to join C.P.'s square Peter or whatever it is, and I was gonna write and ask you to join ... heh ! ... we'll gerrem, gal !

I giggle every time I see Ringo in his night-shirt (the pic, you clot !) - oh dear, it's a bit compulsifyin', innit ??

Jarge's just gimme his jelly babies box ... ooh, hark at the Stones on Luxy darling Mick ! Must write an tell Hagg., it's my turn to

have him this week

Darleeeng ! I'd love to have your copy of "Fab." - sure you can spare it ? Anything you want to swop for ? BACK ! NO ! you can't have Crumford's ears ! I was furious on Friday - what a miserable soul I sound ! - acos they had closeups of all 3 Searchers on "R.S.G." and not Crummy all you saw was that sexy (?) back of his

Well, when me an' Hagg. come up to your place, we'll bring the tartan tent acksherly, and pitch it on yer cabbage patch and bother Ringo's drums, they can get wet !

Back, you dogs Mars calling control fleet

Gerard ! cum an' get yer tea, luv

Well, I fancy trotting up the Cavern and turning up me toes laid out on me camp-bed ("I Think of You" So-ho, not all of the Mersey rubbish is brash ...) amps plugged in my ears, a drumstick in one mitt, and an Oxo-cube to eat ... mebbe with a Crummy or 2 around ?? Or, I'll get to Brum and collapse on the platform, clutching me Russell, with one thin hand clutching yours and Hagg.'s ... morbid chaild (remind me to tell you about my gravestone ...)

Heard that Searchers' version of "Love Potion No. 9" ? It's on an E.P. called "Ain't Gonna Kiss Ya." Well, my version goes:

"I took my troubles down to Madame Hagg.,
 You know, the judie with the sheckel-bag,
 She's & got a pad up at Ambrosden,
 Flogging little bottles of love potion no. 10.
 I told her I was a flop with whacks,
 I bin that way since way, way back,
 She looked at my phizzog and cackled then:
 "What you want's a bottle of love potion 10." (different toon):
 She bent down, turned around and gimme a wink,
 Said, "I'm gonna make it up here in ye sink ..."
 It smelt like Oxo, looked like Arabian ink,
 I closed me orbs, I held me breath, I took a drink !
 I didn't know if it was day or night,
 I started kissing every whack in sight (??? I didn't really)
 But when I kissed the cop outside number 10
 He busted my little bottle of love potion no. 10 " LAD !

"Twist and Shout" - Teenagers' National Anthem ?? Johnathan sounds as if he's got a mouthful of Oxo or someat ... how many times have I told you not to eat jelly-babies with a toothbrush in your mouth at the same time ???
 (I wanna be a d.j.)

Oh well I must trot and wash me wig curses ...

Love and sploshers,

Mushvita II."

Then there was a P.S., written the following evening, which doubled the length of the letter. All perfectly sane and serious crystal-clear to me, anyway.

As a clincher, or a Sunday punch, or whatever - here is a wistful, heart-wrenching little poem Mary wrote some time ago. (It's a parody of a skit on an amended version of something-or-other, which appeared somewhere, sometime in summater else well, she knows what I mean! Dondia, Mush ??)

HEARTBREAK

Hand me my Beatles L.P. as fast falls the eventide,
They shall hear it in Hudson's, how Muscovita O'Reed died;
Not from too much toothpaste or a camel's hoof turned bad -
But another married member of my favourite group, egad!
Hand me my pic. of Crumford, my strength is going fast,
Surely this glot of orange-blossom isn't going to last?
I cannot bear the thought of it; oh, go prepare my room,
Tell 'em that I thought of them, in Bicester, Redditch, Brum!
And as I sink into my bunk, it is my firm belief:
Green Henry is behind the lot, to drive me mad with grief

+ + + + +

Innit sad, though ??

++ BH

CRI DU COEUR ! I'm trying to get hold of copies of two old discs, one of which was, I believe, of the long-lost 78 r.p.m. variety. This one is Francis Craig's piano version of NEAR YOU. The other one is the theme from A SUMMER PLACE, by Percy Fath and his Orchestra. Can anyone help, please? Any reasonable price paid, or will swop one or more of my sf paper-backs

++ BH

ONE

HUNDRED

AND

ONE

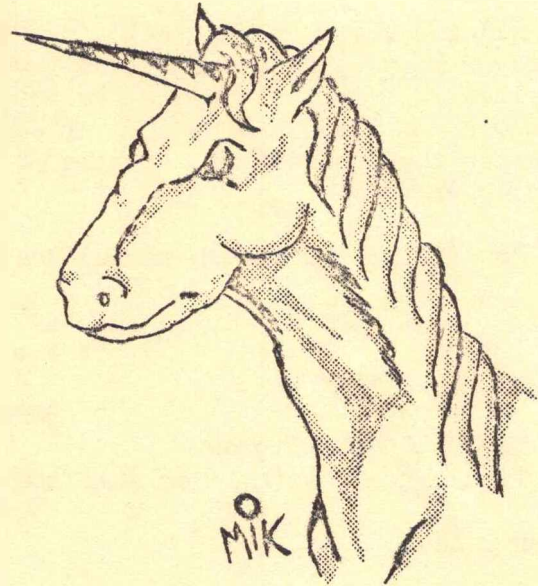
UNICORNS

A One-Act Play

in One Act

and Two Parts

by

RINGO FAKESPEAREA SORT OF PROLOGUE

CAST IN APPROXIMATE ORDER OF INCOHERENCE :

1. A handsome and intelligent PIG, being one of a number kept by a certain family called STONE, of which more anon.
2. MISS (CAROLE) JULIA STONE, daughter of the aforementioned family, resident with her parents at the Unicorn Inn, Great Rollright, in the vicinity of Chipping Norton, Oxon. She is Sweet Sixteen (or was when this epic was originally composed), plays hockey, and spends certain of her nights chasing said pigs out of the neighbours' cabbages patches.
- 3, 4 & 5. Three CAMELS, allegedly Bactrian, and individually labelled CRUMFORD, CURTIS and CASASOLA.
- 6, 7, 8 & 9. THE BEATLES - JOHN, PAUL, GEORGE and RINGO - about whom the less said, the better.
10. MARY REED of Banbury, who has a number of aliases, viz.: The Gt. O'Reed, Mushvita II, Mushy, Mushling, The L.G.G.+etc. (The "Mush-" derivatives are all variations of the name she adopted when, with her fellow-alienne, HAGGIS CAMPBELL of Bicester, she formed the dreaded Tribe X.)
11. A Cuddly Rabbit called FRED, pink with blue stripes (or possibly vice-versa, or with spots or something), who shares JULIA's Bed and efficiently chaperoned her at the PeterCon.
12. One PETER R. WESTON of Birmingham. For information re this character, reference should be made either to THE GT. O'REED or to BERYL HENLEY of Redditch (the latter being also a member of Tribe X, possessed of the tribal name Mushallah, and leader of the Birmingham-area clan).
13. DAVE CLARK, more commonly known to his admirers as CUSTARD, being a Foster-son of somebody-or-other. He is our HEEEEERO !
14. CHRIS PRIEST OF Brentwood, well-known supporter of a Platt-form, who occasionally flees to Scotland to gafiote.

- 15, 16, 17 & 18. The other members of the Dave Clark Five, namely, DENIS, LENNY, RICK and MIKE.
19. BRIAN EPSTEIN, laughingly known as EPPY to The BEATLES, whom he manages - or tries to.

All the above People (well, of COURSE Pigs and Camels are People - whatever next!) find themselves involved in an exciting and moving story, detailed in inimitable style for you, Dear Readers, by the infamous and little-known RINGO FAKESPEARE. (N.B. This is rumoured to be a Pseudonym, covering the identity of a couple of Bright Herberts, who shall be nameless).

Now (if you've enough nerve) Read On

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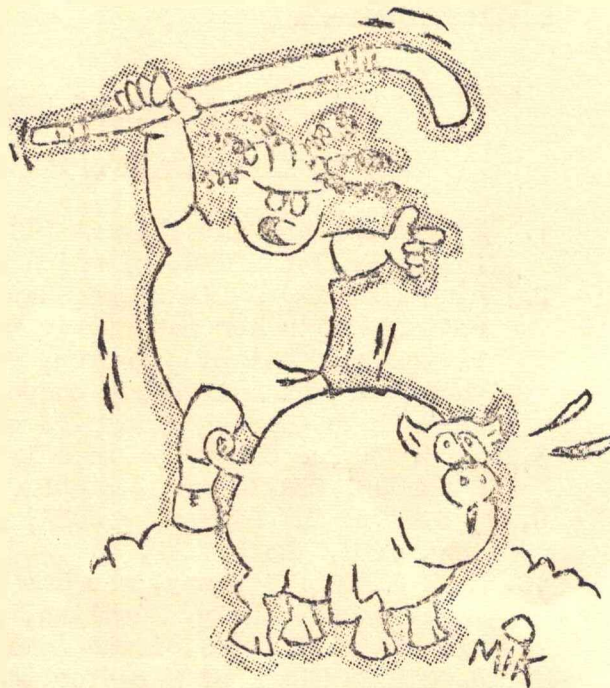
SCENE ONE

The Rollright Stones.

Time: Midnight (neither a.m. nor p.m.)

Enter a FIG.

FIG: The hour is nigh! I have
achieved my goal
to stand within the circle
of these stones
upon the stroke of midnight.
Let me wish:
I wish I could become a
unicorn.



Enter JULIA, brandishing a hockey stick.

JUL: Take that, you swine!
(clouts Pig). And that! And that!
And THAT!

FIG: Bully! (PIG turns into a
UNICORN before JULIA's very eyes).

JUL: 'Tis passing strange. I
could have sworn
this unicorn who stands so
proud before me
was but a low-born pig a
moment since.

FIG: A pig indeed was I. But, pig no longer,
I from this moment am as I appear.
As pig I should have borne a grudge against you,
But as a unicorn I cannot bear
a grudge. Know, therefore: when I run you through,

As I will do before I leave this place,
I do it not from hate, but 'cause I love you.

JUL: Ah, woe is me ! Alas, and lack-a-day,
And similar appropriate remarks.
Now do I wish that I were "Stone" indeed !

(JULIA promptly changes into a stone).

FIG: Foiled again ! Yet p'raps 'twere better thus,
For had I chanced to run the damsel through,
Mayhap ere I withdrew my noble horn
she had been petrified upon the blade -
which is a fate I would not choose to visit
upon the meanest unicorn alive;
for to withdraw my horn from such a stone
would tax the prowess of the mighty Arthur.
Indeed, I tend to think 't could not be done.
But hark ! I hear the sound of camel-bells;
A caravan approaches. Let them come !
No camel born of woman - or of camel -
Has power to fright the noble unicorn.

(Enter Three CAMELS).

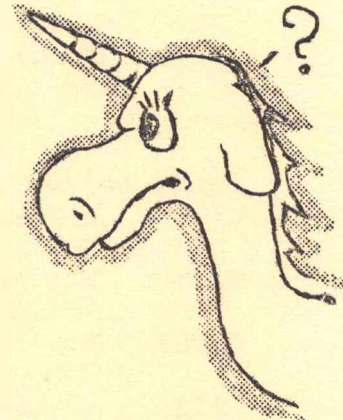
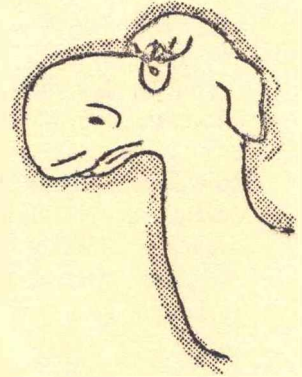
CRUM: Methinks we have outdistanced the pursuit.
CURT: But me, however, thinks 'tis close behind.
CRUM: It matters not. These stones are sanctuary.
CAS: But what is this ?
CURT: Behold - a unicorn.
CRUM: I wish I was another unicorn.
In fact I wish we all were unicorns.

(The Three CAMELS promptly change into unicorns).

FIG: Fair brother unicorns, or
otherwise,
Fair sister unicorns, as it
may be,
Thrice welcome to the state
of unicolor.

CURT: As camel-fleas infest all
camel-kind,
Each species has its own
familiar flea,
Whether 'tis reindeer, man
or unicorns,
And to the latter's fleas I am unused,
As yet. Come, let me scratch against this stone.

(CURTIS CAMEL scratches against petrified JULIA, who promptly falls over).



Q&S: Gadzooks - a Rolling Stone ! Whatever next ?
CIRUM: Then let us search the spot. Born Searchers we,
Beneath such stones as roll. (Searches diligently). What have we
here ?
I think it is - I do declare - THE BEATLES !

(JOHN, GEORGE, PAUL and RINGO spring up from the ground in full regalia,
complete with electric guitars, drums, hordes of screaming fans, etc.).

JOHN: In days of old, when knights were bold, and unicorns ran wild,
GEO: Each horn it grew so straight and true, as smooth as if 'twas filed.
RIN: They were so smooth, folk said in truth they never should exist,
PAUL: Some uniked, to prove he did, then gave his horn -
ALL: The Twist !!!

Oh, he hold his head in a corkscrew turn,
Yeah, yeah, yeah !
And he wobbled his flanks and he wagged his stern,
Yeah, yeah, yeah !
Oh, he pranced his hooves to left and right,
And he held his partner close up tight,
And said, "Baby, this twistin' is dynamite" -
Yeah, yeah, yeah !

JOHN: Since unicorns got twisted horns, they've never been the same.
GEO: They've tapped their feet to the Mersey beat, and rocked their way
to fame.
RIN: They jump through hoops with the top beat groups, they're on
everybody's list.
PAUL: They're with it now, since they first learned how to give their
horns -
ALL: The Twist !!!

Oh, they hold their heads in a corkscrew turn,
Yeah, yeah, yeah !
And they wobble their flanks and they wag their sterns,
Yeah, yeah, yeah !
Oh, they twist and rock and they shake their horns,
And prance around like Roman fauns -
Oh, how we wish we were unicorns,
Yeah, yeah, yeah !

(The BEATLES promptly change into unicorns. This is getting ridiculous).

(Enter the GT. O'REED, very much out of breath, walking on foot - mainly
because it is the only way of walking she knows).

O'R: Puff, puff, pant, pant, puff, puff. Ah - here they are -
But no, it cannot be ! It's too absurd.
Three camels lost, eight unicorns discovered.
Now this is serendipity indeed.
I wonder, now. Can they compare with camels
for crossing ice-floes on the Amazon ?
If you can speak, fair unicorns, pray answer.

PIG: Compare with camels ? Faugh ! you do insult us.
Camels to unicorns compare indeed !
And if to camels, why not pigs, or beetles ?

O'R: Talking of beetles, whence the instruments ?

RIN: Because, fair maid, indeed it can be said:
We are the veriest beetles of our kind.

O'R: I would that you would play, that I may hear.

BTL: In the unicorny universe,
Where the unicorns all dwell,
Ev'ry Unicorn is quite unique,
And knows it very well.
There are tinkers, there are
tailors,
There are sailors on the
steamers,
There are searchers and
pacemakers there,
Even rolling stones and
dreamers,

JOHN: Yeah !
GEO: YEAH !
RIN: Yeah !
PAUL: Yeah !
ALL: YEAH !!!

In the unicorny universe,
When a unicorn is geer,
It can find itself elected as
The Unicorn of the Yeah. (Yeah !)
And all the other unicorns
Will drink to its success,
And that is usually the last
That is heard of it, I guess.

JOHN: Yeah !
GEO: Yeah !
RIN: Yeah !
PAUL: Yeah !
ALL: YEAH !!!

In the unicorny universe,
When a unicorn is born,
All the other unicorns go mad
For the brand-new unicorn;
And all the unicorny bands
Play rock and beat and worse:
Oh, it's really geer to live
in the uni-
Corny universe !

JOHN: Yeah !
GEO: Yeah !
RIN: Yeah !



PAUL: Yeah !

ALL: YEAH !!!

O'R: It sounds like fun to be a unicorn.
I sort of wish I could be one meself. (Nothing Happens !).

PIG: Too late. The stroke of midnight now has flown,
and so no longer may your wish be granted.

O'R: You mean that unicorns can grant one wishes ?

PIG: I much regret it is not so. However,
Wishes may somotimes grant one unicorns.

O'R: This unicorn in riddles doth declaim.
I will retire to cogitate a while.

(Exit THE O'REED. Enter a RABBIT called FRED).

FRED: The night is long, and made withalk for sleep,
Yet must I search the country round about
to find what keeps my Julia from her rest.
It cannot be the pigs, for as I passed,
I heard them snoring on their noisome couch.
Perchance these ancient stones will something know.
Good morrow, ancient stones. How fares't with you ?
My Julia is a-missing from her bed.
If you know owt concerning it, I pray,
Speak of it now.

PIG: What mean you, rabbit ?

FRED: Oh !
A unicorn ! My word, a unicorn !
A second unicorn ! And yet a third,
A fourth, a fifth, sixth, seventh - eight in all.
So many unicorns at one swell foop
nor man nor rabbit hereabout has seen,
I surely think, since Sitting Bull stood up.
Oh, noble unicorns. If stones be mute,
Mayhap you bring me news of her I seek ?

PIG: I do indeed. Though Rollright's stones be mute,
Yet there is one, no muter than the rest,
That holds the secret that so troubles you.

FRED (looking round): What stone might that be ? This, or this, or this ?
Mothinks this stone doth have a pleasing shape.
It doth indeed remind me of my ward. (He inspects it closely).
Her very form - her dainty hand and foot -
My veritable Julia, petrified.
Speak to me, Julia ! Soft - I saw her move.
Then move indeed - but help ! She rolls ! She rolls !

(Exit FRED, pursued by a Rolling Stone).

FIG: Yon maiden rolls; 'tis sure she needs our aid;
 If dawn finds her without the Rollright sphere,
 A mindless stone, forsooth, she must remain. (JULIA hears this).

JUL (thinks): Mindless, indeed! Dear heaven, could I speak,
 I would yon porcine unicorn inform
 that we, the Stones, have thoughts beyond his ken!
 Time was he thought of naught but mud and swill,
 And night-escape into the cabbages,
 to forage for - OH! Yonder looms a tree!

(With a thickening sud, JULIA comes to rest against the bole of a massive oak, which shunts and grudders under the impact. FRED pauses in his breathless flight and turns).

FRED: Ah, if this stone my Julia truly be,
 'Tis aspirin she'll need when she regains
 her human form. But stay! a garsely thought
 now raises up the fur along my spine;
 I know not how this grave predicament
 befell my lass, and, being uninformed,
 cannot conceive how she's to be restored!

(He bursts into tears. Enter the 8 UNICORNS, bent on rendering aid).

CRUM: Come, brothers! let us bend our mighty horns
 unto the task of levering this stone
 back to th'enchanted circle whence it rolled.

(All eight lower their heads; there is a great ringing clash of ivory, and whinnies of anguish).

PAUL: John, Ringo, George - I beg of you, desist!
 Recall, recall that we four truly are
 unto the world of pop and beat and Twist
 a property more valuable than
 insurance firms would dare to underwrite.
 Desist, I say! remember Eppy's words,
 that we, the Beatles, not a risk must take!
 Endanger not our precious limbs and lives!

JOHN: Calm down, MacCartwhack; prithee now, be still,
 We bear not human shape -

GEO: Ah yes, 'tis so!
 As men we are subjected to the slings
 and arrows of outrageous fortune -

RIN: Sheesh!
 (And also, marry and gadzooks, forsooth!)
 Friend George, methinks, unwittingly hath strayed
 into another play; in truth, his words
 do smite mine ears with strange, familiar ring! (O!)

CRUM: ~~EM~~ Pray cease this chatter, for 'tis meaningless
to minds like ours, of great intelligence.

CURT: Yea, thou speakst truly, brother-of-the-hump;
These beetle-mouthings do not move the stone.

JOHN (affronted): Well, I have writ a book, and it is said
that pen is mightier than any sword -

PIG: Who speaks of swords? Art mad, thou mop-haired wretch?
A lever, not a sword, is needed here!

FRED (wringing paws - there is a heavy dew): Eight clacking tongues!
Alas, the night moves on,
And ere you've ceased your chatter, t'will be dawn!

(The BEATLES sing, to the tune of "You're No Good"):

PAUL: He's so right!

JOHN: He's so right!

RIN: He's so right!

GEO: Baby, he's so right!

FRED (getting mad): O heaven is this aught to sing about?

PIG: 'Tis not, small rabbit; camel-freres, to work!
Stand back, you beatles! Useless here are you!

(Muttering, the BEATLES retreat; PIG & CAMELS try again to lever up the stone,
to no avail).

PIG (breathlessly): A further failure - ah now, I despair!

CRUM: Methinks I see just what the trouble is.

PIG (eagerly): Speak on!

CRUM: Why look - 'tis obvious, is it not?
We strain and sweat to roll the stone uphill.

CURT: 'Tis true! Now, were we to attempt
to move this fredlike stone towards the south -

PIG: - but northward, friend, lies Rollright - UP the hill!

CAS: Ah, you speak truth.

CURT: It is no use.

FRED: Alas!

My Julia, doomed to stay forever stone! (Sings through his sobs):
"Who is Julia, what is she, that all the Stones commend her?"

(Blows his nose on one of his ears, and continues, changing his tune):

"Bring back, bring back, O bring back my Julia to me!"

(He breaks down completely).

(FIG & CAMELS gather round him to offer comfort. The BEATLES confer among themselves, and suddenly break into song, to the tune of "All My Loving"):

BILS: Oh, we have a suggestion which may solve the question,
And turn stone to Julia again,
Just forget about Rollright; ~~by~~ travelling all night,
We'll get her to Salisbury Plain!

PAUL: 'Tis a chance, 'tis a gamble, (please list while we ramble,
And tell us if this plan offends):
'Tis midsummer, with moonlight; This lass will be soon right,
If we take her south to Stonehenge!

ALL: South to Stonehenge, rolling through the night!
South to Stonehenge, there we'll put her right.

JOHN: Let us march, and not falter, she'll lie on the altar,
And let's hope the lightning will strike!
That alone will restore her, we're all rooting for her -
(I wonder what Julia is like?).

GEO: Is she fair, is she bonny? (FRED nods)
With lips sweet as honey? (FRED nods again)

FRED: Yes, all Chipping Norton she sends!

GEO: Haste to Wiltshire! (not Surrey) - let's shake it, let's hurry!
I can't wait to get to Stonehenge!

ALL: South to Stonehenge! ere the sky is light,
South to Stonehenge! rolling through the night.

(PIG & CAMELS lever the stone away from the tree; it begins to roll downhill, picking up speed. The 8 UNICORNS & FRED gallop after it, panting out a final chorus of the song):

ALL: South to Stonehenge! (quick, she's out of sight!)
South to Stonehenge! racing through the night.
South to Stonehenge, sou-ou-outh to Stonehenge, (oo-oo!)
South to Stonehenge, racing through the night!

(The voices die away in the distance).

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END OF PART ONE

(What will happen now? Will the stricken maiden reach Stonehenge in time?
Will she there be restored to her former maidenly appearance? Don't miss the
next thrilling instalment in LINK - 2!)

A PSIONIC DEFENCE

Some time ago I wrote an article for NEXUS, in which I mentioned that I enjoy stories with a psi slant, and added that I "loved the 'Kenneth J. Malone' stories in ASTOUNDING." I was also impressed (in a "wishful-thinking" sort of way) by Robert Heinlein's LOST LEGACY (which, I am told, has also appeared under the title LOST LEGION).

Now, here comes DOREEN E. PARKER of Peterborough to ally herself with me on this subject:

"I have been reading science fiction for about seven years and admit (defiantly!) that I enjoy science fiction with a 'psi slant.'

"This, I know, immediately damns me in the eyes of hardened fans, and I can literally see the re-appraisal going on in a person's eyes when I am foolish enough to admit to this.

"But let me try to explain some of the reasons why I like 'psi', and some of the stories which have affected my judgement.

"There is 'The Chrysalids' by John Wyndham. This is one of the first sf stories I read, and still a favourite of mine. After all - a person who reads sf is supposed to be one who has an adjustable mind and who will accept theories which have not yet been proved (or at least, consider them without bias).

"I can see little difference between a theory of FTL drive and a theory of telepathy. In fact, there is more scientific basis for the latter than for the former! Similarly, I can see nothing odd in the postulate that several children are telepathic after an atomic catastrophe.

"I understand (well, sort of!) that brain waves have only a minute electrical charge, but haven't you ever willed someone to look at you when you are trying to attract his/her attention, to find the person doing just that? I often used this method at school, much to the annoyance of Teacher who always demanded one good reason why I should go off into a dream when the other pupils were working!

"Even today, I use the same method when I am too idle to go looking for a particular member of the staff at my office - I sit and will the person to come to me, and it always works! It may be coincidental, but I swear by the method.

"In Mark Phillips' 'Out Like a Light,' Kenneth J. Malone had hunches which turned out to be a form of prescience or precognition. Well - who has never had a hunch? Women are supposed to have a 'sixth sense' which many men seem to find amusing - but more often than not, feminine intuition turns out to be correct. A mild form of psionic power?

(continued on page 23)

Tales from Outer Space....

... by Haggis Campbell.

One of the strange things to be seen floating around in space these days is Blackpool Tower. Famous as it is, the story of how it got there is not so well-known. For those who are studying this thrilling subject for G.C.E. the full details will now be given for the first time.

Way back in 1964, a crowd of - for want of a better word - people, decided to spend the first two days of August in Blackpool. This shower consisted of two judies: Mushling and Haggis, who exercised some sort of influence over the rest of the mob, and seven assorted males: Franklyn, the blond Aussie; Crumford the tea-addict; little Gerard; Jongear, a bully at times; Paulwhack, his sidekick; Michael and Keith. Rather an uncouth lot, and fairly well-known around the Midlands.

They arrived in Blackpool on August 1st by the usual transport - camels! These they hired out on the beach at 6d, a gallop. They spent the first day setting up camp, which was on Central Pier, and spying out the place.

Michael, a lazy type, insisted on going up the Prom in the very latest of craft - a tram! After terrorising Woolworth's, the whole mob gathered outside a hamburger stall. At a sharp command from Hagg, Gerard switched off his transistor. Fags stubbed out, and flick-knives stowed away, they stood silent, deadly serious.

"You, Keith," said Mushling, "will go with Michael in through the front door. Make like you want to hear the organ-playing in the Tower Ballroom or something! Jongear, take Paulwhack in by the side door and soft-soap the security guard. You've got the jelly babies and the winkles? Good!

"Franklyn, you and Crumford take these boomerangs and make sure no-one is left inside by noon." Crumford gasped at such drastic measures - boomerangs! His hand began to shake. He took a swig of cold tea from his hip-flask. Much better - he felt ready for anything.

"Gerard, you come with Hagg and me. We're going to the top!" The boys looked with awe at their leaders. Such bravery - to the top of the Tower in broad daylight, and without paying, too!

Off they went, each following his own instructions faithfully. The task to be undertaken by Mush, Gerard and Hagg was by far the most important. They got as far as the lift and stopped. Quick-thinking Haggis thumped Gerard round the ear, and the poor little lad began to wail and froth at the mouth. "Oh, woe!" cried Hagg, "my baby's having a fit - help!" Stifling an evil larf, she watched the liftman out of the corner of her glass eye. Eager to show off his first-aid, he hurried over.

Immediately, Mushling jabbed him with her knitting-needle, the point of which had been dipped in concentrated Oxo. "Lha! that will keep him quiet for a coupla weeks!" she cried triumphantly, bundling the unfortunate whack into a nearby laundry basket.

Into the lift they went. "10 seconds to count-down!" announced Hagg, and began to count. "... 3 ... 2 .. 1 .. zero!" She looked despairingly at Gerard. "WELL! - push the ~~xy~~ gunklike button, you fool, or we'll never get there!" Sheepishly, Gerard obeyed, and the lift soared skywards. Once at the top, the action began in earnest. Gerard was sick over the side, Hagg inspected the tip of the Tower, while Mushling took photographs with a miniature camera she'd had concealed in her sun-glasses.

"Well, Hagg - I think it will do splendidly," said Mushling, beaming.

"Yeah - it's quite roomy really, innit?" answered Hagg. "We'd better get back to camp and see how the others have fared - after all, tomorrow is the great day!" Gravely the two loaders looked at each other, then turned towards the lift for the return journey.

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The smell of roast budgie and fried rhubarb met them as they reached camp. Seated around the camp-fire half an hour later, they planned the final details.

"Wot did you find out, Jon?" asked Haggis.

"Well - the place is clear at 6.a.m."

"Why?"

"No-one starts work until 8," Jon replied, giving Hagg a surprised look.

"And we managed to get rid of everyone, including the doorman!" Franklyn reported, "we herded them all out the back way, down the street to the Indoor Swimming Baths."

"Yeah! We locked them in there for the nite!" added Crum.

"And we've fixed the liftman!" chortled Mushling.

They raised their goblets in a toast to each other, Haggis glancing scornfully at two figures lying in a drunken stupor on a sack of dried bovril. Hagg had never felt so ashamed. To return from one of the century's most important forays, drunk! And to think how she had trusted Michael. It was all the fault of that good-for-nothing Keith, she thought. Mushling's fave rave of the moment. She shuddered, and tried to put the whole sordid affair out of her mind.

Their puny intellects taxed almost beyond endurance, the nine were soon sound asleep

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The sound of a winkle coughing down near the water's edge woke them. It was just after dawn. Silently they ate their porridge and prepared for the off.

Out of the Pier entrance they went, leading the camels. Across the road, dodging the early trams, and up the steps to the door which led into the base of the Tower itself. Crumford fumbled excitedly for the duplicate key - but couldn't find it!

"DOLT!" cried Hagg, almost hysterical, "you'll ruin everything!"

Mushling reached into her boot, and, a minute later - "There y'are!" she said, "easy as pie!" She put the bazooka away and they stepped gingerly through the smoking hole in the wall!!

It was deathly quiet as they walked through the Aquarium. Gerard saw a Water-Kipper making faces at him through the glass; he shivered and gripped Hagg's hand. It was very eerie, and Mushling had to keep reminding herself that wot they were doing was for the good of Oxfordshire.

At last they reached the lift entrance and piled in. Hagg slammed the doors shut and bolted them.

"OK ! on with your suits !" Mushling commanded. Suitably clad in Oxo-wrapper suits and goldfish bowls, they took their seats. Michael began to cry.

"Hagg, I'm scared !" he wailed. "I wanna go home !" Haggis explained to the frightened whack that in just half an hour that's exactly where they would be - home ! Reassured, he took the controls, and waited for the count-down.

"Where's Paulwhack ?" demanded Mush.

"Re-fuelling," answered Haggis. "This old crate hasn't had a DROP of gravy since they brought it here from Paris !"

Paul returned, and Hagg began the countdown.

"... two ... one ... ZERO !" The whole Tower shook and trembled with the force thrusting it upwards. Up, up it climbed, zooming into the sky - just like Mushling when the electric git-box short-circuited !

Mushling looked down, tears in her eyes.

"We've made it !" she proclaimed, whereupon an almighty cheer broke out. Soon, Blackpool Tower, Shrine of Northern England, would be standing proudly in Hagg's back garden in Oxon ! At last, some sort of Culture would actually be on view for the peasants of the area !

Mushling glanced at the control panel. Wot she saw there made her false teeth click uncontrollably.

"Hagg !" she cried wildly, "We've ... we've gone off course !" Fudly she pulled at her wig.

Eight people rushed like mad yaks to peer out. Crumford couldn't understand it. They should have been hovering over gungy Oxfordshire by now. This was to have been their moment of triumph ! The Gt. Blackpool Tower taken from the North to live forever in the Midlands. Wot was this then that he saw through the porthole ? Pitch black, millions of stars ... surely not !

He looked again. By Harry, it was ! - a dirty great lump of cheese stuck there in the sky !

"Holy Crumpets ! We're in Space !" cried Mushling. Keith cheered, but stopped abruptly when he saw the look on Mushling's face. A hurried conference was called, which was interrupted repeatedly by an excited Gerard, yelling out at every new thing he saw. Anyone would have thought he'd never seen a Red Devil on a bromstick before - tut !!!

A decision was reached. They would have to parachute - they would DEFY the

laws of gravity ! (Who was this Gravity wallah, anyway ??). They lined up by the door, fastening the straps of their strong ex-W.D. parachutes.

"Our mission ... sniff ... has been a ... sob ... a failure !" mourned Mushling. "The only proof ... sniff ... of your gallantry and courage will be ... this Tower, for it will sail the seas of space forever."

They waited silently, a gallant band of scruffs, poised on the edge of the lift-x shaft. At a signal from Haggis, they jumped in quick succession. Hagg was the last to leave (all cheer !), and as she zig-zagged through the stars, she could hear Keith's stupid giggles, and Michael swearing with the frustration of it all !

They landed in (how convenient for them !) the Horsefair in Banbury, just in time to see the morning papers. Naturally, the Tower had been reported missing, but no-one ever caught on as to where it was exactly, or how it got there. (+ (This was because a cardboard replica of the Tower mysteriously appeared on the original site, within a few days. We are now at liberty to reveal that it was placed there by the generosity of the Goons, who had heard on the Goonery Grapevine of the Daring Exploits of the Nine, and wished to make formal recognition of the Deed. The cardboard replica stands in Blackpool to this day, and the nature of its structure accounts for a sudden enormous increase in NO SLOKING notices in and around the Tower. BH)+)

The little gang went back to their normal disgusting pursuits, deciding to leave flying strictly to the elephants !

It was not until 2000 years later, dear Students, that a descendant of one of the motley crowd, Jeremy von Gerard-Chip, spilt the beans - and he has been missing ever since !

That then is the immortal tale of Blackpool Tower the first flying Tower in the History of Time !!!

+ + + + +

(+} The names of the characters in the above are the real names of Certain Well-known Persons who pursue their mundane lives under aliases. To assist you in your studies, these aliases are here appended:-

Mushling	...	Mary Reed.	Haggis	...	Anne Campbell.
Franklyn	...	Frank Ifield.	Crumford	...	Chris Curtis (of the "Searchers").
Gerard	...	Gerry (sans his "Pacemakers" !)	Jongear	...	John Lennon (of the You-Know-Whats !).
Michael	...	Mick Jagger (of the "Rolling Stones").	Paulwhack	...	Paul Macartney (ditto).
Keith	...	Keith Richards (ditto.)			

So now you know ! ++ BH)+)

+ + + + +

THE LAND WHERE THE WINDS DON'T BLOW

Tempests toss my weary body,
 Bitter scars all I have to show;
 Journeying homeward on a stony road
 To the Land where the winds don't blow.

Tear-filled eyes - ah, look beyond you,
 Past the shadows your senses show;
 Soon your burdens drop and enter
 The Land where the winds don't blow.

Though I graduate before you,
 You, who toil and struggle so,
 Soon will meet me, gladly singing -
 In the Land where the winds don't blow.

++ Chris Allerton.

A PSIONIC DEFENCE (cont'd from page 23)

"Teleportation and telekinesis are more difficult to rationalise, but in the past there have been several cases reported. I remember reading an article in ASTOUNDING a few years ago, concerning a mid-European girl" (+(Palladino ? BH)+) "who was supposed to be able to teleport; no rational explanation was ever discovered, although she was investigated by the scientists of her day.

"I also remember reading (within the past two years) a letter in a daily paper which stated that two members of H.M. Forces in Germany spent the better part of a day concentrating upon raising a grain of sugar from the table. They finally succeeded. (I can hear the horse-laugh now - but I prefer to keep an open mind !).

"Another reason why I like 'psi' stories is because they are so readable, e.g.: SIAM; MUTANT; MORE THAN HUMAN; TIGER ! TIGER ! - just to quote a few off-hand. As my circle of friends consist mainly of women, I can hand such stories to them with a 50/50 chance that they will also enjoy them. Which is more than I can say for the greater part of technical sf ! That's another point - from personal experience I find that a woman will enjoy a good 'psi' story, irrespective of the fact that it may not be scientifically possible, because she doesn't know (or care, probably) whether it is scientific or not. Whereas a man will try to dissect the story to fit the facts, whether or not he enjoys it !"

Thanks, Doreen. Comments invizid - printable ones, mind ! ++ BH

KGAN ANSWERED

What is the sound of one hand clapping ?

It is the sound of sunlight stroking petals;
It is the sound of a lark's wing beating the morning air;
It is the sound of a serene thought glowing in a wise mind.

It is the muted whistle of sap rising in a spring-time tree;
the bell-note of smoke rising straight, like a vein in marble,
through the opalescent evening air.

It is the sound of snow falling,
and of water freezing;
of worms moving deep in the earth,
and of roots stretching blindly therein.

It is the music of moonlight silvering the night sea;
the chorus of stars moving majestically in the great celestial dance;
the mighty hum of Earth spinning patiently on her mythical axis.

It is the whisper of a minute fish darting among coral;
the murmur of an alighted bee coaxing nectar from a reluctant rose;
the crystalline tinkle of a rainbow's formation.

It is the sound that sings through dreams;
the sound not heard by ears, but only by minds
attuned to receive its stealthy intoxication.

It is the sound of nothing, and yet of all things;
It is the sound of life, being lived.

++ Beryl Henley.

