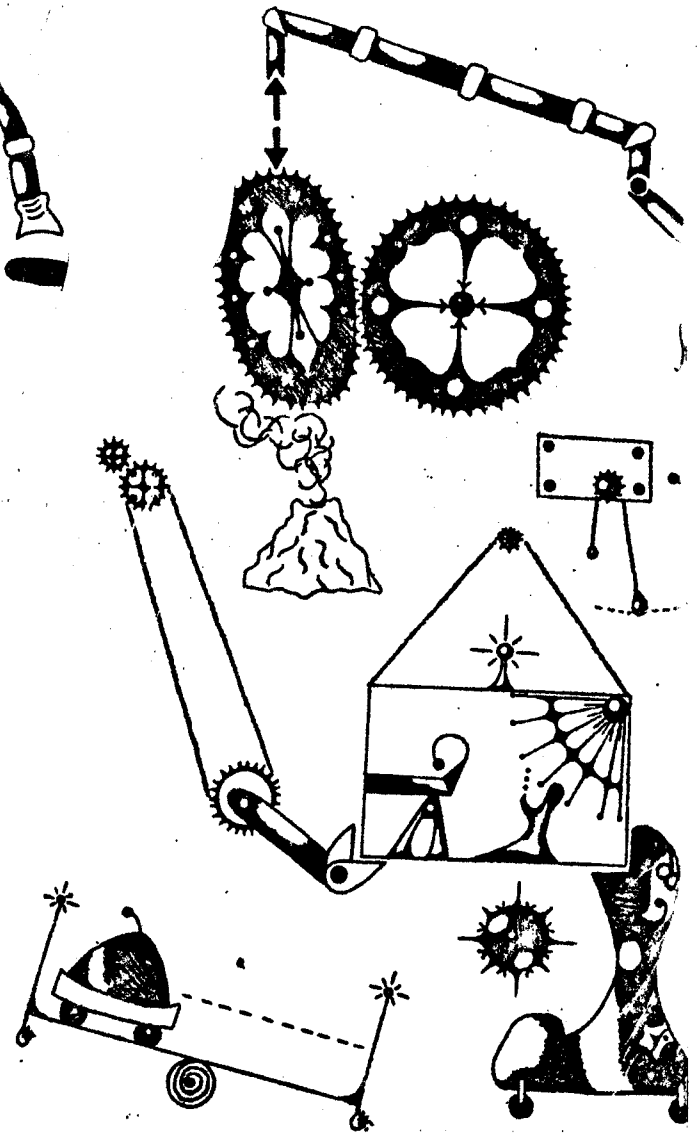
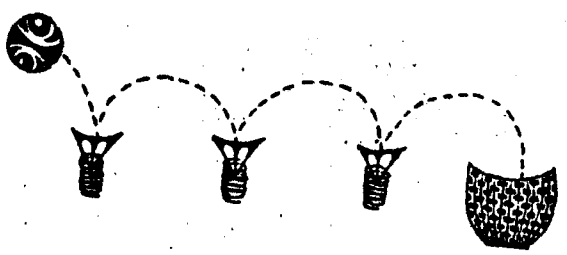


RUNWAY 37



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Art credits:

Olivia Jasen: Cover, pages 2,6,12
Robin Brunner page 14, back cover
W yne Brenner, page 15

Nextish I will be busting my butt to get it printed (if not mailed...) by the weekend of July 18-20 so I can have copies available at OKon on account of I've got an interview with one of the Featured Pros from the con: toastmaster Gordon R. Dickson. There may be nothing but a cover and the interview, but...

SPRING HAS SPRUNG...FINALLY
 Bringing with it the annual
 'crop of conventions

Aggiecon XI (Texas A&M Student Center, March 27-30) marked the return to the convention scene of two favorite faces: Polly Freas and Randall Garrett. Both have been quite ill in the past year and were a bit short of stamina, but seemed to enjoy themselves while they lasted. We certainly enjoyed seeing them again. (Garrett and wife Vickie Ann Heydron have recently moved to Austin, Texas, by-the-bye.)

Also on hand, and being very gracious about having the scene stolen from them, were Poul Anderson, Kelly Freas, and Katherine Kurtz.

Morris and I got to Aggieland around 3:30 Friday afternoon, after a sunny 9-hour drive in our unairconditioned VW Rabbit. We had to go out again almost immediately, though, in search of an atuo part, so did not effectively arrive at the con until about 5 p.m.. By then my absolute first priority was a SHOWER, so I missed the "conventions" panel I'd sort of intended to go to. The only other official programming I made the rest of the con were Poul Anderson's CoH speech Saturday just after lunch, and Katherine Kurtz's reading/chat Sunday just before lunch.

All the rest of the time I was either singing, or talking about singing, or sleeping.

Morris, meanwhile, was discovering computerized Dungeons and Dragons.

CAMBER THE HERETIC, the last of the "Camber" trilogy, is reported finished and off to the printers. Estimated publication date is Christmasish. Ms. Kurtz read a sample chapter from it, and described plans for other books in the series, which are in various stages of development, from gleam-in-the-eye to fairly completely outlined, to apparently several chapters written. There will be another set-of-thre on Alaric Morgan as a child and young man, a set on the Morgan/Duncan/Kelson careers taking-up about 2 years after the end of HIGH DERYNI, and one tentatively titled KING JAVAN'S YEAR which follows CAMBER THE HERETIC after a slight gap in time.

I don't recall exactly when we got started filking on Friday; there was a Reception for the various pros after suppertime, and I had a couple of songs to rehearse with Helen-Jo Hewitt and her autoharp after that; it must have been around 11:00 before we got set up in the second floor lounge. High points of this session were the dress-rehearsals of a couple of songs intended for formal presentation (i.e. singing in front of the authors whose stories inspired them) at Minicon and FoolCon the following weekend, and a set of Alamo songs.

A lot of people don't realize I was raised Texan. This includes even some Texas fans. A comment went up as I started the second Alamo song that I shouldn't let myself be bullied into doing them, even though they were appreciated more than I probably recognized. Whereupon I explained about having grown up in Baytown, 5 miles as the raven flies from the San Jacinto Battleground. After which we finished the set, which included a rabbleroising recitation by Peter Schorn of "The Death of Bowie Gizzardsbane" from SILVERLOCK.

Saturday evening's filking started uncharacteristically early: 9:30 p.m. The con banquet had been at 5:30 p.m. and nothing was scheduled afterwards except movies, and we wanted to be sure Polly would have a chance to come and listen for a while. (cont'd next page)

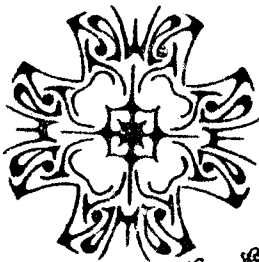
R37/4 page 2 Aggiecon cont'd.

Especially since I'd rehearsed a core group earlier in the day on "Hello, Polly; well hello, Polly--we're so glad to have you back where you belong, etc." The rest of the group caught on quickly and I may be wrong but I think Kelly did a suspicious amount of blinking during the song.

We followed that up with the Sketchpad song, since he had his along and was working his way through the concommittee and staff (at Aggiecon this is a formidable task, I might add!). From then until 1:30 a.m. I sang essentially straight-through since there were only 2 other filkers there, and they neos with barely 3 songs each to offer. I got my chance at a Kellycature when a local SCA bard showed up with his lute and did about 8 songs in a row. Bless him (and curse my talent for forgetting names to where I can't thank him properly.

My fingers were getting pretty ragged-feeling by 1:30 so when Cal Johnson asked for "Old Time Religion" I handed him the guitar and slipped off for a pitstop. When I came back the call went up for "The Eagle Has Lander" and my voice cratered in the middle of the first line, I simply could not hit the notes. I could still talk, though, and "Eagle" is always a good song to finish up a sing with, so we packed up the instruments and went in search of a surviving party. When I finally left that, I got kissed goodnight by Poul Anderson, which is almost as thrilling as being kissed goodnight by Gordy Dickson.

The trip home, once we'd got the Part Picked-up Friday installed, was totally uneventful until I got home and started to unpack and discovered I'd left my hair dryer (less than a month old!) sitting on the TV in the hotel room. The housekeeper's office never did find it.



Minicon 16: Radisson Downtown Hotel, Minneapolis, MN, Easter Weekend.

8:20 a.m.

Friday morning I entrusted myself to Delta Airlines and set off for my first Minicon. The only memorable incident enroute was the realization that most of those intent young one and two-stripe aircrew types scurrying around O'Hare were perceptibly younger than me. By way of retribution the plane sat on the ground for half an hour before leaving for Mpls, so was about that late getting in. My roomates had already checked in when I got to the hotel; this meant I got the rollaway.

I schlepped around to con areas in general Friday afternoon, delivering various items: con flyers to freebie tables, quilted critter (Koala pillow) to Ken Fletcher for the DUFF auction (cont'd next page)

cookies to Munch Movement, a tape from Aggiecon for Gordy Dickson. (I'd got my hands on Helen-Jo's autoharp and tried various songs on it. Gordy's "Apple Comfort" sounded so good I made a tape of it for him. He liked it enough to have me autograph the cassette...how's that for egoboo?!) Met Rick Sternbach and Clifford Simak while I was up there also.

Had dinner with Kip McMurray about 10 p.m. Friday. Very good and inexpensive Italian place about 3½ blocks from the hotel. Met Anne, Bob, and Robin Passovoy coming out as we went in. We filked in Kip's room after dinner, quit about 2 a.m.--people have to be alive for things in the morning.

Such as breakfast (coffee and fruit juice, actually) with Sandra Miesel Saturday morning. We've been averaging 2 to 3 pages each, each direction, almost each week all winter but had not really talked to one another at cons that much before now. Catchup time. Then lunch with Barney Neufeld and Ann Cass (Barney buying, bless him). Proxied the buckster rooms after lunch. I've left 3 quilted drawstring bags with Janet Gruckshank & this drew an inquiry after a special color plan and I had my first commission project! Sat with Melissa Bayard a bit & worked on another quilted bag and watched her turn out buttons hand-over-fist.

Caryl Wixon enticed me to the banquet after all with an offer I couldn't refuse: sit at table with Joan Vinge.

Caryl also spotted us a nice-sized function room off the Mezzanine for filking afterward. There was a costume-ball, with a lightshow and live band, over in the ballroom. Showstealer is "Disco Droid". We invite him over to the filk & sing "The Marvelous Droid" for him. Then Curt Clemmer introduced him to the Techies... Jaon Vinge dropped in and I got to sing Michele Cox's "Tin Soldier" song for her. She liked it. Catchup included Anne & Bob Passovoy, Bill Roper, Mary Jean Holmes, Kip, Bruce Pelz, and Gordy. Bob P. turned back into a parent at 1:30 a.m. when it was time to retrieve Robin from the babysitting room, but Anne and the rest of us hung around for another hour or so. When the filk finally did shut down, I went off to a 3:30 a.m. breakfast at a nearby Dennys-type place with Eric Webb and Chris Clayton.

Sunday breakfast (for the second time) was around 10 a.m. with Kip--he'd picked up the Friday supper tab so this was my treat. Collared Sandra while waiting for Kip to get there, got her to sign her essays in the new ACE edition of DORSAI! and the Feb/March DESTINIES. After eating, Kip and I rehearsed our "Audio-Visual Filk Show" of his slides of Scottish Highland scenery and my vocal of "Finlandia".

Got invited out to Gordy's home Sunday after lunchtime, along with the Passovolk, Eric and Chris. We were to see Chris off to the airport and visit with Gordy's mom. There was some delay in departing, though; Gordy's car had been used by Dave Wixon to run an errand sometime since it had been parked Thursday, and it was no longer where it had been & Dave hadn't written down where it was now. Anne, Robin, and I guarded the baggage while the gents ransacked a 6-story parking deck.

Got back to the hotel around 6; joined Ann Cass, Corinna Frank, the Wixons, Sandra, Kip, and somebody on the end whose face I couldn't see, for sandwiches in the bar. Ann C. had to catch a plane for home right after supper, and the Wixons had to go back on-duty as consom, so by the time Kip and I got upstairs with the A-V filk paraphernalia, the Passovolk, Corinna, and Sandra were the only ones left. (continued next page)

The slideshow was well-received, and afterwards the 8 of us sat around on the couch and associated chairs with our feet up on the coffee tables and a red quilt filched off one of the suite's beds spread out over our joint laps. Melissa Bayard is being approached for commemorative buttons.

The Passovolk and Corinna had a train to catch eventually, and after they left other people wandered in and out til around 3 a.m.. At various times the group included Bob Tucker, C.J. Cherryh. (the con GoH), Donald & Elsie Wollheim, Jone Stopa, Al Fitzgerald, Eric, Sandra, Rusty Hevelin, the Wixons again, Jim Odbert, Kip, Gordy, & me.

Monday morning was time to pack up and go. Gordy loaned me one of the spare keys to his suite so I could stash my trash there when I went to check out and eat. Eric also had a flight out on Monday afternoon, about an hour ahead of mine. Gordy took us out to the airport, with Sandra along as return driver. I forgot which airline I was supposed to go out on (hadn't read the tickets since I bought them in January!) & went to Northwest instead of United at first. Once the bags were disposed of the four of us descended upon the coffee shop for lunch before Eric's flight. He'd driven us out, and for a while there we thought he'd boarded his plane with Gordy's key-bundle still on him. Sitting there in the bar, we decided there wasn't much could be done about it til everybody was back home and in-reach of a phone, so why worry. (The keys turned out to be down in the valet-parking lot...with the car.) Eventually, sloshing gently from my margarita, I was hugged and kissed and pointed at the door of the airplane. I had a lovely nap on the flights home.

I saw/talked to whom I haven't mentioned elsewhere: Namedropping: folks Richard Sokol, Darlene Coltrain, Bob Vardeman, Kevin Dunn, Carol Kennedy, Arthur Hlavaty, John Purcell, J.R. Holmes, Neil Preston, Teddi Stransky, Becky Darrow, Mike Wallis.

DO; OR DO-NOT: THERE IS NO "TRY"... Yoda

BOOK REVIEW: THE CRIMSON CHALICE by Victor Canning.
review by Samanda Jeudé

This book takes the early Dumnonian heraldry claiming as Arthur's parents the great chieftain Baradoc and the Earth goddess Tia and tells a down-to-earth origin of the great dux bellorum. Many of the characters from Mary Stewart's THE CRYSTAL CAVE series are here, in a totally new form, and Merlin makes his re-emergence as a shadowy healer outside the grip of time and history. Canning finds a mundane mother for Arthur, but retains the name, and draws together the triple threads of Rome's departure, the Saxon invasion, and a semi-mythical Speaker-to-Gods who ties together the fragmented British tribes for a final stand of the light before the Saxon terror. Ignore the cover illustration with its 14th-century lady's dress and 16th-century castle, and concentrate on the grubby reality of 4th-century Britain, when the historical Arthur, in all probability, did his crusading.

MICHAEL ELLIOT AT THE OLYMPICS

By Jean Lamb

Michael Elliot, a rather normal-appearing humanoid with brown eyes and mousy brown hair, worked on an unusual paper, the DEATH STAR CLARION, as copyboy, Kava-maker, and all-around gofer. His editor, a five-tentacled Antarean, turned green whenever he was angry but was now glowing pleasantly pink. He always did this when thinking of someplace interesting he could send Michael.

So when Michael found his name on the list of contestants in the Imperial Olympics, he was not resigned to making a fool of himself in the interests of circulation. But when Kabin, the editor, threatened to have his last three travel vouchers audited, Michael blanched and ceased his protests. He knew he shouldn't have claimed that visit to Madame Rosa's Emporium as a legitimate medical expense (though the visit to Dr. Clapwell shortly afterwards certainly was). "Very well," he mumbled, "I'll go."

But when he arrived at the planet Propper, permanent home of the Olympics, and found he had been signed up for the pan-boxing competition, he nearly took ship again. But the guards had been warned. And the tombstone of the late Dr. Zachary Smith warned what happened to unsuccessful stowaways.

Michael was also surprised to find he was considered a serious contender. Obviously Kabin had been spreading some tall tales and cash in the right directions.

At last the fatal day arrived. Defeating the favorite, Chingol the Vull, was tantamount to winning the gold medal right there and there. Unfortunately, the eight-foot-tall purple being had won all previous matches through death or dismemberment of the opposing party. Michael knew he was doomed.

Chingol came thundering in on two great flat feet, in contrast to Michael, who wore spiked shoes, an armor-plated jockstrap, and a look of terror. The first round began.

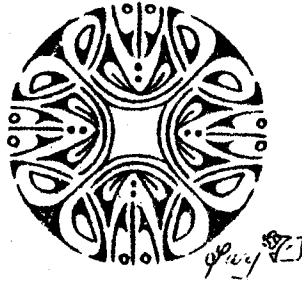
Michael ran for his life. In fact, he did nothing but run, incurring the wrath of the audience and the contempt of the judges. Somehow the first round ended and Michael was still alive. He looked up into the audience and saw Kabin at a ringside seat. Good old Kabin! At least his editor had faith in him. Then he saw the green-with-anger Antarean shaking his eyestalks and paying out some credits to a mangy-looking slime mold. Michael sighed and prepared for the second round, which would begin all too soon.

The referee came up to Michael and indicated through Denebian sign-language that he would be executed anyway, should he show the same cowardice in the second round that he did in the first. Mike gulped. He got the hint.

The second round began. He rushed out, fired by fear and greed (the gold medal ought to be worth something), determined to find a weak spot somewhere. He inadvertently got too close to the Vull and stepped on the Thing's feet. "Pardon me", he murmured, spikes dripping purple gore, and was extremely surprised to see Chingol's face crumple in pain. This gave Michael the clue to the one and only vulnerability of the Vull. He rushed in again and again, planting spiked feet on top of bare ones. Finally Chingol was so enraged and confused it lost all coordination in number four arm, which promptly hit the Vull itself in the jaw, scoring a self-kayo. (cont'd)

Michael was stunned to learn he was the winner. A group of reporters gathered around him, agog to see the man who had pulled off the greatest upset ever. "How did you do it?" asked a pasty-faced humanoid with a cheap toupee; "How?"

It was quite simple, really," Michael said. "I just took the Vull by the corns."



THE MIGRATED ARKANFAN AT DunDraCon
by Billie Odell

Had a good time, but should note that this particular con is strictly for the game-players and that there were no activities for the group as a whole....which would have been virtually impossible anyway as there were several hundred, median age 16...

Mr. Biggleton etc. handled the whole thing very efficiently and one of my first observations is that it was a raging moneymaker! The hucksters, which they called "dealers," with one exception were young people hired to tend tables of printed or manufactured materials, all strictly game-related. The one exception was a lost-wax jeweler and wife who do elegant dragons etc, price range from \$35.00 to \$200. There were none of the familiar-form art shows, pro-host, famed guests, etc. Mostly the young folks divided into adventure cells playing their cubscout hearts out for 6 to 12 hours.

There was a little media coverage, the local tv-folk trying like mad to make something sensational out of the role-playing-game by using buzzwords such as "cult-like" to which the only possible response must be "oh, bosh!" However, it does seem to be a behavior-modeling experience rather than an intellectual development endeavor. Few readers, for instance.

In several thousand other words, this particular event was some different than other SF cons. There are endless game stores opening around here, not necessarily affiliated with the bookstores, and some places provide tables & space which rents for \$1.00 per 4 hours, game rental 50¢, and the experience of a "Dungeon Master".

(('Here' is Palo Alto, CA, in the San Francisco Bay area))

THE GIRL AT MA JHONG'S BAR AND GRILL

N.A. Collins

The three companions gathered around the wooden table in Ma Jhong's Bar and Grill were hardly "typical". "Mismatched" might not really describe them, either. They were hunched around the back-most table, their faces illuminated by the guttering candle stuck into a wine bottle.

The largest of the group was female, surprisingly. She was tall and big-boned, the weak light showing her to be a White Nomad of the Cimenon Track. Her Nomad's features were topped by untraditional red hair and green eyes. She wore the coin of a mercenary-assassin at her throat. She was leaning forward, both hands wrapped around her drinking cup.

Beside her sat a woman so petite she seemed a child. She was darkish in complexion, with black hair and violet eyes. Her demeanor was that of a cougar in repose. She wore a basic thieving suit with a cape; around her neck was the office-insignia of a Master Thief.

Opposite the two females sat a rather young male, barely out of his adolescence. Despite his obvious youthfulness, the man's hair was iron gray. He wore the browns of a Mercenary and his right breast showed where an army-emblem had once been attached. He looked from one woman to the other, then shook his head.

Every weapon of the trio was placed on the tabletop as a sign of good faith. A scimitar, poignard, stiletto, rapier, magick-pouch, war-axe, garrotte, and a bow with its accompanying quiver of arrows were piled before the surly group. But the most dangerous piece of equipment was not on the table.

PEEP?

It was under it.

The gryphon stuck its eagles' head out from under the tablecloth and chirped in baritone. The Cat, the darkish woman, clamped her hands around its beak.

"SSSSHHHH!"

The gryphon looked into Cat's eyes and whimpered.

"Don't be cruel, Cat. All he is is hungry." Ra-Zor, the red-haired Nomad, took the bone from her plate and offered it to the gryphon. The gryphon's golden eyes lit up and the beastie snapped at the offered titbit. "There, are you happy, Oddy?" In answer, the gryphon withdrew its head.

Grayfriend, the gray-haired youth, lifted an eyebrow and stared at the place where the gryphon had emerged. "Oddy?"

Ra-Zor nodded. "It's short for Odd Bodkins"

"Odd Bodkins?"

Cat looked peeved. "What do you expect from something like that?"

"For a minute I thought you were pointing at me, " grinned Ra-Zor.

"Don't be too sure!"

"Let me get this straight...You want me to link up with you....again? WHY? All the way from Thorlaket you two blasted me about how green I was, how inexperienced I was, and how badly I bungled everything! Now you want me to team up with you?"

Ra-Zor shrugged. "We like you, kid. Besides...you're a damned good horsethief. And it gets awful lonely adventuring. There have been times when I would have died for a prettyface."

"Hah!"

"Don't be snide, Cat."

"What about, uh...?" Grayfriend motioned to the gryphon under the table.

"Odd Bodkins?" Oddy is ours until either he or we die. That's awful permanent-sounding, but life is strange."

"That's not all that's strange..."

"Shh, Cat. Oddy is 'a pet now."

Something under the table gave a thunderous belch.

"Are you for hire, Outlander?"

MA JHONG'S cont'd/

Ra-Zor started and turned to glower at the stranger who had interrupted their argument. She was a woman a good tenyear older than the Nomad, dressed in a green butterfly-sleeve robe with matching leggings. Her hair hung down to the small of her back and it was red, not unlike Ra-Zor's own.

"Who are you?"

"I am Margia the Minstrel. Er, you are an assassin-for-hire, aren't you?"

"Amongst other things. I am Ra-Zor the Fierce, a D'Zari from the Track."

"I am in desperate need of a killer-for-hire. I am a Bondslave under Contract to a bondlord known in the Kingdoms as Heavy Ned. He bought me when I was a child and has taken his money from my living; singing in all the dives and sinkholes of Esrith."

"And you want me to do something about the situation? Why don't you free yourself? I've nothing against good money...but this sounds somewhat personal, if you don't mind my saying so."

"It is not as simple as it sounds. Heavy Ned uses magick in order to keep control of those he has bought. But if it was a mere case of bondslavery, I would not care over-much. The life is not all that bad. But Heavy Ned has decided that I be added to his seraglio!"

"From what I hear concerning Heavy Ned," interjected Cat, "I would prefer mating with a mentally-deficient yeti."

"Precisely!" Margia looked beseechingly at Ra-Zor: "D'Zari, I beg of you...help me. I will give you two bags of gold if you will slay Heavy Ned for me."

"Now you're talking, sister."

"But only after Heavy Ned is dead. If you fail, my money will be withheld, due to either your death or mine, if not both."

"I knew there had to be a catch," sighed Ra-Zor. "Very well, Margia, I will kill your master for you."

"By the way," purred Cat, "What magick does this Heavy Ned use to bond you to him?"

"As long as blood runs through his flesh I can not raise a hand against him without risking the chance of ending my own life as well."

"I see...and I am to make sure that blood ceases to run through his flesh."

"Just from it."

"Nice lady," muttered Grayfriend.

Ra-Zor felt like an idiot.

She was following a virtual stranger into the richest district of Esrith to kill a prominent bondlord for nothing more than the nebulous promise of gold! She fancied herself getting soft in the braincase.

She liked the red-haired minstrel, and trusted her. To an extent. To be blunt, she trusted the Cat to an extent. But savages, the Master Thief was quick to note, were always suspicious of someone or something. Besides, Ra-Zor had little fondness for the institution of the harem. She remembered all too well having to rescue a young D'Zari girl from one such place in Ypsilanti.

But it had been best summed-up by the Cat.

"It escapes me why you're going through all of this!"

She had laughed as Ra-Zor and Margia marched off toward their destination. It escaped Ra-Zor, too.

"This is the place of my master." Margia motioned to a high wall which separated the street from the estate of Heavy Ned. "Beyond these walls are two gardens, each separated from the other. The manor itself rests within the center of the inner garden. Heavy Ned dwells in the tower in the center of his home."

"Will you be coming with me?"

"I can not. Heavy Ned fears those he owns and those he has spited during his many years of self-gratification. He has erected a magickal barrier about his property so that none of his retinue may enter." She extended her hand and a burst of light corroborated her story.

"Something tells me this is not going to be very easy. Why couldn't you go through the Assassin's Guild like anyone else?" Without further comment the D'Zari effortlessly scaled the wall.

Ma Jhong's cont'd

"Good luck, Ra-Zor!" called Margia. As the D'Zari disappeared over the barrier she added, "You'll need it."

Ra-Zor was wary of the outer garden. The carefully manicured grass and the concealing bushes made her nervous. She drew her barbed scimitar and pressed her back against the wall. The bushes rustled, but there was no wind. A deep growling came from the night and dozens of glowing eyes stared back at her. The familiar musk-scent that had haunted her childhood came to her.

Sand tigers!

The huge beige cats edged from their hiding places, the muscles rippling under their silky pelts. Ra-Zor felt her hair stand on end. During her early years amongst the D'Zari she had slain many a sand tiger; it was a ritual of adulthood. But never had she been faced by more than one.

The great cats seemed to know her memories, and she could hear the start of the low hunting-growl they shared when stalking in a pride.

From the shadows bounded a golden blur. The sand tigers shrieked in rage and fear as their attacker fell among them with tearing claws and rippig beak. What the gryphon did not slay arrows fletched with gray dispatched.

When the fighting was over, Odd Bodkins lifted his head and shook the blood from his dripping beak. The gryphon padded over to Ra-Zor and brushed his head against her thigh.

"Good ol' Oddy!" I should have known you would never leave me be!"

"What about me? That mongrel gryphon gets his head stroked—all I ever get is kicked in the butt!" Grayfriend stood up, his bow still in one hand.

"Later, Grayfriend, later!" Ra-Zor looked around. "Where's Cat? Surely you didn't come here without her?"

"Tsk, ts, my barbaric friend! Only over the wall for a minute and already you're in hot water! It looks like you might need my help..."

"And you'll get half of the purse?"

"A third", interjected Grayfriend.

Ra-Zor scowled down at her pet: "I'm glad you can't talk!"

The inner garden was a transplanted jungle from the Slavers Coast. Cat stiffened at a faint sound.

"Did you hear that?"

"Hear what?"

"Open your ears, Water Rat! There it is again. Damn this darkness!" The Desirian dug into her magick pouch and tossed something into the air. It flared into a small blue-white ball of fire. Something in the shadows grunted and recoiled. "Holy Mafta!"

Ra-Zor drew her scimitar and got between the Master Thief and the hulking shadow-thing that hesitated just beyond the witch-fire's glow.

"Grayfriend! Make ready with those arrows of yours. When they run out, come in with your axe!"

Odd Bodkins whimpered and put his head between his huge paws. Damn unreliable gryphons!

It came out of the shadows. The thing that roamed Heavy Ned's inner garden was a bull ape of the Slavers' Coast. The creature stood nearly seven feet, its broad face contorted with a malignant hunger that gave it a grotesque resemblance to Man. In the eerie witch-fire the brute's coat shone indigo. The heavily-musclcd arms and the short legs made it look like a deformed giant.

In her many travels Ra-Zor had seen many such apes, usually chained in the Tarantuean temples as sacred guards. But never had she seen one as hate-filled and malevolent as the beast that loomed before her.

"Cat...?"

"Fight, damn it! You're the barbarian!"

The ape lunged forward with a roar, its arms swiping forward for a grip on Ra-Zor. The D'Zari leapt to one side, the barbed blade of her weapon barely cutting through the thick mat of the ape's fur.

There was the 'twang' of Grayfriend's bow and the ape shrieked with indignant rage. One of the Atlantean's arrows jutted from the monster's shoulder. It paused its attack to grasp the offending arrow and break it off at the flesh.

Ma Jhong's cont'd

While the ape did so, Ra-Zor leapt forward and brought the barbed scimitar down in an arc that split its chest open in a crimson gush. The creature howled and lumbered forward with anger and pain in its little red eyes. It knew it was dying and it intended to take her with it.

Ra-Zor was caught within the deadly embrace of the massive ape and felt herself be lifted from the ground. She shut her eyes, picturing herself decapitated by the beast's jaws or broken into a thousand varying angles by its calloused hands.

When she came to, she found the corpse of the bull ape collapsed in a gory pile beside her. Several of Grayfriend's arrows feathered the creature's back.

Cat bent over her. "You allright, kid?"

"Don't start, Cat." She picked herself up and retrieved her sword. "I'm nearly killed and you don't lift a finger! No magick, no nothing! What kinda mage are you?"

"Sheesh! Ask somebody if they're okay and she bites my head off!"

"Never mind my mouth, Cat. Close brushes with death make me bitchy, that's all."

"What about me?" wailed Grayfriend. "Doesn't anyone care if I helped save your life?"

"Later, Grayfriend. Later. We've still got a night's work ahead of us." She scowled at the cowering gryphon. "Lotta help you were!"

The twelve Calmarean bodyguards were dicing in the main hall that led to the stairs of their master's quarters. They rarely did anything but drill and wait for one of their employer's surprise inspections. They knew they were largely ornamental. Anyone dangerous to their master's health usually ran afoul of his "pets" in the two gardens.

So three peculiar intruders and a rather impressive-looking gryphon took them by surprise. They were happily tossing the bones and bragging about their amorous adventures in the Low Quarters when an unexpected voice came from behind them.

"Don't make a move, my friends. Not unless you want our little friend to...um...sharpen his claws on you."

Odd Bodkins lashed his tail like a stalking mouser and looked...hungry.

"Those stairs--do they lead to the living quarters of the bondlord Heavy Ned?" asked Cat.

"Yes! Yes!" offered the guard captain eagerly. "Heavy Ned lives above us! We--we won't argue! G--go on up; we don't mind--really!"

"It's nice to see what loyalty your money can buy nowadays," sniffed Ra-Zor. "Oddy, watch these men. If any of them tries to do anything--eat 'im. Do you understand?"

Odd Bodkins understood.

"Cheerio, me lovelies," purred Cat. "See you later--maybe. Hmm?"

The winding tower stairs were enough to make a mountain goat ill. Ra-Zor had her scimitar drawn, Cat had her tossing knife free, and Grayfriend had discarded bow for war-axe.

"You know," whispered Grayfriend, "I once heard of a strange tower in an ancient city. It was made of silver with a cusp of jewels atop it. An evil wizard in the service of the blacker gods held a fallen god with the head of an elephant and skin the color of jade captive along with a mammoth ruby known as the Heart."

Ra-Zor and Cat stopped and turned to stare at their companion.

"Where did you hear such garbage?" asked the Cat.

"Uh, I, uh...er"

"Never mind, Cat. Next thing you know he'll be telling us there's a citadel somewhere that sings!"

"So...what do we do now?" Ra-Zor motioned to the door before them.

"Proceed with caution. Hmmm." Cat pressed her ear to the door, face tight with concentration. Her skin paled noticeably. "Ghods above and below! The room's alive with serpents!"

Grayfriend and Ra-Zor exchanged uneasy glances.

"Er, serpents?"

"Yes! I can hear their language! This is going to be tricky..."

"I think I'm going to be ill..."

The Cat produced a tiny reed-thin pipe from her cloak and waved her friends behind her.

Ma Jhong's cont'd.

The Master Thief pushed open the door and stepped into the ill-lit cobras' den.

Dozens of wedge-shaped heads arose and flared their hoods, hissing in anger at she who would disturb their peace. Numberless eyes, hard and black and unblinking, gazed at her and hated her.

The Cat piped the tune that the Eldritch had taught her to calm the dragons of their race. She feverishly prayed it worked on other cold-blooded creatures as well. If not, she was as good as dead.

She nearly stopped when one of the snakes, nearly twelve feet long, brushed against her leg. It was all she could do to keep from screaming, but she continued. One by one the snakes fell into the hibernation the piping conjured. The hissing ended and the room was silent. The Cat motioned for her companions to enter.

"It seems that Heavy Ned is more than a bit precautious," observed the Desirian. "Paranoid is more the word! I assume that door leads from this anteroom to the illustrious bondlord himself."

The lock crumbled like paper under the Cat's alchemy. Ra-Zor kicked the door in with all the grace and aplomb of the barbarian-born.

His excellence, Bondlord Heavy Ned, sat on his circular bed amid a tangle of silken sheets and furs. With him was one of the dark-skinned beauties of legendary Nube. The bondlord was aptly named. He was an offensive roll of pink-jiggling blubber. His eyes stared dumbly from a blank pig-face.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion?!" he blustered, heaving his bulk from the bed.

"Please...don't get up," said Ra-Zor, stepping forward. "I'd rather not look. And to answer your question, we are here to kill you, bondlord."

"Why? I do not know you! I've done you no ill."

"Yes, that's true. But we...rather, I...were hired by one of your bondslaves. A woman named Margia the Minstrel."

"That trollop! What was her price? I'll double it. Triple it!"

"I'm sorry, Bondlord. The Contract's sealed. I'm honor-bound to comply."

"You barbarian fool! I gave you your chance. Talia, destroy them!"

The Nubean girl grinned and displayed sharp teeth. Ra-Zor felt her blood run cold. A weir-woman! Yoggoth! The leprous wolf-spawn slept with a weir-woman!

Talia growled and dived at Ra-Zor, moving too swiftly for the desert woman to avoid. With an inhuman shriek the weir-woman jumped and bore her to the floor. The she-beast sat astride her chest, her teeth gleaming in the light from the oil-lamps. Talia drew back her claws to bring them down in slicing death on Ra-Zor's jugular.

Talia's body sat there, frozen in mid-action while her head bounced across the floor. Grayfriend stood over the pinned D'Zari, his battle-axe dripping.

"Ra-Zor...?"

"Later, Grayfriend! Later!"

Heavy Ned was making animal noises and staring at them with wide, terrified eyes. Ra-Zor got to her feet, shaken but unhurt.

"You must die, bondlord. You knew that. Surrounding yourself with cobras, guards, beasts, and hellspawns might delay it, ...but they could never stop it."

"No!...No! I have money...!"

"It's a pity I have to dirty good metal on you..."

"Ra-Zor! D'Zari!...Hold!" It was Margia the Minstrel. The red-haired singer entered the bedchambers of her master.

"Margia, how is it you can enter?!"

"When the Cat charmed the cobras she broke the last field around the estate as well. And since you left a rather well-marked trail behind you, it didn't take long to find you. Ra-Zor...I have no money to pay you with!"

"WEAT?!"

"It was all a lie! I wanted to have Heavy Ned dead so badly before he added me to his soraglio that I dared to lie about a Contract agreement with you!"

Heavy Ned giggled. "She lied, barbarian! I have money---that's no lie! I'll pay you and your friends to kill her! She deserves it,...She lied to a Freelancer! Tried to cheat you out of your money. Kill her, Barbarian. Kill her!"

"I sell my swordarm to whomever pleases me, Bondlord. And you do not please me!"

"Stay your hand, my impetuous friend", interrupted the Cat. "You said yourself it's

Ma Jhong's cont'd

a shame to soil good steel on him. I think I have a solution to your problems. Margia, you stated that your Contract binds you to this toad as long as blood runs through his flesh?"

"Aye...that's true."

"No!...No---you wouldn't..." screamed Heavy Ned.

"Ah, but I would, Bondlord! And I shall!"

The obese bondlord jumped to his pudgy feet and tried to push past the group. The Cat lifted her hands and intoned her incantation in the strange tongue of the Eldritch.

Heavy Ned took three steps and turned into a fat statue of gold.

"There! No blood flows through his flesh. Now, isn't that better than a messy assassination?"

"Well, it's been a long night," sighed Ra-Zor. "Break off an arm and have it minted. You can have a messenger send it to us. We'll either be at the Brass Anklet Lodging House or next door at Ma Jhong's Bar and Grill. Nice working for you. Good evening...er, morning. With that they left Margia alone with her once-master and future fortune.

"I don't understand it! I've saved your hide three times tonight! And what do I get? 'Later, Grayfriend. Later!' All I ever get is chewed-out or criticized or made fun of! I'm upstaged by a damned addle-brained gryphon!"

"Grayfriend..."

"Ra-Zor, I'm going to have my say! I'm tired of being treated like a snot-nosed kid. Alright; so I am new to the business. But I can learn faster than you or Cat think!"

"Grayfriend..."

"I want some recognition, not sarcasm or a boot in the pants! I want to be treated equally and fairly! I want..."

"Grayfriend!..."

Ra-Zor grabbed the gray-haired Atlantean by the shoulder and threw him off-balance with the practiced ease of a wrestler. She caught him and lifted him bodily. She was grinning, her green eyes alive with a fire not all mischief.

"...It's 'Later'."



R37/4 page 13 MOVIE REVIEW: THE BLACK STALLION
Produced by Francis Ford Coppola, based on the novel by Walter Farley,
review by Margaret Middleton

I know it's not science fiction; go see it anyway!

Ya gotta understand: The Black is an old friend of mine. I've read Farley's books as I found them in various libraries from the 4th grade on. For those of you who do not have the pleasure of his acquaintance, The Black is an Arabian-bred horse, beautiful and wild as the sea, of a coloring which permits of no other rational name for him, and he's the fastest thing on feet.

The plot is simple: boy finds horse, boy tames horse, boy races horse. Young Alec Ramsay is New York-bound on one of those semi-tramp steamers which make up the lower middle class of the world's shipping fleet, when this fighting-furious horse is brought onboard somewhere in the Middle East. There is a storm and fire at sea; Alec and the horse are the only survivors when the ship goes down. Alec manages to grab one of the ropes attached to the horse, who tows him ashore on one of those rock-and-sand mountain-peak islands off the North African coast. The boy finds a patch of edible seaweed which keeps body and soul together in both of them until they are rescued. Back in suburban Long Island, Alec and The Black find Henry Dailey, retired horse-trainer. (The one "name" star in the film: Mickey Rooney. Back when I was reading these books I always visualized William Frawley or Cecil Kellaway as Henry; but then, Rooney nowadays looks more like Frawley and Kellaway did then...) Henry has an old buddy who is nightwatchman at Belmont Park and who lets them in to train at 3 a.m.. But without registration papers, where can The Black race? Well, it seems there is this match race afoot between the Eastcoast champ Cyclone and the Westcoast sensation, Sun Raider. Henry pulls in a few old favors and gives racing reporter Jim Neville a sneak look at The Black in action. Neville knows both a fast horse and a surefire publicity stunt when he sees them, and...

Of course The Black wins the race-- didn't I say he was the fastest thing on feet?

The movie is gorgeously filmed, and deserves the Oscar it got for sound-editing. Of particularly gleeful memory for me is the sequence where Alec first rides The Black: filmed entirely from underwater as the boy entices the horse out to swimming-depth and sneaks aboard, whereupon the horse charges off in a shower of spray. Other neat bits: The Black, spooked by the garbage man, has busted out of Alec's back yard and fled for the tall grass at the edge of town; Alec has trailed him all day and night, is curled-up disconsolately in an alley-corner about dawn; when out of the fog clops and jingles a junkman's cart pulled by a gray horse wearing an Emperor Napoleon hat. I'd forgotten old Nappy--I'm glad they left him in the movie. And then there's the poker game aboard-ship; table stakes include unset gemstones, various pieces of antique jewelry, and a two-inch-tall bronze statuette of a horse (now that's the way to play poker!).

here are detail-differences between the movie-story and the book-story, inevitably. But one doesn't start re-viewing them until on the way home afterwards, so they don't matter.

The chief difference is, the moviemakers resisted the temptation to film the last chapter of the book, in which Farley set himself up for a sequel...which eventually ran to somewhere around twenty books about The Black and his progeny and his only real peer, The Island Stallion, Flame. I drag this in because THE ISLAND STALLION RACES (cont'd)

I happened-across (and got in trouble with the 4th-grade teacher for not officially checking it out from the room library); and, years later when I was looking it up to reread, found it crossreferenced to "science fiction".

You see, The Island Stallion is taken to the races by Jay and Flick, a couple of planet-hopping extraterrestrials who stop at The Island to (in effect) change a flat, and then have to wait-over a few days for a favorable re-launch window...



R37 10

R37/e page 15 BAGELS! SPICY HOT
BAGELS!

Barney Neufeld, 12 April
2726 Girard Ave. I envy you your con=
South B-1 ability. I used to
Minneapolis, MN do that sort of thing
55408 without a second
thought myself. But,

I haven't been able to do it for over
a year now. I really miss it, too.
The fanish life in Minneapolis is very
different from what I've been used to
in Cleveland and Mississippi, but even
it cannot completely replace the feel-
ing of a good con. (It tries, though,
and comes close most of the time).

Your review of the latest Dorsai
books would have been much better
without the heavy-handed proselytizing
that begins it. It's quite all right
for you to express the belief that
you are dealing with Hugo material,
but no amount of brow-beating will make
me believe it before I've seen the
books myself (which I hadn't when I
read your review). I fear you al-
lowed your zealotry to get the upper
hand here, and my reaction to what
you say suffers because of it.

Steve

Leavell treats a disturbing point.
While there is nothing inherently
wrong with novelizing movies, it
can present a dangerous opportunity
(as STTMP illustrates so well).

The positive side of novelizations is that they provide for those who wish to con-
tinue to enjoy a given movie a means to do so. It, also, allows those who, for what-
ever reasons, did not see the movie an opportunity to experience it. But, the nega-
tive side of this practice is what has happened to STTMP. To wit, so many things that
needed explaining in the movie were left unexplained on the assumption that everyone
would be reading the book as well. It was a blatantly obvious attempt to make as
much money as possible out of the situation, and as such deserves our contempt rather
than our support. (Of course, they will make money out of the thing, and that's a shame.)
We've arrived a a point where science fiction is beginning to be taken seriously. If
we now wish to get science fiction films to also be taken seriously, we must insist
on proper attention to the requirements of good solid film-making, not just "purty
pichurs" stringing us along.

((good points all along, Barney. I don't take well to be-
ing exhorted, either...only it's hard not to exhort when one comes across a story that
grabs the way LOST DORSAI (especially) did to me. wotcha think of THE EMPIRE STRIKES
BACK ?))



R37/4 page 16 LoC's cont'd.

Ed Rom
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Book reviews: I have never read "Amazons" anthology--no comment. I agreed with the review on "Thieves' World"--it's a very good book. I hope there's a sequel. ((there is, being collected even-now.)) I just recently read the Dorsai story in "Destinies"--I must say that I find the Dorsai stories boring ((())) Different strokes for different folks, I guess. (I have liked a lot of other things by Gordon Dickson--I find his work to be rather uneven).

The article on "Life of Brian" was most interesting--it's ironic that opposition to a film of controversial nature usually serves to ensure the film's success. ((commercially, at least.)) I agree with the point made in "Push the Button, Max"--special effects are fine, but can only carry a movie so far. I wish somebody would make a film of a good SF novel--"STAR BRIDGE by Jack Williamson and James Gunn, or Bester's THE STARS MY DESTINATION. They would just have to make sure that the Hollywood hacks didn't mangle the plot in order to make it fit a formula. Maybe I'm expecting too much. "The Egg and Us" was rather enjoyable--is N.A. Collins an aspiring pro? I wish her great success. ((she is indeed. I continue to make small wagers with myself over how long I will be able to continue printing these stories before somebody else starts paying her for them.))

I wish your LoC'ol had been longer--lack of LoC's? ((yup)). I always enjoy reading LoC's--sometimes they inspire comments of my own.

Susan Schwartz
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New York, NY
10028

I reviewed AMAZONS! for SF Times (anybody seen that rag? I haven't, and I haven't got paid for the review, either, which is a bummer.) and I have to agree with Danell Lites that C.J. Cherryh's and Tanith Lee's stories are excellent. I thought that Elizabeth Lynn's story was the prize of the volume, and that Andre Norton's "Falcon Blood" finally Explained Things about the Falconers. (I am a great one for having things explained. Too many years of undergraduate essays, I suppose.) But I don't really agree with Danell on the rest. A lot of the other writers are sisters of Salmonson's, working out of the same small press, and the hassles in subtlety that bothered Danell just didn't get to me. Maybe I don't expect it in S & S; maybe I wanted to read some new people; and maybe...just maybe I wasn't as put off by really overt feminism (though I'm anything but an Amazon) as Danell, calling herself a reactionary, might be. Though I doubt it. As for "The Rape Patrol", I agree it isn't S & S. I don't know what the hell it is, but it resembles James Tiptree a lot more than it does Andre Norton. But I totally disagree with her that it isn't well-done. Whether or not it was worth doing...well, that's debatable; I don't like MOTHERLINES either. Salmonson is obviously a radical feminist, and her intros were sort of polemical, but hilariously nasty.

I can't wait for THIEVES WORLD II either. I just wish I could play, too. ((going by Susan's story in THE KEEPER'S PRICE, I wish she could, too. Asprin is open to a judicious number of new writers in each volume (ACE won't stand for too many of the boxoffice names being replaced by unknowns, but one can always ask).))

LATE-BREAKING: According to LOCUS #233, Ace books is announcing TALES FROM THE VULGAR UNICORN (THIEVES" WORLD II) for November.

THE TRAVELLING ARKAMPAN

June 20-22 MIDSOUTHCON Huntsville, AL
info John Purcell, Rt 1, Box 322-A, Leoma, TN 39468 \$10 reg.
Fred Pohl/Bob Tucker/Kelly Freas

July 11-13 ARCHON IV St. Louis, MO
info Box 12852, Overland, MO 63114. \$7 til June 15/\$10 after
Bob Bloch/ Bob Tucker/ Ed Bryant

July 11-13 HIGH PLAINS FESTIVAL Amarillo, TX
info 1206 W. 18th St., Amarillo, TX 79120 \$10 reg.
Kirk Alyn/Jackie Bielowicz/Bob Asprin

July 18-20 OKON'80 Tulsa, OK
info PO Box 4229, Tulsa, 74104 \$7.50 til July 1/\$9 after
Alan Dean Foster/Shelby Bush III/Mary Kay Jackson/ Gordon R. Dickson

Aug 1-3 RIVERCON V Louisville, KY
info PO Box 8251, Louisville, KY 40208 \$7.50 til July 15/\$10 after
Roger Zelazny/ Lou Tabakow/Vincent DiFate

Aug. 8-10 FILKCON II Toledo, Ohio
info Dan Story, PO Box 8022, Ann Arbor, MI 48107
filksinging

Aug. 299-Sept.1 MOREASCON TWO Boston, MA
World SF Convention #38 \$8 supporting/\$30 attending til July 15/\$45 at-door
info PO Box 46, MIT Branch PO, Cambridge, MA 02139
Hugo's, Site Selection for 1982 (Chicago VS Detroit)

Sept 12-14 OTHERCON IV College Station TX
info Box 3933 Aggieland Station, TX 77844 \$8 til Sept. 1/ \$10 after
Jack L. Chalker

Sept. 26-28 IMAGINITZACON Memphis, TN
info Mike Brown, 3211 Trezevant, Memphis, TN 38127 \$8 til July 4/\$10 til
Sept. 25/\$12.50 at-door. make checks payable to Lillian Weatherall
Robert Asprin/Stven Carlberg

Oct. 17-19 ROC*KON*5 Little Rock, AR
info PO Box 9911, Little Rock, AR 72219 \$10 til Oct. 10/\$15 at-door
Andrew J. Offutt/ Dick & Nicki Lynch/Jo Clayton



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