

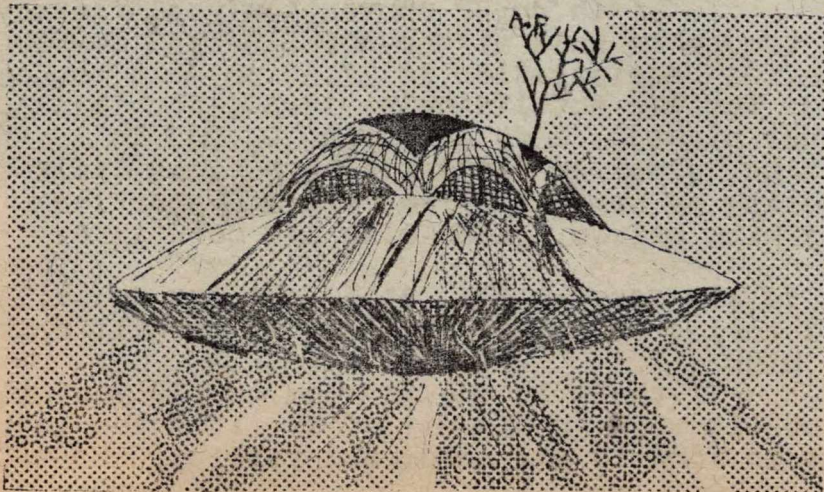
MAYBE

WORLDS OF
FAN FICTION

#9

DEC '70 - JAN '71

754??



issue #9, Dec70/Jan71, MAYBE, Worlds of Fanfiction 2
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Cartoons signed in elvish are by Jeff Schalles.

Some of the art in this issue was courtesy of Perri Corrick's CORR.
The majority of the stencils were cut by Hank Davis this time and Rick
Cross collated. Interruptions by an editor ((are in double parentises
like this))and if they do not have initials ~~in~~ them are by IMK.

- 3...andy offut, writing from the Funny Farm
- 4... " " , THE FACES BEHIND THE BIG NAMES, an article
- 5...Jim Corrick III, BIBLIOBIOGRAPHIES, of T.B.Swann & andy offut
- 6...Robert Weinberg, a math letter
- 7... " " , THE DEAD LAND, a Morgan Smith story
- 12...Janet Fox, IF YOU ENCYST, a Hank & the Rat story
- 16...Clinton Holder Jr, THE KEY TO EVERYTHING, a hard SF story
- 19...GREAT MOMENTS IN SF#1 according to Hank Davis
- 20...Hank Davis, FILTRATION, a column
- 23...Janet Fox ((this page, 2, is being typed before 23-28 are in,
...Rick Cross so I don't know what will be on them))
- 29...Thomas Wiloch, RAMANDA, a fairy story for young people((heh, hEH))

Unless you do something(or one of the editors like you), your
last issue is: __. A "T" instead means we trade. A "D", "C", or "F"
after the number means you are getting it at the behest of Davis, Cross,
or Fox respectively. Unless you specifically want your material in one
of the 3 smaller sections(which will run 4-5pp for each coeditor next
time)send contribs &/or letters to Irvin Koch(who doesn't print LoC's
unless they are special). Koch also gets the cash at following rates:
1cy,3d class=75¢; a sub of 6,3d class=\$2.50 or 1st class sub=\$3.00. Of
course getting something printed means you get that issue free. If you
are already"T" keep sending to Koch. Since there are now 4 people
involved, future trades with the other 3 editors may get you a"D","C",
or "F" copy.

This thing is APROXIMATELY BIMONTHLY. After issue 13 no
garuntees are made on anything(Koch graduates & may have to mothball
the mimeo), but a 14pp quarterly zine entirely staff written is possible.

The GNOMOCLAVE
is an SF convention(yeh, fantasy
and comic types are invited too)to be held at the HOTEL ANDREW JOHNSON
on 11-13 Jun 71 in Knoxville, TN. Registration is \$2.50 payable to Koch.
He also has reservation cards for the hotel(single:\$10.50, double:\$15.50,
triple:\$18.50, quad:\$21.50 per night). Andy offut is MC, GoH is
A. Surprise, program is parties, panel on fantastic inventions, talk
by pros, trivia contest, meeting of organized fen, and more parties
incl. a HOBBIT costume party with prizes. Koch also has more info.

The
other cochairman of the con is Jim Corrick III, 2116 Lake Av, Knoxville,
TN37916 and anything by mail having to do with the con which will arive
here Jun8 or latter goes to him.

If there is enough room on p30 you will
see a letter from Jim, if not--it will go the way of an Art Hayes letter
I promised to print but kept so long it got dated and file13d.

Andrew J. Offutt, Funny Farm, Haldoman, Ky. 40329

I want to send you something for MAYEE, mainly because you're in the South and I live in the state that provided the chief executives to both sides in that wish-it-were-forgotten war.

Here's something you should be personally interested in: One thing someone should do is tell people how to pronounce names.

For instance I said Fritz LEE'ber for years, then learned 9/69 that it's LYE-ber. And there's Heinlein... I've always said HINE-LINE, but apparently it's HINE-lun. I asked Poul how he pronounced his name, and he carefully, slowly, with one finger tutorially upraised, intoned "AND-er-sonnnn." And Jack Gaughan calls it Gahn, which is GAWN in Kentucky. Oh, and Alan Nourse's last name is pronounced Nurse. Dr. Nurse, for Pete's sake! Cliff Simak's name is pronounced to rhyme with syntax; the i is not long.

Silly, but I can't think of any others right now, and I don't know 'em all. ((Some people might be wondering how offutt is pronounced, heh, heh. And it suddenly occurs to me that I chatted with you at Midwestcon without you giving an official pronunciation. Was Bob Tucker's sounding of AW-FUT correct? -HD)) For all I know, I pronounce John Brunner's name wrongly. (How can you mispronounce a name? Easy. Regardless of spelling, the way the owner pronounces it is right.) Oh, and Galaxy's editor is AY-lur; honest; Mrs. Jake told me (he's hard to understand, through the pipe).

As a public service: The last name of the 1970 Rebel Award winner isn't pronounced Cock, and it isn't Cook either. HE rhymes the o with the ones in Coca-Cola, and the last two letters with the first two letters in children: Ko--ch! (Got that Meredith?) His first name is harder....

The foregoing is for those fans who never see other fans (like, they live someplace like Morehead), and/or don't go to cons, and/or don't LISTEN and just keep on being wrong.

Now. What about them all; those who've never SEEN those who write the stuff that fandom (used to be) all about? Well, I've been astonished several times by the personal appearance of my idols (de Camp, who is a magnificent figger of a man) and my enemies (Coulson insists we're feuding, but honest, I hardly even know the guy) and others (Ted White, for instance. I was shocked, and so gauche as to show it). Anyhow, I sat around making notes at St. Louiscon last September, and a lot of people seem to have found the notes instructive and amusing.

(Frinstances: I've never met my agent; in the past 12 months he's handled 23 of my books and has so far sold 15. I've talked telephonically with my editors at both Dell and Paperback Library, but never met them. My loss: they're both female, with LOVELY voices. I owe a great deal to both Fred Pohl and Damon Knight--Fred never bought a story from me without some sort of rewrite, and that helped me immensely--but I've never met either.

Anyhow, the enclosed is newly done, but comes from notes taken on backs of cigaret packages, napkins, girls' blouses, etc etc in St. Louis in September, 1969. Much of it has been published in Peter Weston's Speculation, from England. But Spec hasn't all that much distribution over here. I include Shorter because he's TAEF man and many are unsure why and have never seen him. I include Klein because he's practically a legend. I do not include me; try it.

As to Joe Green and Richard Meredith...well, who the hell cares what those guys look like, anyhow? (OK. Green looks like a high school science teacher who bootlegs or something, because he's obviously got more bread than a h.s. sci teacher. Meredith looks like ... uh ... let's see ... black hair and beard ... ah. He looks like a Commahnder out of one of de Mille's biblical epics. A Philistine, maybe.)(Do I get a quarter for saying maybe in MAYEE?)

Assuming you run this and/or would like to hear from my sometime collaborator,

y'oughta send a copy to Robert E. Margroff, Elgin, Iowa 52141.

((Letseeherenow,
andrew j. offutt looks to me mighty like the Captain of a British ocean liner, if there are such things anymore, and must have indeed been conspicuously gallant in the performance of his duty on some occasion or other, else why did Tucker make him Sir andrew j. offutt? I know a couple of sf writers who think that the behavior of the Dell editrix does not match her voice --HD))

-oOo-

THE FACES BEHIND THE BIG NAMES by andrew j. offutt

GORDON DICKSON: a redheaded Fred MacMurray after a bad night.

JOE HENSLEY: looks exactly like Harlan Ellison except his hair's prettier.

HARLAN ELLISON: moves entirely too fast to be seen. I do remember, though, that he is 9 feet tall.

TERRY CARR: a tall and straight fellow who looks as if he MUST be the power behind the throne of a W. European Kingdom.

ROBERT E. MARGOFF: the quiet and bespectacled King of that same realm.

JAMES GUNN: a tall and very slender fellow who i think looks like Michael Rennie; Jodie thinks he resembles Rex Harrison. This is because she is nutty about Rex Harrison while i have always wished i looked like Rennie. Weighs 37 pounds at about 6'1".

JACK GAUGHAN: Roy Rogers plus 25 pounds and a brain.

ROBERT BLOCH: W.C. Fields less 100 pounds, 10 of which came off the nose.

HARRY HARRISON: Mephistopheles disguised as Jack Leonard on a diet.

ELLIOT SHORTER: Rod Steiger disguised as Rosie Grier disguised as a kodiak bear. Harlan Ellison once voyaged down the Mississippi in Shorter's left shoe. Lying down.

POUL ANDERSON: a 22-year-old college student disguised as a great and prolific writer named Poul Anderson who, considering his volume of output, MUST be 89 years old.

ANNE McCAFFREY: The Good (Celtic)Witch of the East (Coast). If Yul Brynner could grow such a magnificent mane he'd play God rather than Pharaoh.

LESTER del REY: Looks exactly as Lester del Rey should look, and wears a beard that's the prettiest, in both design and color, among us all.

SPRAGUE de CAMP: a tall and erect and dignified chap with a diminutive crewcut beard. I am sure Sprague de Camp was NOT at the Con; the gentleman posing as that wildly-humored writer MUST have been the British ambassador to Krishna.

BEN BOVA: your friendly neighborhood druggist, or a P&G salesman.

ROBERT SILVERBERG: Satan, definitely, with the eyes of a yiddish-speaking angel.*

PERRY CHAPDELAIN: He's big and he has a big beard. I can't think of anything fancy, but that marvelous twinkle in his eyes is worth seeing. Travels in cohort with another writer pretending to be a priest.

JOHN JAKES: this kind and gentle (looking) man looks as though he writes for Ohio Flower-Growers Gazette, rather than Brak the Barbarian (who is really a beautiful Nordic gentleman named Bounds). I have told my sons, though, that John Jakes is 8 feet tall, carries an enormous bloody ax, and eats entire steer-haunches at a single sitting. (These sold in St. Louis for \$187.95 in the Hunt Room, \$197.85 with coffee and a fork.)

DANIEL F. GALOUYE: I swear to heaven, he looks like a newspaper editor.

ALAN E. NOURSE: Peter Ustinov; beard, eyebrows and all. Oh-- less about 49 pounds. He sure doesn't look like an Intern!

ALEXEI PANSHIN: I knew I had seen his picture many times, but could not remember

*A California Cantor advised that ALL angels speak Yiddish. Yahweh is not ABOUT to admit into his peaceful haven any of the descendants of the bad types recruited by Paul of Tarsus, who went in for quantity rather than quality.

where until I saw that leper kissing his robe. I swear....

MRS. ALEXEI PANSIN: entirely too much a doll to be married to a man who goes around letting lepers slobber over his robe.

MRS. POUL ANDERSON: the handsome Deaconess of an esoteric California religion, or perhaps Scribe SF of the Rosicrucians. She also came within an ace of hitting a lower note than I in Ole Man River. (Ribbah, dammit, Ribbah!)

DON WOLLHEIM: the man who owns the man who owns the New York Mets.

T.L. SHERRED: without doubt the nicest, and the second most beautiful man in SFWA. He resembles no one, although he could play the part of a country doctor a damnsight better than any country doctor. On an alien island, maybe.

CLIFFORD SIMAK: the most beautiful man in SFWA. He does NOT look like a newspaperman, could NOT have written both Goblin Reservation and Werewolf Principle, and is really the proprietor of a very small but gentle bookstore in Nantucket. Or a bourbon-taster for Stitzel-Weller.

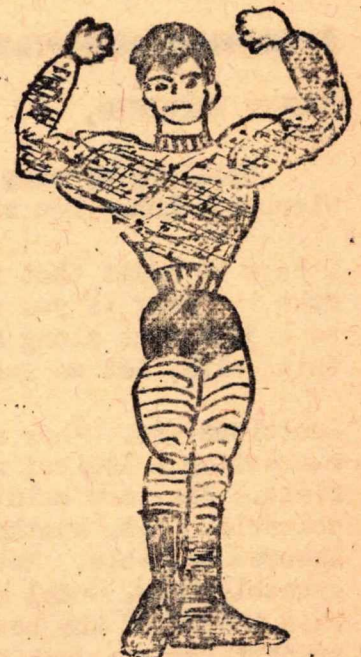
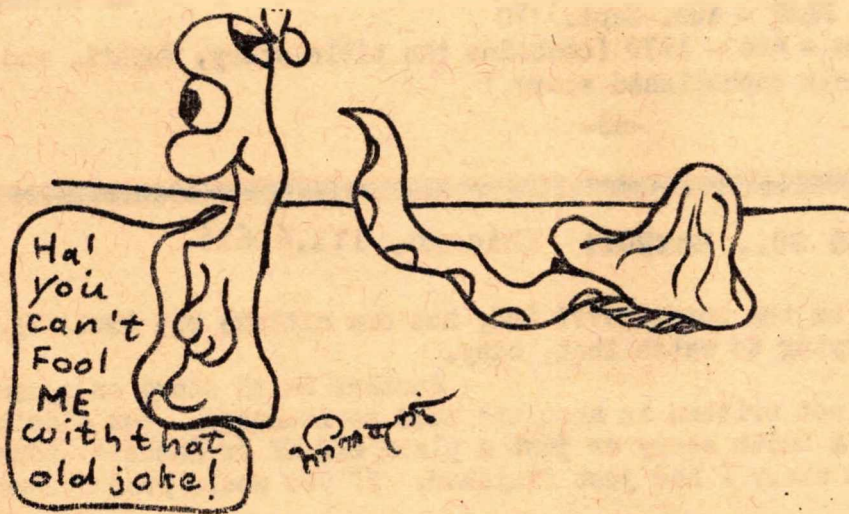
EDMOND HAMILTON: we don't have any yet, but when we do this is what a retired spaceman will look like. He has NOT retired. Perhaps spacemen won't either.

PHILIP JOSE FARMER: doesn't really look old enough to have grandchildren, doesn't look wicked enough to write those delightfully wicked stories. But he takes them fishing and to Disneyland. The children.

JAY KAY KLEIN: he and his ubiquitous camera move entirely too fast to be seen. One suspects the presence of a very warm, rather shy gentleman. Perhaps the only one in his part of the country.

GLEN BROCK: a harried hotel manager (with a drunken tailor) on the verge of suicide. Don't do it, Glen; it all worked out!

-oOo-



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andrew j. offut

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2. Blacksword - GALAXY - Oct. '59
3. Mandroid - IF - June '66 (with P. Anthony and R. Margroff)
4. The Forgotten Gods of Earth - IF - Dec. '66
5. Population Implosion - IF - July '67
6. Swordsman of the Stars - IF - Dec. '67 (with R. Margroff)

7. The Defendant Earth - IF - Feb. '69
8. Ask a Silly Question - GALAXY - July '70

((Addendum: Under the pseudonym of John

Cleve, Mr. offutt has written several "adult entertainment" books, at least one of which is also scientificfictional. So:

9. BARBARANA (as "John Cleve") - Brandon House, N. Hollywood - 1970 --HD))

T.B. Swann

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2. Viewpoint - NEBULA - May '59
3. The Dryad Tree - SCIENCE FANTASY (SF) - Aug. '60
4. The Painter - SF - Dec. '60
5. Where Is the Bird of Fire? - SF - Apr. '62
6. The Sudden Wings - SF - Oct. '62
7. The Dolphin and the Deep - SF - Aug. '63
8. The Murex - SF - Feb. '64
9. The Blue Monkeys - SF - Feb. '64
10. Vashti - SF - May '65
11. The Weirwoods - SF - Oct.-Nov. '65
12. Day of the Minotaur (The Blue Monkeys) - Ace - 1966
13. Manor of Roses - F&SF - Nov. '66 ((Reprinted in ONCE AND FUTURE TALES - Harris-Wolfe & Co. -- 1968 --HD))
14. The Weirwoods - Ace - 1967
15. The Dolphin and the Deep - Ace - 1968 (contains title story, The Murex, and Manor of Roses.)
16. Moondust - Ace - 1968
17. The Goat Without Horns - F&SF - Aug.-Sept. '70
18. Where Is the Bird of Fire - Ace - 1970 (contains the title story, Vashti, and The Bear, a previously unpublished story.)

-oo-

ROBERT WEINBERG, 71 E. 32d St., Box 901; Chicago, Ill. 60616

Spelling my name wrong on the cover?????? And, not one mistake but two!!!!!!
Wienburg, huh. How about trying to watch that, okay.

Another Smith story enclosed. I have to admit that it was not written in absolute dead seriousness. You didn't make it clear if you wanted a Smith story or just a plain old SF or fantasy story, so I just sent along a Smith story I had just finished. If you would prefer something else, let me know.

Be thankful that you do not have an inkling what recursive functions are. They are not functions of functions. They are functions used in expressing a logical method in terms of primitive operations defined in a certain field. They are mainly used in discovering whether or not certain problems are solvable. I.E. whether or not there is an answer to the question is Fermat's last theorem solvable. Not what the solution is, but whether it even exists. As you probably know, Godel showed that not all statements in mathematics are provable. This is one of the basic ideas behind Recursive Function Theory. It is not an easy subject, and is just beginning to become known with the growth of computer science. I was lucky to get it on the Masters level. It usually is taken on the Ph.D. or Advanced Studies level. A story on it would be fun, as I mentioned, but completely gibberish to any non-mathematician (and probably to many mathematicians).

The Smith stories all in one book? I would rather try a novel, or perhaps three short novels

a Dead Land. The very presence of life, any life, seemed to be a contradiction to the stillness of the day. This place seemed to whisper out, "I am Death, I am Ending. No life exists here. No life shall."

The adventurer trudged on. The Arabs had assured him that the strange section was only a few miles across. In the center of it was the ancient castle where Smith hoped to find the book that was the object of his search. A book unlike any other in the world. A book that might

be a unique item, the only one of its kind in existence. Filled with dark and terrible secrets, of horrors of the past, and the present. The Book of Abominations.

A chill wind swept across the dunes. And, yet, not one bit of dust stirred. The desert remained unmoving. The wind slashed across Smith's face with evil force, but there was not a sound. Involuntarily, Smith hunched his shoulders together, and trudged forward. Darkness was settling across the sand. Morgan cursed to himself. He had been walking for hours, and he still had not caught sight of the lost castle. Morgan would have to spend a night on the Dead Land.

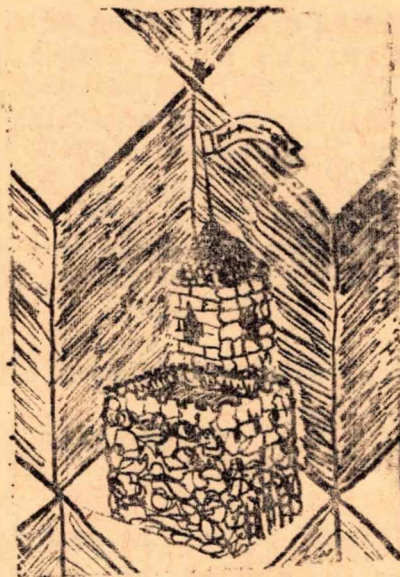
The ground had cooled off considerably. In the shelter of a small hill, the man stretched out for the night. There was no need for a fire in this section of the desert. There were no animals to frighten off. And, there was nothing available to build a fire with, anyway. Smith was tired from his trudging, and went to sleep almost immediately.

He awoke with a start. Something was pulling at his flesh! A monstrous hand seemed to be ripping at his skin. Some night fiend was clawing at his feet! In the darkness, this unknown monster attacked him with terrible force. With a roar of pain, he sprang erect.

There was no sound other than his cries of anger in the night. With a start of sheer horror, he saw that no living thing was about. No living thing, but his attacker was not living! Beneath his feet, the earth itself writhed and clawed in an awful mockery of life. Like a sea of flesh, it rippled in the night. A thousand miniature claws reached up and pulled at his boots. The entire Dead Land was in movement. It hungered for life!

Morgan grabbed his pack and ran. A wall rose up from the land. Each time his massive feet came down, the earth actually drew back in pain. Behind him, the ground rolled like a mad sea, as ripples of sand and earth followed his mad dash across the desert. The dunes bent and stretched as he ran past. Escape was impossible. The man found it nearly impossible to keep his balance as the earth rolled under his feet. He knew that he could never make it back to the edge of the Dead Land. He could only move forward. And, if he fell to the ground, he would never rise. Ten thousand questing claws would rip his body to shreds. At night, the Dead Land lived.

Out of the darkness rose a huge structure, hidden by low hills from any questing traveller. A massive structure of stone; alone and unmoving in the center of the heaving land. The lost castle in the midst of the Dead Land. With a gasp, Morgan



A. Jain

Smith stumbled across the open gateway and into the stone floored courtyard of the castle. He might have left one hell to enter another.

This castle was old. That much was immediately apparent as Smith walked through long deserted corridors. There was no sign as to who were the original builders of the structure. The ancient Romans? Or perhaps the brave men of Carthage? Or some lost African race that had long been forgotten? Smith shrugged. Whoever the original builders, they had worked well. The castle was in near perfect condition.

From above, there came a weird howling, as of some giant wolf baying at the moon. Morgan grinned without humor. He knew his luck could not last. Somewhere in this place must be the Book of Abominations. And guarding it had to be, logically, an Abomination.

The man drew his pistol. It might be of some help. Whatever, he had come far to find that book, and he was not going to leave without it. Even if he had to fight a thing from the Pit.

Smith knew little about the Book of Abominations. It was the most legendary of all black works ever written. Stories had it that it was the original of the second book written by the German, von Juntz. After publishing the frightening Unaussprechlichen Kulten, the German had begun work on a second book, containing secrets that he had feared to put in his first work. For the last few weeks of his life, von Juntz had worked behind locked doors, finishing the manuscript. But, one night, horrible screams came from his room, and when the door was opened, von Juntz was found ripped to shreds, the marks of huge talons on his throat. The book on which he had been working was found torn to pieces. A friend had pieced together the manuscript, but, after reading it, burned it to ashes, and then committed suicide! However, rumor had it that von Juntz had put much of what was to be contained in that unnamed second book in an earlier volume of notes: The Book of Abominations.

The Book, if it did exist, would be the rarest of the rare, for it would be an only copy. And Smith, a student of the darkest lore, wanted that copy. He had met von Juntz many years ago, and had been impressed by the German's fervor. Smith, nearly immortal, never rushed unless he had to. The German was always in a rush. He belonged to many, many cults and strange brotherhoods, some of which even Smith did not know of. If anyone could have gathered dark secrets that Morgan Smith might find useful, von Juntz was the one. On and off for the last thirty years, Smith had followed rumors of this fabled volume, never actually confirming its existence. Only in the last few months had he definitely learned that the book existed, and only in the last few weeks had he learned where it was hidden. He had hurried to this place. His father would be after that book soon, and his father controlled forces that would make it easy for the old wizard to gain possession of the Book of Abominations. Smith had had to act fast, and he had done so. Now, he was in the lost castle, his quest nearly over.

After several minutes of searching, he came upon the book. It was on a stone altar in the center of a huge meeting room in the rear of the castle. Smith hurried forward to the volume. Out of the darkness, a huge thing hurried forward to Smith.

Without hesitation, Smith raised his pistol and fired. At a range of but a few yards, he could not miss. Six slugs slammed into the beast. Without missing a step, it kept on coming. Morgan groaned. For once in his life the man wished he would find a monster that was easy to kill.

The thing was quite ugly, and quite big. It stood slightly over seven feet tall, and was as wide as Smith, but much heavier. It was humanoid, in fact, came quite close to resembling a man. Except that it had two small breathing holes where its nose should be. And, it had a huge mouth filled with fangs. And, it was neutral gray in color. A typical ghoul.

But Smith had hand-

led such monsters before. As it came charging forward, he swung his pack right into the creature's stomach. It doubled over in pain. The thing had no vocal cords, and could make no sound. Smith did not care. As he slammed it across the neck with both hands, breaking bones to splinters, he knew that the thing would be crying out in pain if it could. A steel tipped boot destroyed what was left of its face. Morgan Smith had long ago gotten the defeat of clumsy ghouls down to a science. His father had used such creatures as guards, and their vulnerabilities were quite well known to the adventurer. Again, he moved forward to the book.

The applause caught him by surprise. Smith stopped and looked around. Another figure was emerging from the darkness. Not as big as the ghoul, but nearly so. Hands clapping in appreciation. A man, or nearly so. A man except for the results of thirty long years of decay in the desert, for this man was no longer alive. He had been dead, dead for a very long time.

His face was more a skull than an actual face. The dried flesh hung in strips along the rest of his body. His clothing had long crumbled into dust. Its skeletal hands clapped in bony applause as it opened its mouth to speak. Its empty eye sockets glowed with eerie life as it stated, "That was very nicely done. Professional, even."

Smith nodded. Talking skeletons were not a pleasant development.

"I am the true guardian of the Book. For you obviously have come here for it. I should congratulate you on reaching this place. Of at least seven others, only one man was able to make it. You just killed him."

"You are the owner of the volume?"

Smith asked.

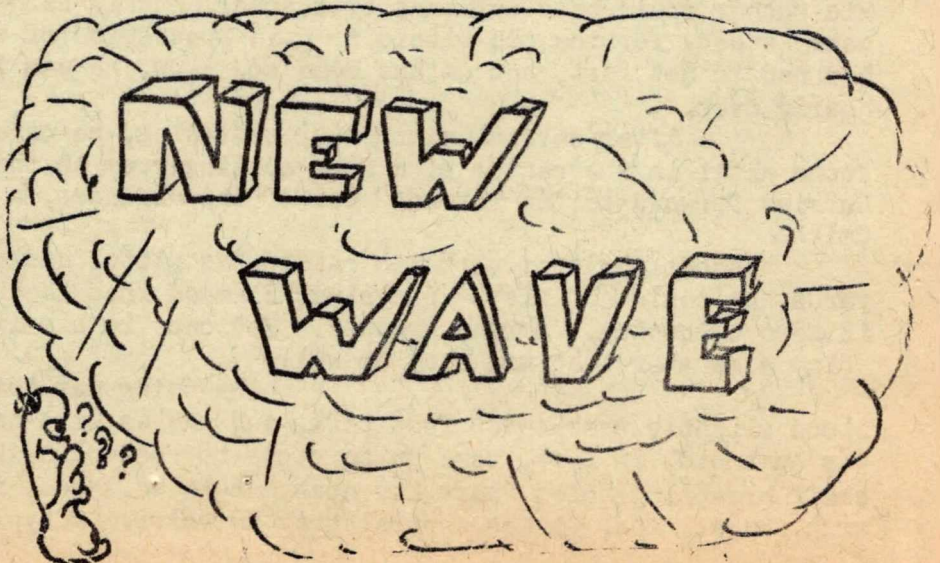
"Yes. It is mine. When I lived, I was Erich Krieg. I was a close friend of von Juntz. He gave me the Book for safe keeping, fearing that if he was killed that the Book of Abominations would be lost forever. When he met his rather grisly fate, I decided to flee with the book to a place of solitude. This Dead Land is described in the Book, along with the castle. It sounded just like the right place. I had not counted on certain unfriendly Arabs," it pointed to a huge gaping hole in its chest. "Using certain spells, I had made sure that I would remain animate as long as the book was in my possession. I did not realize that the words animate and alive are two different things. I am quiet dead, but I still remain to guard the Book. And, probably shall until the world comes to an end. But, I talk too much. Come, let me kill you, and end this unpleasantness."

Smith backed away warily. If the skeleton had used a spell from the Book to remain animate, none of his magic would be of any use. His pistol was not going to help either.

"Are you sure we can't settle this peacefully? Maybe, if I left without the Book?"

The creature shook its head. "But you would not leave. I can read it in your soul. You are not a man to leave a task undone a quest unfinished. You must die. . . ."

Morgan did not wait for the thing to finish



its sentence. He leapt forward, using the old maxim it is better to give than to receive. His mighty left arm drew back, and sent his huge fist smashing into the jaws of the skeleton. It was a blow that would break the neck of any ordinary man, and probably shatter his skull as well. The skeleton creature stumbled back for a second, then came forward.

One bony hand reached down and grabbed Smith by one shoulder. The man grimaced in pain as needlelike fingers dug into his flesh. He kicked at the thing with steel rimmed boots. Once, long ago, he had defeated a similar creature with such tactics. But this monster was sturdier than the Thing of Bones. It did not as much as even shudder.

With a jerk of the wrist, the monster sent Smith smashing into a wall of the room. Strong as he was, Morgan was jolted by his contact with the hard stone. He rose to his feet just in time to meet another charge of the skeleton. Incredibly swift, the thing lashed out with bony fists. Again, Smith was battered to the wall. It was all he could do to defend himself from the thing. He was constantly on the defense. There was but one course of action.

Spotting a door, he ran from the room. Chuckling wildly, the skeleton charged after the adventurer. There was no way but up. Smith ran as fast as he could. The monster just loped along leisurely in pursuit. It obviously knew that the man could not escape. And it was right. The passage opened to the roof of the castle. A long, flat expanse. Staring down, Smith could see the rippling life of the Dead Land. Coming toward him was the skeleton guardian of the Book of Abominations. He had to act, and act now.

Gathering what remaining strength he had, the man started forward. The skeleton came running at him, huge arms outstretched to catch him if he tried to flee to the sides. But Smith was no fool. He lunged, and caught one of those arms with both his hands. And, with all of his might, heaved the skeleton forward.

Like the man at the end of the chain in "Snap the Whip," the creature went flying across the roof. It was only a few yards to the edge. With a high pitched screech, the skeleton tumbled over the side, and down to the awaiting earth below.

By the time Smith reached the spot where the creature had gone over, there was not much to see. The hungry claws of the Dead Land had done their grisly work. Even the bony life of the guardian of the Book had not been invulnerable to the unholy lust of the Living Earth.

Wearily, Morgan Smith staggered down to the corridor to the Book of Abominations. Smiling in triumph, he lifted its heavy cover. And then stared in astonishment.

Written on the first page, in huge German letters, was the following message: "To my conqueror: If you read this, it will mean that I finally have been bested. The Book of Abominations is yours. But, would you really want it? Von Juntz was mad, had been mad ever since finishing his first book. This second volume was intended as a trick. A clever diabolical trick. For each spell and incantation was prepared in such a manner that it would only bring ill to the user. You saw what happened to me. Be thankful, that in my anger, in my black despair, I destroyed the manuscript and substituted these blank pages that I had brought with me for notes. The Book of Abominations is a legend, and nothing more. It has been dust for thirty years."

For a full five minutes, Smith stared at the writing. Krieg had destroyed the manuscript. He had fought the ghoul, the skeletal Krieg, and even the Dead Land for nothing. And then he smiled. His father could not know that the Book was just blank pages. Smith would be able to use the volume as a powerful bargaining tool to obtain some other manuscript that his father possessed. He had no need for the true Book of Abominations. Its legend was enough. With a grin, he awaited the sun, the dawn, and his leaving the Dead Land.

IF YOU ENCYST

by Janet Fox
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The thick atmosphere of the planet Prana made for dark nights. Hank and the Rat thought the conditions ideal for a quick and undetected exit from the star-freighter Atchison Topeka, but as the Rat went down the forward ramp, he felt someone grip his arm from behind and when he whirled around, he was looking into the reflecting surfaces of night-vision goggles on the ugly face of a Security Patrol.

"Blast! It's a skink," warned the Rat, squirming in a muscular headlock that was getting in the way of his breathing. Instead of running as he knew he ought to, Hank lunged blindly in the direction of the little man's voice. Colliding with a mass of unknown flesh, he brought both fists into play. One caught the Rat in the short ribs, but with the other blow, he sent the skink sprawling.

"Put 'er on hyper," he yelled, grabbing his partner by the arm and tossing him forward in a staggering run. The SP's belt siren was beginning to set up a high-pitched howling.

Wheezing and running, the Rat managed to keep pace with his tall, gaunt companion. "You know where you're goin?" he asked at last.

"No. Let's clear the spaceport before we stop. It looks as if the local authorities are of a mind to take Code 9 seriously. They must not like freeriders here."

"Now who'd want to keep a harmless guy like me out?" wondered the Rat.

When the lights of the spaceport had dimmed behind them, they slowed to a fast walk. Even in the dark Prana had its own distinctive personality. The air was humid and clinging, the sweet/sick smell of alien flowers breathed on them by the wind.

"A planet of romance," said the Rat, breathing deeply. "I can tell already." The city in which the spaceport lay was not around, but above them. The buildings were gigantic pendulous sacs woven of some light and strong fabric. They hung above from the branches of an ancient forest. A woven road like a spider's web wound in and out among the buildings. The Rat had found a low-hanging road and gripping it, he swung himself up. "Come on. There has to be night life of some kind in this place."

"That's what I like about you. You never know when to quit."

On a lower level than the rest of the buildings, they found a sac with its door ajar. From these open doors came a dim blue light and the sounds of strange music. "This looks okay," said the Rat.

"Might be a church for all you know," said Hank.

"Never been wrong yet."

Inside, under the flickering blue lights men were gathered around the woven tables drinking or playing some sort of game with wooden discs. Hank and the Rat found an unoccupied table and seated themselves in hammock-chairs suspended from the low ceiling. The Bartender was evidently one of the natives, a vaguely manlike being, short in stature with gnarly arms and legs.

Hank tried Intergal on him, but the Pranan only answered in a guttural language of his own. Finally, Hank held up two fingers and made drinking motions with the other hand. The ugly little alien had soon set before them two cups of foaming green liquid. As they drank the nitro in slow careful sips, they noticed that mingled with the natives were gold-uniformed astronauts from the spaceport and soldiers in the traditional olive-drab from some nearby Terza-base. Most of the Pranans looked like the bartender, their gnarled bodies partly covered by reddish hair--even the women had

beards.

"Some planet of romance," laughed Hank.

"Wait a minute, look." Hank looked toward the door just in time to see a small party enter. These people seemed of another race. One woman especially caught Hank's eye. She was small and delicately built, but a generous bust and hips filled out the length of emerald mist she had carelessly wrapped around her, clasping it at the side with a breech of snapping flamestones. Her skin was richly red-brown and her hair a fall of spun copper.

"God in Cosmos," breathed the Rat prayerfully.

The players of the tinny-sounding music began a new tune, and the natives, along with a few servicemen got up and began to form a circle for a slow, hypnotic dance. The girl with copper hair joined in, moving her hips languorously to the monotonous beat of metallic drums.

"I'm gonna get in on this," said the Rat, rising unsteadily and making a place for himself in the circle beside the woman in green mist. Since the Rat was a small, unappetizing man with a scraggly black beard, his direct approach worked only about two times out of a hundred, but it was enough to keep him from giving up.

Hank was surprised when the Rat came back to the table, leading his prize by the hand.

"Hank, she's a doll and she speaks Intergal. This is Scoria. Doll, Hank, my partner."

She put out a fragile hand heavily ringed with gold and flamestones. She seemed feverishly hot, but he supposed it was from the exertion of the dance. The Rat looked feverish too, but that didn't surprise him any.

There was only the one chair, so the Rat and Scoria were forced to double up. She seemed to want to stay very close to him, curling up in his lap and clinging tightly. "She's beautiful, educated and intelligent," decided Hank. "What does she want with a dumb space-bum like Rat?"

Scoria made a few polite remarks in Intergal, but her eyes, bright as flamestones were slowly devouring the Rat.

"She keeps calling me her 'rah-vin'," grinned the Rat. "I don't know what it means, but I like the sound of it."

"Well, I think I'll get a bottle and find me a cheap hotelroom for the night."

Scoria recommended a small inn a short distance away. He tipped the bottle up and drank as the suspended bed swayed beneath him. "I guess maybe I'm just jealous," he silently told himself, "but I wish that girl hadn't latched onto Rat. There's something about her that's not quite. . . ." The alien liquor hit him all at once and he went off into a feverish sleep punctuated by brief, frightening dreams which he couldn't remember when he awoke the next morning.

The cries of birds and monkeys awakened him, and he slowly realized that he was high in the trees. The whole inn was swaying ponderously in the wind. He felt seasick and airsick all at once and was about to run to what passed as a bathroom when he was distracted by a faint noise at his door. It was like the feeble scratching of a starving dog. "Who's there?" But there was no answer, only another faint scratching. Carefully, he opened the door.

"Rat! What happened? Come in here, man. Have a drink of this." He tipped the bottle against dried and shrunken lips. The little man seemed as if he had been in a desert for days. His skin was dehydrated, his eyes sunken, his weight visibly down.

"She. . . Scoria," said the Rat, his hands scrabbling at the front of his shirt.

"No, now take it easy, pardner." Hank tried to calm him,

but he managed to rip open the shirt and on his chest was a red welt the size of a hen's egg. As Hank examined it more closely, he thought he could see the outline of a tiny foetus.

Impatiently, he wiped the sweat out of his eyes. "Come on, Buddy. We're going to get us a doctor. Not one of these crazy aliens, a real earth doctor on Terrabase."

The sentry at the gate gave Hank a mean and suspicious stare.

"We've got to see the base doctor," explained Hank.

"He looks bad," said the Sentry. "You Terran?"

"Of course we are," said Hank, "and while you're standing here running off at the mouth, my pal is dying. Look at him."

"Okay, bring him in here. I'll call Doc Kanin, and he'll send an ambulance."

"What's wrong with him?" the Sentry asked after he had radioed in his message.

"I don't know, must be some native disease."

"Didn't you go through immunization when you came in?"

"What do you think we are, tourists? We're freeriders. Came in on the Topeka."

"Then you'll be under arrest,"

said the Sentry, picking up his gun again.

"They're pretty hard on freeriders here on Prana."

"I don't care. If he gets all right, it'll be worth it."

The base ambulance was actually a portable hospital on anti-gravs. Two nurses, one of them a pretty redhead, took charge of the Rat and had him in bed with nutrient solution dripping into him before they actually reached the base hospital. The bed, encased in its plastic shields, was floated into one of the wards. Dr. Kanin took one look at the patient and shook his head. He was telling the nurses to remove the nutrient solution when Hank grabbed him by the front of his white coat.

"He's a dead man," said the Doctor angrily. "You two idiots blundered into a situation you know nothing about. He's become the 'rah-vin' of one of the Bosk. They rule Prana. The littler people, or Tantrals, are raised like cattle so that every three months a Bosk can curl up inside them, burn them out and absorb their vitality.

"She was a damn parasite. I never liked her looks."

"I'm sorry. I don't like to see this happen to your friend, but this planet belongs to the Bosk. We can't risk trouble with them. If your friend had been immunized, he wouldn't be in this trouble now. There's nothing to be done."

"Put the bottle back. At least



give him a chance to fight."

"All right, but there really isn't any hope, you know."

Hank stood beside the bed, looking down at the empty mask of his friend's face and watching the colorless fluid go down, drop by drop. "Come on, Rat, you're a tough rider. You've got a million reasons to want to be alive. A million planets to see--more--so many you couldn't count 'em all."

Frightened by the lifeless look on the bearded face, Hank struck a light, openhanded blow to the Rat's cheek, and the tortured eyes opened as mechanically as a doll's. The Rat tried to moisten his dried lips, but Hank had to give him a drink before he could even talk.

"Give me your knife, Pard. She's trying to kill me."

"Quiet down, you'll make yourself worse."

In a convulsive movement, the Rat sat up in bed. His eyes were inches from Hank's and he said again in a steady voice, "Give me your knife."

Hank's numb fingers lifted from its sheath under his arm the hidden weapon he always carried. He could only watch as the Rat lifted the knife and struck himself in the chest. At his outcry, the nurses and doctor came running, but they were too late. A sticky reddish fluid was smeared over the sheets and on the floor a tiny foetus-shape was squirming its way to an unpleasant death.

"Cosmos, you've killed her," said the Doctor. "You've broken the cyst before she was ready to emerge."

"Are you saying he's going to be all right?" asked Hank.

"Damn right," said the Rat. He now seemed fully conscious, but was unable to move because of weakness.

"He's all right," said the Doctor, "but only for now. The Bosk will consider you murderers. You'll have to stand trial."

Hank was locked in a storeroom of the hospital until he could be transferred to jail in the morning. After checking for escape routes among the crates and machinery and finding none, he was making a bed for himself when he heard the door open. A female shape was outlined briefly by the light. "Hey. . . Mister?"

He recognized the redheaded nurse. "Come with me," she directed. "My friends and I are getting you out of here tonight." In the corridor an orderly met them with the Rat on an anti-grav litter. "We've got a skit-boat waiting to take you to the spaceport."

"Won't you get into trouble?" asked Hank as the small vehicle warmed up.

"Not if they don't catch us," grinned the Nurse. "We're tired of toadying to those damned Bosk parasites. It's about time one of them got what was coming."

The freighter was a gigantic clumsy blot against the sky. Hank was on the lookout for SP's, but the boat made a neat landing beside the loading ramp and no one was there to see them go aboard. The Nurse helped Hank get the Rat comfortably settled among the cargo in the hold. "Good luck," she said, as she left them.

"Man, I never noticed before what a looker she was," said the Rat. He smacked his lips greedily. "I wish she could go along with us."

"Sure, and maybe she'd even call you her little 'rah-vin'."

"Shut up," grinned the Rat.

THE KEY TO EVERYTHING

by Clinton H. Holder, Jr.
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"So what can we do?"

"Blow the whole damn planet out of space," Graf said, biting hard on the stem of his pipe. "Separate out the debris and atomize it!" He was tired of nit picking once and for all. This matter had been on his nerves so long it had a six foot beard.

Chain said scathingly, "That's the Centaurean way, right enough. If you can't understand it, if it doesn't fit into a stereotyped mode, then step on it--crush it. It's obviously a mistake of nature."

Graf nearly screamed but protocol demanded that he at least be civil to his director from Colony Control, even if the same civility was not reciprocated. "What's your solution then? We've got a planet down there that hates man's guts--without reservation. Every crop planted, every temporary building constructed is destroyed by lightning or flood or ground upheaval, or a combination of all three. The only buildings standing are stracal domes." Stracal domes were first built to withstand the volcanic action of Mercury, Sol system. They were constructed so that even burial in magma would leave the inhabitants unharmed, though possibly helpless. "There's a hell-and-gone computer five miles down in the bowels of that planet that was told to keep vermin off that planet and it's doing its best to follow that order."

Chain realized the impossibility of getting a decent report out of the man. He thought that a chief colonizer should really know better than to get involved with a planet to this extent. His job was not to get hysterical over difficulties but to solve them. The planets having just the right combination of atmosphere, radiation level, and soil were few and far, so impossibly far, between. Every one found had to be made use of. Chain shuddered to think of how overcrowded Earth was with nearly every person living, working, dying within a mile of his birthplace. Nothing could be as formidable as Earth.

His proudest face must have communicated his thoughts to Graf because the chief colonizer went deep purple, "You think I'm overestimating the situation. Well, let me tell you, that computer won't let anything get within twenty miles of it. We put a mini beeper in a dart and fired it from thirty miles up. At fifteen miles it stopped transmitting. Do you know why?" Chain shook his shoulders and Graf scowled, "That monster hit it with a one hundred megaton bomb - a clean bomb."

Chain came fully alert immediately. "How clean?" He looked intensively at Graf.

"You name it. Nothing but raw energy. No residues. No nothin'. On top of that, whatever propulsion system that missile had was faster by five orders of magnitude than anything I've ever seen. That sucker went twenty miles in about one micro micro second. That's about one hundred million times the speed of light. God!" Graf started to reach for his liquor locker but checked himself since his boss did not like drinking on duty.

Chain thought reflectively for a few moments: If that automaton could afford to waste that kind of destructive power on a dart, what would it do to a man? Also, it was evident that it could convert matter totally into energy. What a stupendous power source! Finally, the missile's drive was something radically different from the Kiosu drive humans had. Mankind was pushing the theoretical limits of the Kiosu formulae, postulating expansion of the ship axis about all points in space, at only one thousand lights. He glanced grimly at Graf who was slouched in his oversized seat behind his oversized desk. "So you want to destroy the greatest find in history--a new drive, pure

matter--energy conversion and Heaven only knows what else."

Graf opened his eyes wide. "Haven't you been listening? When was the last time you cleaned your ears? I'm telling you for one final time, you can't get near it at all. If you try to walk up to it, the most god-awful thunderstorm builds up. The closer you come to that twenty mile radius, the worse it gets. Finally a sheet of continuous lightning bars any path closer to it. We tried mobilizing a stracal dome and lost four men in one snap. The only good that came out of this screwy situation is that we've only lost four. The machine doesn't seem to care if we go natural but the first time it senses a cultivation or construction project, it goes wild."

Chain remarked frostily, "It's sad to see a chief colonizer become a pessimist and fatalist." Graf opened his mouth to say something hot but Chain held up his hand, whereupon the chief bit his tongue in frustration. "Let me summarize this in unbiased terms. Some ancient race left this computer to defend or protect their planet. We attempt to colonize and our works are destroyed. All paths of approach are cut off in the most spectacular way

imaginable. The first solution would seem to be to find the key to open up the computer."

Graf burst through. "What key?"

"The disarming signal, if you will. The race that set up the computer must have keyed it to cease hostilities so that when they returned it would let them in."

A faint light of hope flickered in Graf's eyes. "Well, it wouldn't hurt to try. What do you suggest?"

Chain looked pensive for a few moments and then replied, "The most obvious place for any material key

to exist is close to the computer. Therefore, teams in your scral vehicles should search in a band from near the twenty mile radius to, say, a twenty three mile radius. Also teams around both poles."

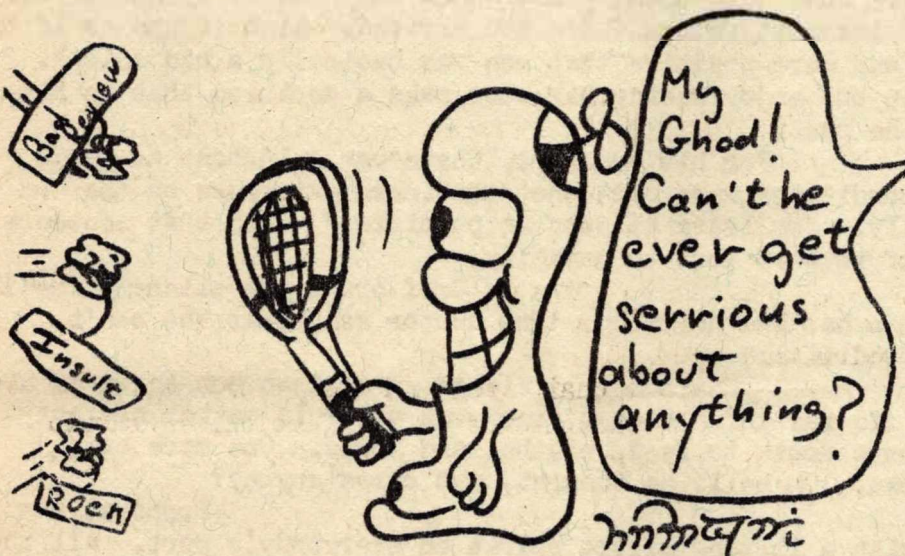
"What should they look for? That's a lot of land to search for an unspecified nothing."

Chain reflected. "They should look for anything unnatural, anything out of place--metal objects or strange rock formations."

Graf looked unhappy. "It's going to take a lot of man-hours."

The thought of Earth loomed up between them and Chain said, simply, "It's worth it."

Three months later, the chief colonizer and director met on the planet's surface to look over the photographs and samples turned up by the exploration teams. The pickings were few and the key nowhere obvious. Lightning had changed the landscape so radically that it was not at all clear what constituted an unnatural formation. By this time the director's optimism was even wearing thin. He felt that he had been on so many wild goose chases that he was ending up chasing himself. Add to that the conditions the colonists had to live under, like food rationing, thunder, sleepless nights, no sex (a Colony Control ruling which was not rigidly enforced--witness the fact of an immediately



pending birth), and hard, endless-seeming work and you begin to appreciate fully the fatalism of those present.

Graf looked very tired. "That's the lot. A photo of a blasted tree trunk vaguely resembling a woman, a rock that looks like a lopsided pyramid, another photo of a pool of water shaped like a duck, and one rock that appears to be bear cub shaped. All we need is a partridge in a pear tree to make it complete."

Chain recoiled from the humor, if such, he thought, it was, in the remark and replied, "There doesn't appear to be any key present, then. Just odd natural items caused by the computer's defense system. The only other key I can think of is electronic and the code for switching off the computer is impossible to attempt by hit and miss methods."

"Okay. What next then?" Graf knew what the reply had to be. The storms had picked up in intensity since Chain had arrived. Also it was as if the computer was becoming more and more positive that man was basically a bad animal. However, Graf could not help but enjoy seeing his boss make a decision that he himself had predicted far in the past.

For his own part, Chain was reluctant to admit defeat but the morale and conditions were such that continued existence on the planet was the sheerest folly. "We leave as soon as possible." With that sentence, one world and the secrets of it were lost to humanity.

Graf broke the silence, "We'll have to wait until that woman has had her baby. The doctor said that she can't stand acceleration in her condition."

Chain nearly flared up at that but shrugged his shoulders in defeat. What did the infraction of one worn out rule matter against the loss of a world? One more mouth to feed, clothe, and house. One more body stacked up in the sardine can. Oh hell, he thought, who cares anyway?

Preparations went ahead for evacuation with a lifting of the spirit on everybody's part. All the personnel, colonists, and equipment were ferried to the mother ship in orbit except for the one scrawled dome which was the "hospital." With most of man's works gone, the planet slowed its murderous pace slightly. By the end of ten days when baby and new mother were ferried in too, only normal conditions prevailed on the surface.

Chain was toying idly with a dart an hour before the ship was to leave orbit for home when Graf walked in. Chain glanced at him, and said, "There's one other thing I want to try before we leave. It's so far out in left field that it seems impossible but I want to know."

Graf shrugged. "What can we lose that isn't already lost?"

"Exactly. I want to drop five hundred beeper darts on the thing. Call it a hunch."

"They're here. Actually, more than that number. We made them up so that we would see if the computer would destroy itself with its own defenses but we never used them."

Chain bit his lower lip. "Really, if I'm right, one would do."

Consequently, one dart was fired at the computer. At twenty miles, Chain began to hold his breath. At the crucial fifteen, the dart was still alive. Technicians were gathering all around him and Graf at ten miles. Finally, the beep from the dart's transmitter stopped as it burned itself in the ground. Everybody in the room was looking slack-jawed as Chain exhaled gustily.

Graf looked at him questioningly but Chain just said, "No questions yet. Put down a dome and stack as many people in it as possible."

This was done in some haste and again a dart was launched with the same results. This time Chain sighed, "Okay, everybody out. The war's over."

Later, in the privacy

of Graf's office, Graf threatened Chain, "Let's have the story or, so help me, I'll pull out your toenails one by one and pluck your eyebrows bald in the deal."

Chain smiled easily, "It was just what it looked like--a wild outside hunch, as I have already intimated. The reason I put those people back on the surface was to make sure the computer wasn't just inactive from the non-presence of intelligent beings on the planet surface. Evidently, its radius of sensors is much further out than its defense sphere. Anyway, I kept remembering the so-called 'clues' the search teams found while we were waiting for that baby to be born. I thought that in the right light that bear cub shaped rock looked a lot like a baby. I checked the places where the articles were found and discovered that the limbs, arms if you will, of the woman shaped tree were stretched in the general direction of the bear cub, baby, rock. This initiated the wildest line of thought and speculation I've ever tried. In a way, it's quiet simple."

Graf sensed a pause and filled in, "If you're waiting for an attentive audience, you've already missed your cue. Go on."

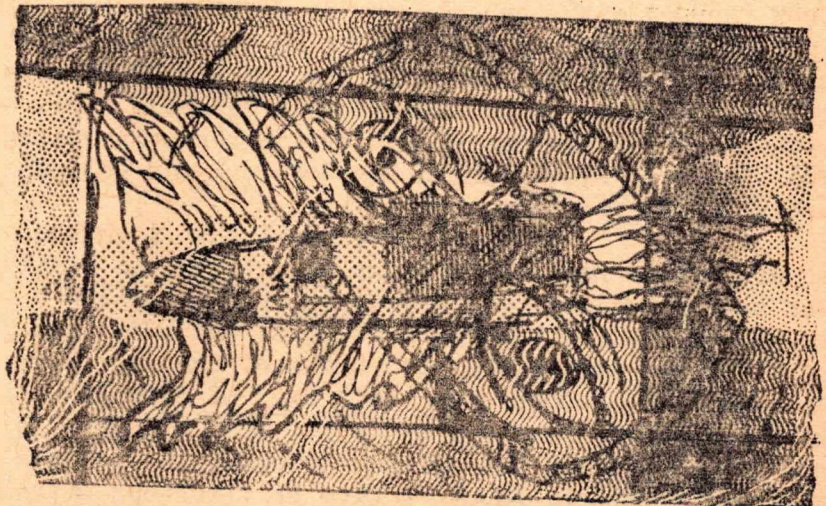
"I reasoned that the people who built this computer must have loved the planet to plan for its defense in such a way. However, knowing that they had to leave it, for whatever reason they did, they decided to save it for others who would love it and not build, say, planetary defense and offense stations on it since military uses could destroy it. We know also how hard it is to find a fertile planet. So it was programmed to resist invaders in increasing steps so that finally any hostile invaders would be pushed off. However, it was told to give a set of 'clues' such as we found."

"Let me ask you this hypothetical question. By what criterion would you judge if the invaders were hostile or friendly to the planet on those terms?"

Graf thought for several moments. "I know! If they bore their children into it."

"Exactly."

-oOo-



GREAT MOMENTS IN SCIENCE FICTION #1
"Three rousing cheers for Donald G. Turnbull of Toronto for his valiant attack on those favoring mush. When we want science-fiction, we don't want swooning dames and that goes double...Come on, men, make yourself heard in favor of less love mixed with our science."
-- Issac (sic)Asimov in a letter in ASTOUNDING Sept'38.

FILTRATION

or, The Other Guy's Space. . . .

The job of a filter, let us face it, is to catch the crud. So "filtration", you must admit, is not a pretentious title.

And a filter might be considered to be a nit-picker. I have been known to do that, too.

So, to catch the crud. . . and maybe some more pleasant flotsam. Or maybe jetsam.

With 1970 three-quarters shot, what could be more logical than to list my choice of the best 10 sf novels of 1969? Well. . . .

- 1) Macroscope by Piers Anthony
- 2) Creatures of Light and Darkness by Roger Zelazny
- 3) The Jagged Orbit by John Brunner
- 4a) Fourth Mansions by R.A. Lafferty (I'll explain these. Relax.)
- 4b) Omnivore by Piers Anthony
- 5) Let the Fire Fall by Kate Wilhelm
- 6) Grimm's World by Vernor Vinge
- 7) The Pollinators of Eden by John Boyd
- 8) Wolfling by Gordon R. Dickson
- 9a) The Rakehells of Heaven by John Boyd
- 9b) Isle of the Dead by Roger Zelazny
- 10) Breakthrough by Richard Cowper

The two extra titles result from different calendars. The Hugo begins its year with January and ends it with December, but the Nebula year ends with November and begins with December for novels. So Omnivore, published 12/68 is a 1958 book with respect to Hugo eligibility and a 1969 opus . . . with respect to the Nebula. And both Fourth Mansions and Rakehells were published in Dec. 69, so. . . . Confusing? Yes.

The worst book of the year is not easy to pick. I call a tie between The Null-Frequency Impulser by James Nelson Coleman and The Black Corridor by Michael Moorcock. I don't think that the word "pretentious" can be legitimately used in putting down a book (anyone with the gall to put words on paper is being pretentious), or I might pick the Moorcock as the winner on the grounds that pretentious crud is worse than unpretentious crud. Dan Morgan's The New Minds gave the above two some stiff competition, but lost out. Lancer Books deserves a plague of locusts, leeches, tax collectors, and other noxious creatures for recently reissuing the worst sf novel of 1967: The Waters of Death, which the Moorcock and Coleman novels cannot hope to equal as a waste of the reader's time.

The novel that I enjoyed the most in 1969, however, was not sf and can be had from Bantam: A Death In the Family by James Agee. Also enjoyable was Norman Mailer's Why Are We In Vietnam (which I read in Vietnam). I was interested to see the Mailer book turn to sf at the end. You just can't trust anybody anymore.

The two most over-rated books of the year were Norman Spinrad's Bug Jack Barron and Ursula K. LeGuin's The Left Hand of Darkness. The LeGuin was good but unremarkable and the Spinrad was a classic case of the enjoyable bad novel (sort of a New Wave Doc Savage novel), but neither deserved the fulsome praise they received. Ace has reissued Ursula K. LeGuin's City of Illusions which I consider superior to The Left Hand of Darkness.

As for 1970, I doubt that a novel superior to Joanna Russ's And Chaos Died will appear. If one does, I may go insane from the shock.

Ted White has been making noises in AMAZING and FANTASTIC about two new writers: Gordon Eklund and Gerard F. Conway. Now, since the job of an editor is to put out a magazine that will sell, an editor's trumpeting like a bull elephant in rut over the

GREAT*NEW*WRITER that he has usually can be filed in the same drawer as the promises of used-car salesmen and the collected speeches of LBJ(remember him?). Sf editors, however, are different (he said, wincing at the memory of green-tinted pages in IF), and more likely to be candid with the ~~sf~~ readers. Ted White, moreover, was a fan (and is still a fan, as shown by his writing dillies such as "brought the art of the informal essay to its fannish peak" in the Nov. AMAZING) and when he says Gordon Eklund is potentially as important as Zelazny, I accept his sincerity. I'm not quite ready to accept that evaluation, though.

Eklund's "Dear Aunt Annie" (FANTASTIC, 4/70) is a wower of a story. For it, Eklund has used a construction which some people will call an "experiment" and I call, not in a derogatory sense, a trick; plus an idiosyncratic style; plus (surprise) a story. It is not quite a virtuoso performance, because virtuosity implies mastery of the materials, but it comes close, in spite of some rough spots. The question is: what next? The boosters of experimentation often overlook that the new structures seldom can be used more than once, unlike the older techniques which are repeatable. So, here. Bug Jack Barron suffers because Burrough's style grows old and is covered with fungus very quickly (perhaps, if I had not read Nova Express, BJB might be less moldy). And the manner of telling "Annie" cannot be repeated too many times. So, what can Eklund do for an encore?

In "A Gift From the Gozniks" (FANTASTIC, 8/70) Eklund uses a straightforward structure, a quiet style, and a less original story. Ted White compares "Gozniks" to Zenna Henderson. The characters might be in one of her stories (though Eklund cannot make them as real as she would), but the story itself reminds me more of Simak. (This time it won't hurt to tell you what it's about: aliens trying to keep all of Homo Sap from going the way of nuclearcide, with other aliens opposing.) It isn't in the same class as "Annie" and wouldn't be even with more solid characters, but it's still a respectable effort from a new writer. And I'll be watching for his third story.

Not only in the magazine, but at Midwestcon, Mr. White has been likewise boosting Gerard F. Conway. Mr. Conway's "Through the Dark Glass" (AMAZING, 11/70) and "Walk of the Midnight Demon" (FANTASTIC, 12/70) both use a scattergun structure, not unlike Eklund's in "Annie", but "Glass" does not tell a story, does not give a satisfactory picture of the future society, and--though Mr. Conway comes closest to success here--does not make the priest come to life. The second piece does have a story behind the shifting structure, but it is a sword and sorcery cliché, which will bother some people less than it does me. The style is interesting, sort of Robert E. Howard with the adjectives under control and a dash of anti-romanticism, but not my kind of thing. Interestingly, Mr. Conway has more control of his material than does Mr. Eklund, but uses it to less effect, alas.

Both writers have sold novels to the Ace Specials line. This does not automatically mean that the novels will be world-beaters. The Ace Specials line deserves praise for excellent novels by Joanna Russ, John Brunner, and R.A. Lafferty, but has not been getting its deserved lumps for mediocre ones by Simak, Schmitz (The Demon Breed; not the Witches of Karres, which is excellent), Anthony & Margroff, Bob Shaw, etc. Nonetheless, I'll be watching for them. In both cases, I will be durious to see how the writers handle a novel-length work. And in the case of Eklund, I'll have hopes of enjoying the book.

GREAT MOMENTS IN SCIENCE FICTION #2

"It is nearly impossible to mix sex and science fiction, any more than you can successfully mix sex and the supernatural. None but a few rare practitioners, like Wallace West in his En Route to Pluto, have ever been able to make even a passable try at it."

--Groff Conklin; Intro. to The Best of Science Fiction, Crown, 1946

Among the tasks that may fall to your humble servant (I'm not usually this humble, but I've read two Zelazny novels in the past month), the editor, is that of correcting the errors of your other more-or-less humble servant, the Editor. (It is only just that Irvin Koch should be the Editor, rather than the editor, for he has the mimeograph.) In MAYBE 4, Frank Denton asked about Andre Norton's "People of the Crater" and "Garan of Yulac." Irvin answered that they had appeared in SPACEWAYS. Not so. The name of the zine is SPACEWAY (I keep making the same mistake, mainly because I saw the movie SPACEWAYS at an early and impressionable age.) And "People of the Crater" was in the first issue of FANTASY BOOK, which was published by the same Fantasy Publishing Co. that put out SPACEWAY. The only date in my copy is a copyright of 1947. This novelette was reprinted in Ace's Swordsman in the Sky, edited by Donald A. Wollheim. Also, her sequel to the "Crater" story, "The Gifts of Asti," was in FANTASY BOOK #3, copyright 1948. Both stories were under her pen name of "Andrew North."

O.K., how many mistakes did I make?

In the nation of Australia dwells a sterling chap, Bruce R. Gillespie, who can be reached at P.O. Box 245, Ararat, Victoria 3377, Australia, and reach him you should, immediately, but indirectly, by sending \$3 to Charlie Brown, 2078 Anthony Ave, Bronx NY 10457. For your three small ones, you will get 18 issues of his SF COMMENTARY by seamial. More affluent types can fork over \$7 for airmail, but the sea route is adequate. The copy which I received today (10/13/70) was postmarked 8/13/70, but the material is not the sort that dates rapidly. This is something of a successor to the deceased and much-missed AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, and has many of the same contributors. John Foyster, in #10, had an article on the (hypothetical) ideal sf writer, a review of Future Imperfect that is a rebuttal, and an article on sf criticism. One of us is slipping; I agreed with him a couple of times there. He also has a bibliography of David Lindsay. In this issue, Bruce Gillespie begins his project of critically surveying Brian Aldiss's novels. And there is a bit of doggerel by Jack Wodhams. SFC 11 has editor Gillespie discussing the winners of the Ditmar Awards (analogous to the Hugo) and George Turner with an article arguing that Wells did it first and best and everything since is cold mashed potatoes. SFC 12 has letters and book reviews (mostly interesting, though the letters will turn off the fannish types) and an interview with Polish sf writer Stanislaw Lem. SFC 13 has one of Rotsler's brilliant sketches on the cover (this remark inserted to indicate that the opinions of the Editor are not necessarily those of the editor), reviews (including the first pan of Nova that I have seen, by John Gibson; the man is mad, of course), and a chatty conreport/travelreport/stuffreport by Perry A. Chapdelaine. SFC 14 has the letter-col title changed to "I Must Be Talking to My Friends," which sounds like it should be a song title, and the letters are from such people as Stanislaw Lem (see above), SaM, Brunner, Silverberg, Gene Wolfe, and Geis. This issue has a laudatory review of NOVA, reviews of 3 Bob Shaw novels. For a change, I find myself in agreement with Bruce Gillespie when he states that Bob Shaw is overrated. SFC 15, the latest ish, has letters, reviews by John Gibson (he likes The Rose and he doesn't like Nova!!!!), among others, and an article on J.G. Ballard by Alex Robb. If you like SPECULATION, I think you'll like this one. If you like SF REVIEW, you might like this one. Recommended.

(Did you know that there are Col. Sanders' Kentucky Fried Chicken stands in Australia?)

(Did you know that there are Col. Sanders' Kentucky Fried Chicken stands in Kentucky?)

This vital information filtered out by your humble servant--

--Hank Davis

KOONTZ HUNTING

by LEON TAYLOR P.O. Box 89, Seymour, Indiana 47274

One of the malnourished deficiencies in fandom that makes for iron-pure blood in prodom is our simple refusal to discuss sf. It's truly ridiculous. Ceramics, hobbit pipes, doorknobs, fan politics and a million other trivialities receive repeated attention (eventually deteriorating into repetition) but sf? What's that?

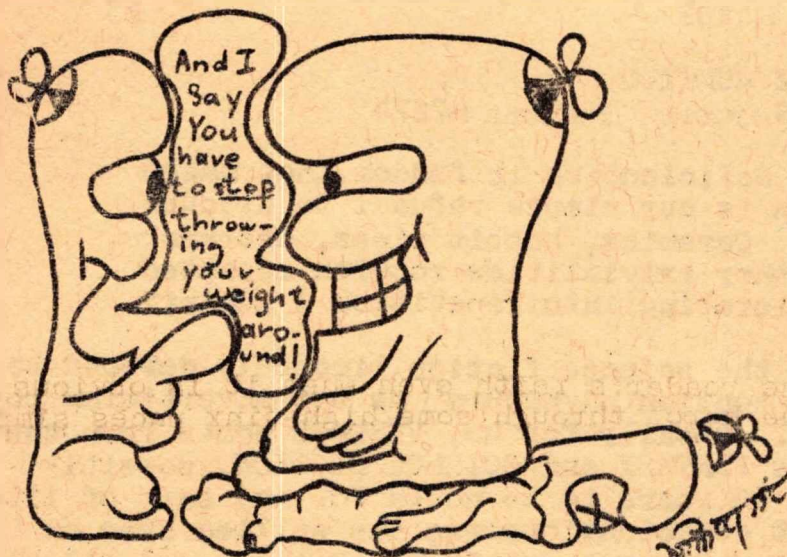
We have VENTURE, the science fiction bimonthly devoted to good ol' thud and blunder (or "action adventure" as the advertising boys so diplomatically phrase it). Luckily for us, VENTURE comes from the same good people who bring us FANTASY and SCIENCE FICTION, possibly the only prozine in the last 10 years to be noted for any sort of literary quality. Some of that conscientiousness has spilled over on F&SF's sister, but not much. Beggars can't be choosers and all that.. VENTURE's format differs from previous thud ander, action adventure rags in that it features a complete novel in every issue with forgettable short shrift accompanying it. Novelwise, VENTURE's batting average has been fairly fair: Julius Fast's LEAGUE OF THE GREY-EYED WOMEN was a mild winner, while Dickson's HOUR OF THE HORDE played up to par and both Laumer's STAR TREASURE and Wellen's HIJACK bogied back in the marshes. Probably the most gratifying features of VENTURE are the slashing, violently jarring covers by Bert Tanner, a fella who always gets the shaft when fen start talking about top artists..Perhaps if he wrote more letters to fanzines...?

No matter. The point is that VENTURE was made for Dean R. Koontz like Eve was made for Adam, and as in the latter case a baby soon followed..Koontz, occasionally a poet but more often a hack, specializes in this type of Tarzan-goes-to-the-stars tale. Afficiandos will recall FEAR THAT MAN and STAR QUEST, which were good/bad/indifferent(circle one)but more importantly shared that same mode: one half of a bread-and-butter ACE Double, with a knock 'em in-the-aisles plot and pace, pace, pace. And that, friends, is what VENTURE is in the business for.

For this reviewer, it was a very popular form indeed. In fact, BEASTCHILD (VENTURE's retitling of THIS ALIEN EARTH) is the best adventure schtick that Koontz has done yet, and a happy sign that he is beginning to emerge from the dungeon of Bad Hack. You can stop writing those ghodawful IF tales any time now, Dean.

In many ways this is a unique novella--like, how many novellas do you know of that are 44,000 words long?

The story is told from the viewpoint of an "alien" whose race has just conquered Earth. Although Dean makes up some very exotic-sounding name, it is obvious that the alien is nothing more than a human being with some very strange sexual habits..But this reflects more the obtuseness of its subject than the stupidity of the writer; no one has ever experienced alien thought, either firsthand or otherwise, so how does one portray them? The situation fairly shrieks its own impossibility, but that doesn't stop slews of sf writers from trying--and anyway, it's nice to know that Dean is included in such happily optimistic company..But if Hulann fails miserably as an alien, he definitely makes it on the human spectrum. I liked him from the start...at times he can be a stuffed shirt, but that only enhances his believability. And it is this believability that is most important, for it sustains the reader's faith even when it is obvious that the author is putting the hero through some high-jinx paces simply



To advance the plot. It soothes his impatience when the facade of the villain conveniently slips just at the right climactic moment, or when 35 point-blank shots turn out to be merely flesh wounds. While the props of the play fall with a great big WHUMP! and the leading lady wets her pants and an oceanful of other disasters are simultaneously occurring, the actor stands there oblivious--and we believe. The sort of faith that moves mountains.

Now these sorts of misplotting boils and corns are part of a disease called Laumeritis, conceived by the machiavellian of the same name. Symptoms are amazingly coincidental rescues, dark handsome strangers, missing government papers and similiar paraphenalia. And despite the number or wit of the villains they always work out like a mathematical equation to an inevitable happy ending. ((I remember one Laumer novel where the heroine ended up in a dissolving universe and stayed there as it defuncted...IMK))((by the way, Rick Cross will be here next time with a tale of Panama Canal Zone Fandom, he cut the first stencil of this 3pp section that was supposed to be his and then left to s*t*u*d*y, what I should be doing...IMK)) While it is very nice that the writer has such godlike powers that he can push around variables at will, to the reader's eye it is not very believable or enjoyable. This sort of thing demotes writing from an art to an occupation.

Koontz, thank heavens, doesn't resort to Laumeritis often, but he does occasionally, and that's enough. I have a secret wish to see The Hero just once get strangled/shot/poisoned/etc. by the villain like he's supposed to; but my desires went unfulfilled in "Beastchild" where Hulann predictably escaped trap after deadly trap by a hair's breath each time. But y'know, I didn't mind too badly, partly for the believability reason cited above, and muchly because of Koontz's pacing. Dean writes the sort of novels you finish in one sitting--in fact, that is one of the most frequent remarks made about his books. It's not really the events themselves so much as the speed at which they occur, and with Dean, it's a clockwise mechanism (and yes, that's Laumeritis but you have to make sacrifices somewhere). Pacing is a difficult thing to describe, except to say that A. Conan Doyle is the all time master of it. If it's good then you notice it, and if it's bad you attribute its effects to something else. In a way, it's the invisible string that holds a tale together, and a most delicate string it is too; for if event B occurs before the reader's interest has been aroused by event A why son, you're in a heap of trouble. Ditto if event B gets buried under a lot of extraneous crap which the reader doesn't find worth shoveling up. Sifficult for a writer?--hell, yes. Finding out when a reader gets interested in a book is like asking him when he fell in love. He can't tell you the truth because he doesn't know himself.

But there are some rules. 1: for Ghu's sakes, leave some pertinent ends dangling. Koontz does that, and conscientiously ties them up at the end, too. Makes for a tidy floor, ti does. 2: events should take up appropriate space

,writing a note to the heroine's milkman only takes a few words to relate while a whole chapter can be devoted to the villain-hero gunfight. Dean earns his brownie points here, too. Lose a few skirmishes but be sure to win the war. Too many writers try to hand their heroes everything on a silver platter. Make 'em work, and let them drop a few too. To err is human, no?

Dean is proficient here also--but you're getting the idea. There are various rules for good pacing and Dean follows them all, but the main thing is a sort of inner clock that either says "Now tell it!" or doesn't. And it's a bit difficult to explain further.

For me, this was an exciting world to delve into; resisting the common impulse to throw everything ~~in~~ plus the kitchen sink. Dean has the good grace to choose his story trappings carefully. Extrapolation is a minor facet of "Beastchild", but Dean's very restraint in it lends more substance to the fairy mist of believability. Not to mention that several of these side shows are fascinating in themselves. In case you've never noticed, Dean has a thing about rats. Not just any rats, mind you--BIG rats. Twenty pounds and up. Regardless of whatever suspect information is given on a book, I do not consider any book to be a true Koontz novel until the hero is attacked by a horde of giant rats, preferably just barely escaping the clutches of death and thereby gaining a realization of what "Life is all about". As if to dissolve our doubts immediately, Hulann encounters his first rodent on p12. This time out, none of this flimsy-flimsy about radiation mutation; these rats were introduced into the Temnan-Naoli war by the aliens. The ironic facts that these rats kill regardless of whichever side you're on and that his life was saved by a supposed "enemy" leads Hulann to discover that the war is not so righteous as it's cranked up to be. (also, Leon, the rat itself was dying of Naoli anti-rat virus at the time, ought to do something to the thinking reader...IMK) So the awakened realization of "what life is all about" is partially fulfilled too.

Another personal favorite of mine is the conversion canister, still another Naoli weapon that turns on its master. Instead of talking so much ((Leon quotes at length showing that Koontz has characters fill one another in on this in an enlightening-to-the-reader way;--yep, I cut this article but you didn't miss anything I guarantee this time...IMK))

A few warnings about "Beastchild". First, it rushes into the situation like a pro getting rid of unwanted news. We're still shaking hands with Hulann when the author, anxious to get it done and over with, launches us into that co-o-o-old water with the assumption that we can swim and if we can't--well, we can jolly well sink to hell as much as he cares. Now I don't like to bitch, but I do think that we're entitled to know a little more about Hulann before we're forced to identify with him as a political rebel and social misfit. In other words, hold off on that Big Scene, where Hulann commits both himself and the reader to the life of a criminal; a little more background and time will help us adjust to Hulann much less painfully. This is, by the way, the only blotch on Dean's pacing record.

Second, it's fairly easy to pretend that this is a polished, upper-class quality piece of work until we come to these occasional tears where the hack nails stick out like the ugly ramp of sin. ((somebody should have told Leon this ed LIKES hacks; back issues 4 & 6 are 2 for 75¢...IMK)) Case in point: on p53, when Hulann is riding an aerial cable up a restless, snowstorm battered mountain, there is a long poetic passage describing some of the

things Hulann observes. Remembering that he has just missed freezing to death, it's great until we reach that one part about a slumbering giant obscured in cotton... ignoring the ridiculousness of the very imagery, I'd like you to notice exactly what's done. Consider: the hero's in the middle of a snowstorm. He's nearly frozen to death. But he compares this icicle part, this meat freezer to cotton. And I challenge you to visualize soft feathers knifing through a stowstorm....

Nitpicking, perhaps, but it only took one straw to break the camel's back. The discerning reader absorbs every work (Evelyn Wood may kindly go to hell) ((but I need her present address now, Leon...IMK)) and when unintentional absurdities keep cropping up, he is likely to get very annoyed. I was. You will be, too, unless Dean makes appropriate changes.

Third and worst, the ending is Pretentious in screaming red letters. And this is "Beastchild"s major fault. Because of Hulann's engaging manner, the reader can eventually thaw to him despite the premature commitment. And the nits I mentioned are only that! nits. But the ending of the novel is the culmination of what has been for the reader a very exhausting experience; identifying, relating, and carefully weighing 44,000 words is no picnic. So the reader has every right to demand complete satisfaction --but instead of well-polished finish, we get a pious sounding tome as obnoxious as it is stuffy. Now it so happens that his ending has to do with death, and what it says is most interesting--and particularly relevant. But his "words for all eternity" manner turned me off and left me unhappy with an otherwise reasonably satisfying book. There are enough clods writing crap that excel at being pompous; don't emulate them.

But "the good points outweigh the bad". Dean Koontz is one of the most talented sf writers of the seventies, and each new work bears convincing proof. Read "Beastchild" ((ALIEN EARTH?)) if for nothing more than a couple hours good fun and thought, then darkly mull over the ending's message. Never mind how it's presented.

-oOo-

((By now EVERYONE is wondering why I crowded out fiction & new coeditors to put this in--and then cut it and argued with it. Reasons: despite the fact I don't really want book reviews, this was a good one. Also it started to review VENTURE and F&SF like I want done for all the prozines. Also, Rick--and it's a funny thing, this was originally sent to another zine (I detected where its name and editor had been erased by mine) whose editor is "Ricky"--Cross didn't have enough time to do the column he was thinking of & said "OK, you can use this." Now, if I can lure Leon into writing less degressive/shorter (less cuttable) reviews of prozines & their companies....IMK))

((and another last minute note: Believe it or not, there is a similar publication to this in the U.K. STING SF, from Jane Hales, 2B Cheriton Road, Folkeston, Kent. United Kingdom costs 4 shillings. I'm trying to make a deal with her for mutual selling of packages of the other zines overseas in local currency.

Another interesting development is: Michael O'Brien, 158 Liverpool St., Hobart, Tasmania 7000, Australia who is one of the agitators for an Australian Worldcon in 1975. I may yet talk him or someone else "down under" to send some given number of their zine as swap for mine and then we each try to sell the others stuff in our own country.))

-oOo-

LETERRSSS

((No, Janet & Rick didn't make it after all; maybe next time.))

JOHN H. STEELE, RM3, B562817, Box 13 NavRadSta(T) Isabela, APO NY 09845

Well, surprize, surprize...I actually recieved a fanzine in the mail yesterday. The surprizing part of it is that I do not care for fanzines in general--I always feel as though I have entered into an argument, and don't know what it is about....I don't like hearing about people that I don't really know, and 9 times out of 10, haven't heard of--if this is what Fandom is coming to--I want off.

Then--out of the blue sky, as I am sitting on the TransmitterDeck at Aguada, in walks the relieves, and the Electronic Technition coming on watch throws your fanzine over to my desk, and I open it up--ugh, another fanzine--and look at the Table of Contents--Hey!! This one actually has stories in it! Now I have been looking a few years trying to find the type of fanzine that I used to recieve, shortly after coming into fandom. They had Stories instead of 30 pages of arguements. ((and to make a long story short, he sent me a passable story which will appear some future issue))

ANDY OFFUTT, Funny Farm, Haldeman, Ky. 40329

((exerpts, news only)).^Wasked to be fan @oH in Dallas next July ((after being MC in Knoxville in June))....we'll be there. ...have agreed to do a series of articles for Jerry Lapidus' back-coming fanzine "TOMORROW AND..." on writing.....have sold three sf novels in 1970, and the third sale, written this past June, is the best piece of work I've ever turned out. It's about Haldeman, and Morehead and Lexington and a few other places, about thirty years from now, and it ain't too pretty. The protagonist is Jeff Andrews, a writer.... It's a cassandra book, terribly violent because I wanted to show how CASUAL violence, killing is becoming, and will worsen. It's also ecological, based heavily on Ballantine's THE ENVIRONMENTAL HANDBOOK, Desmond Morris' THE NAKED APE, and Robert Ardrey's THE TERRITORIAL IMPERATIVE; all three books really changed my mind about several things. The title--so far--is THE CASTLE KEEPS and will be out in Spring 71 from Berkley... ..other books by Paperback Library and Dell.... something wierd: sometimes-pro and sometimes-fan artist but always superb-artist D. Bruce Berry and Andrew J. Offutt will sell a collaborative novel in 1971 that will blow your damned SKULL!...

ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS, PO Box 611, Valley Center, CA 92082

((exerpt--talking about his last book: LOVE IS FOREVER-WE ARE FOR TONIGHT, which I thought was too brief and sketchy but nevertheless a precedent breaking work))...Curtis...their distribution was the poorest... However, I have another book (this one is fiction) coming from Curtis, NOW COMES TOMORROW. Wonder what they will put on the covers of this one and when it will be out? I certainly would like to do a much more detailed work on the base of LOVE IS FOREVER-WE ARE FOR TONIGHT. I left out more than I put in, and really, I did not finish the book but hurried through to a hasty end because some publisher put me to work. ((one of these days you are going to sit on a book 'till it's RIGHT and slip it in to a hardback publisher with decent distribution and adjust pb reprint house)). As to an 130,000 wds---Whew! Well, I have a hot idea in my head right now and as soon as I finish with my correspondence, I will probably start on it. But 130,000 wds? Frankly, I don't know how long it will run at this time but my energy levels have been very low most of this year. If these

return-and they seem to be returning - who knows how long it will run?

ROSE-MARIE GREEN, 1390 Holly Av., Merrit Island, Fla.32952

Florida fandom now consists of Ninette Nicoloff, L'shaya Salkind, Leah Sparks and myself. (and about 500 people no one knows, 50 or so of whom might yet be enticed into fandom--like, look, that area has more cute girls in fandom than anywhere, even Houston or Knoxville, which aren't doing so bad) Possibly a few others. We are planning to publish a zine and see if it brings in any people. (what happened to the one L'shaya and Anita Kovalick were working on??)

I should have written this sooner, but to be honest the reason I'm writing it now is that scathing glare you gave me at Agacon. I haven't been in fandom long enough to get used to scathing glares; especially from expectant editors. ...

...The most important factor of any fanzine is its true context, in other words what it says. What the contributors have to say, why they want to say it and who they want to say it too. I love people. It's people I love to read about, observe, cry about, laugh with, and hopefully, understand. Isn't that what fandom is all about anyway? (the majority of the rest of the letter carried this theme out in relation to the first 2/3 year of MAYBE)

A last question. Irvin, why are you so fantastically enthusiastic over fanfic? I mean, you said you would love to have some stories from me. How do you know what I write? It might be sheer crap. As a matter of fact, considering fans, that's your most likely bet. (but she did promise a story and to remind her father to do me a science article) (the reason I prefer fanfic to endless fan talk is that cons and personal letters or personal gatherings do that sort of thing a million times better. Many fans are fair writers tho not pro or are small time pros who only sell two stories out of two hundred. There is a tremendous amount of material which needs to see the light of day but is passed over in favor of damn idiot blitherings or fueds. This goes for articles on SF too, but not for book reviews/reports which are fairly common...IMK))

GLEN BROCK, Box10885, Atlanta, Ga.30310

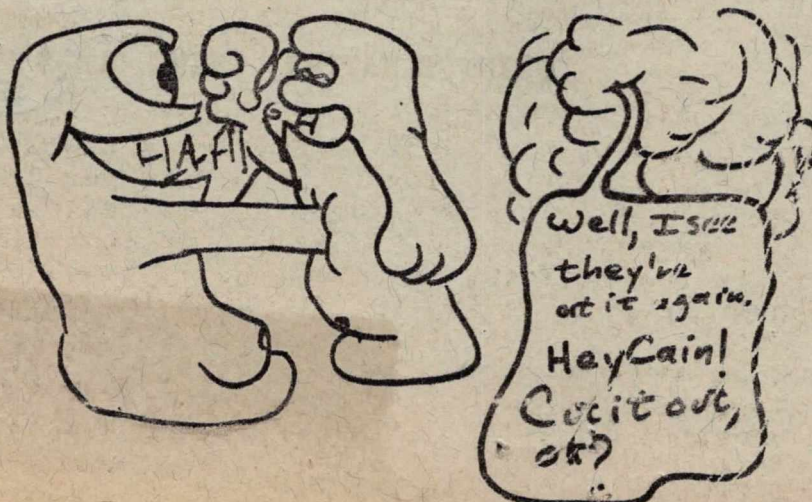
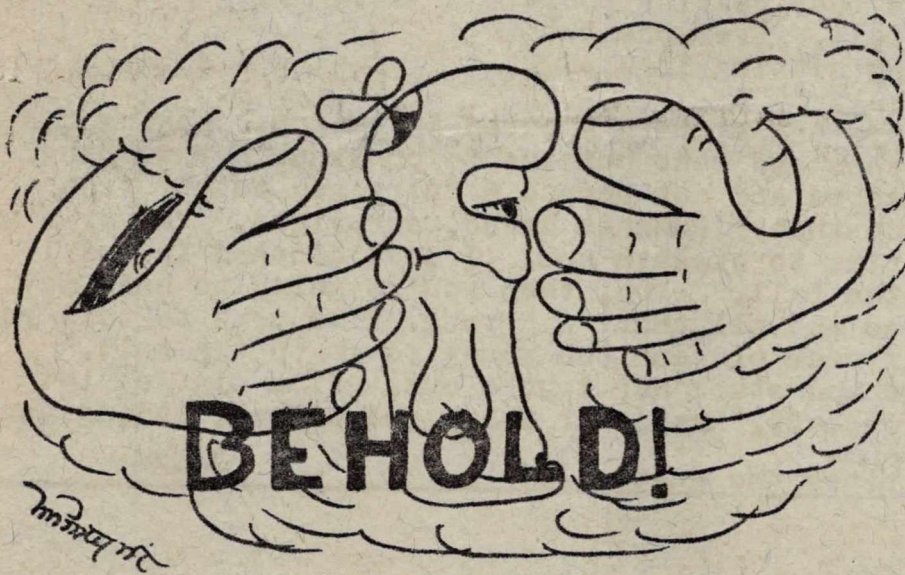
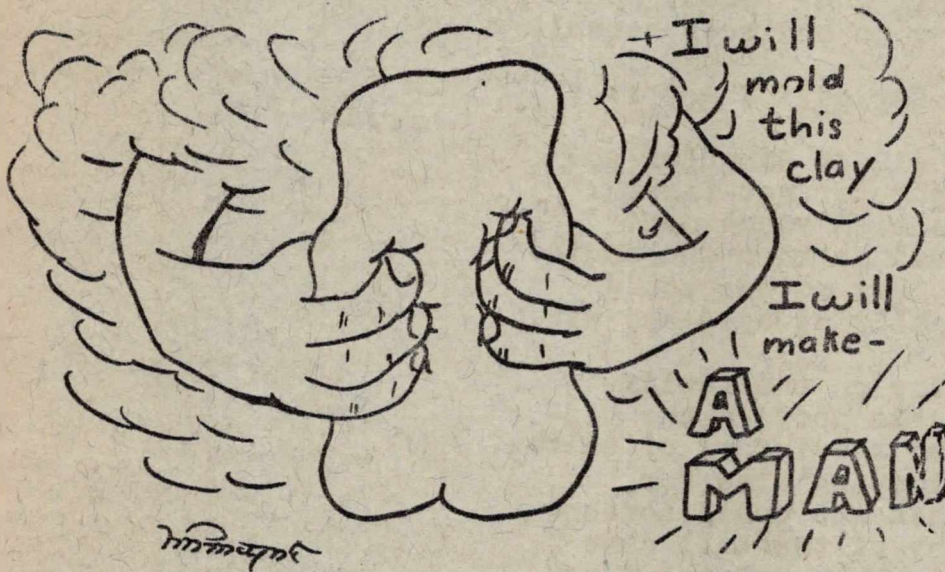
Greetings--enclosed are embellishments to clothe MAYBE with the respectability of artwork. (would you believe they are now scheduled for #13!!! That's how far in advance the art for covers goes.)

HANK DAVIS, Box154, Eoyall, Ky,40854

You and I have several differences of opinion, such as fan fiction, layout, Rotsler, etc. Thought: how about if Rotsler artwork appeared only on the pages with my material? Also, I know that you like fan fiction (and I've already said that I don't) but do you actively discourage articles, humor, reviews (scratch reviews, come to think of it; you wanted prozine reviews--how about book reviews??), etc. (other differences is he wants Montreal in '73 while I want Dallas. He also says he is more in favor of TAFF than the "Bob Shaw fund" and wants Australia in '75 and we agree on those two. Anyone who wants can submit direct to him--whatever he wants on his pages go. I don't discourage anything except things I consider not as interesting as I like. Right now, we are overloaded on everything except what will go in the 15pp of the other 3 coeditors for issues 10 & part of 11. I can always print good stories and prozine company reviews...IMK-0o0.)

RAMANDA

By Thomas Wiloch



Once in a time long ago, when the world was still a playground for every kind of elf and fairy, there lived a girl named Ramanda. She lived in a small hut with her 35 brothers and sisters; plus her folks. It was a hard life she led, filled with work from dawn till dusk. How she longed to get away from it! How she wished to be like the kind who never had to work! She hoped and she dreamed until one day the king came to visit her town. All the townspeople cheered and waved for the king and so did Ramanda. The king was a kind sort who often threw gifts to the people on occasions like this. Ramanda saw that he had already thrown out four TVs, a dozen radios, and a brand new Corvette. She figured that her gift would be good too. It was! A ticket to the Annual Royal Ball! She stood looking at it for a long time. When she finally looked up it was night and everyone had gone. She walked home in a daze. "What have you been doing?" shouted her mother above the roar of 35 active children.

"I was at the king parade. I got this

from him" answered Ramanda, handing her mother the ticket.

"A ticket to the ball huh? Good, now your sister Booranda can go and meet herself a rich guy to marry."

"But the ticket is for me. I got it." said Ramanda.

"But shouldn't the eldest daughter go? Shouldn't the eldest daughter get first crack at all those nice rich young men?" Her mother replied. Ramanda knew she couldn't win the argument. Her mother could argue with the whole family at once and win. She fell silent.

That night as she lay on the family bed, (she had a comfortable spot in the middle so could well afford the luxury of wasting a few moments of sleeping time for thinking), she vowed that she would somehow go to the ball. The day of the ball came quickly and everyone was busy helping Booranda get ready for the ball. Everyone but Ramanda that is. She was sitting in a corner sobbing and howling.

"Crybaby" her brothers and sisters shouted in unison, shaking the hut. She just ignored them and went outside to continue her weeping. Suddenly a big light flashed and out popped a fairy god mother from nowhere. "How did you do that?" Ramanda asked, surprised. "Never mind kid, I haven't got the time to explain now. I just dropped in cuz I heard you crying about the ball." "Oh, then you're going to help me? Get me some fancy clothes and all that?" "Wrong. I've come to tell you you're just a runtly six year old and too young to go to the ball." Ramanda stamped her foot and stuck her tongue out. "You big meanie! she cried. "You are a crybaby." said her fairy god mother, fading away.

(And another LoC bites the dust....)

FROM:

Irvin Koch
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PRINTED MATTER THIRD CLASS MAIL

TO:

MICHAEL O'BRIEN
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