

RUNWAY 37 ROC*KON SUPPLEMENT
Containing material pertinent to ROC*KON*4.

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Art credits:

Brian Worthington: Cover
Olivia Jasen: page 2
Gary Z. Ralph: page 6
Robin Brunner: page 8
Samantha Jeudé: page 14

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Chicago in '82 Bid

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A FEW KIND WORDS ABOUT OUR VARIOUS GUESTS

Professional Guest of Honor: Gordon R. Dickson.

He doesn't really need an introduction. He can walk into any gathering of fans and be greeted with hugs and kisses (from the ladies), toasts (from the gents) and a general chorus of "HI, GORDY!" By the time a seat is found for him, any fans in the group who don't happen to have met him before this have a pretty good idea of who has joined the group.

His writing has been appearing in SF magazines and books for nearly thirty years now, beginning with a series of short stories, in collaboration with Poul Anderson, about some delightful aliens called Hokas. They look like live teddybears and just love to dress up and identify with exciting fictional people. They especially love Terran adventure fiction. EARTHMAN'S BURDEN, the collected Hoka stories, is planned for re-publication sometime this winter.

More recently, he has been working on the Childe Cycle, often also referred to as the Dorsai stories. When it is completed, it will form a connected series of novels tracing the ethical evolution of the human race from the Renaissance to the 25th century. Books published to-date in this series are (in internal chronological order) NECROMANCER, TACTICS OF MISTAKE, SOLDIER ASK NOT, and DORSAI! Other short works, not directly in the main story line but serving as "illuminations" (his term) of certain important supporting characters have also been published: "Warrior" and "Brothers" deal with Ian and Kensie Graeme, and "Amanda Morgan" introduces a neighbor family contemporary with TACTICS. ("Amanda Morgan" and "Brothers" have been collected in the book THE SPIRIT OF DORSAI, along with some extremely intriguing connecting text. SPIRIT should be available at ROC*KON). The next major book in the Cycle, THE FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA, is in the process of being written, with a target release date of a bit over a year from now.

In between all the writing, Gordy finds time to attend about two conventions a month, on the average, where he lights up all our lives with his charm, and enthusiastically helps fill the nights with song.

Fan Guest of Honor: Dalvan Coger.

Dal has bookshelves in his house like other people have paneling and wallpaper. In his spare time, he teaches at Memphis State University, reviews books for the Memphis "Commercial Appeal" newspaper, and helps hold the Mid-South Fantasy Association together.

His fan activity goes back to before WW2, in Battle Creek, Michigan, and though I don't think he's ever printed a fanzine of his own, he's certainly kept most of the ones other fans have sent him.

Fanac (though not book collecting) was interrupted somewhat by a career in the US Military, but once retired from that he got back into the swing and even started going to conventions. He was toastmaster for the first three ROC*KON's, and he did such a good job we've promoted him this year.

A FEW MORE KIND WORDS ABOUT OUR OTHER PROS ATTENDING

Robert Asprin: Toastmaster

Bob has been at all the ROC*KON's there have been to date, and I'm sure we'll find some way to lure him down again next autumn.

He has just about completed the transition from Big Name Fan (we had him as Fan Guest of Honor at ROC*KON*1 three years ago February) to Up and Coming Young Pro (he's doing his first Pro Guest of Honor gig at Hoosiercon this coming February), but he still enjoys singing and drinking all night, and ROC*KON intends to see that he gets a chance to indulge himself.

Bob has three novels out, now (all published since that first R*K): THE COLD CASH WAR (St. Martin's hardback, also paperback but I forget who); ANOTHER FINE MYTH (Starblaze trade paperback, just-released mass-market PB); and THE BUG WARS (St. Martin's hardback). Also just released is THIEVES WORLD, a collection of heroic fantasy tales edited by Bob, with stories by various writers all set in a common universe: one writer's character may show up as a bit player in another writer's story. (Bob's essay on how this came about is hilarious, and worth the price of the book in itself. I read it sitting in my car in the parking lot of the bookstore and several passing mundanes must still be wondering why that lady was giggling into her steering wheel.)

Lynn Abbey: neo-pro.

After all the ink/blood that Danell Lites, I, and many other fannish reviewers have spilt over ACE's Illustrated editions, they have gone and spoiled their track record and brought us a Big Picture Book that is more Book than Pictures. Lynn Abbey's DAUGHTER OF THE BRIGHT MOON is 400+ pages, with not more than half a dozen illustrations (which is in a way a pity, because the ones they do have are by Steve Fabian.) At least one of the bookstores is ordering copies of it and if we get lucky, they may actually arrive in time for the con. Even if they don't, you can still get her to autograph her story in THIEVES WORLD.



THE INNER FAN -- A GUIDE TO FOOD IN THE VICINITY

IN* HOUSE EATERIES

Terrace Restaurant: 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.; 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Coffee Shop: 7 a.m.-2 p.m. Mon-Fri; 7 a.m. - 11 a.m. Sat & Sun (but Mrs Mc assures me that they won't close up if there are obviously folks still coming in to eat as 11 a.m. comes up)

After 5 Lounge: 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m.; 4p.m.-midnight Mon-Sat.

METROCENTER MALL(MAIN STREET): 6 blocks east of hotel along Capitol

McDonald's: corner of Capitol and Main, northeast. 6 a.m.-7 p.m. Mon-Sat.

Out to Lunch: no street number but across Capitol from McD. Open Mon-Fri for lunch: sandwich take-outs; good reputation.

Say McIntosh's: east side of Main between Capitol and 4th St. In old Center Theater building. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon-Sat. Barbecue sandwich, home-made lemonade, sweet potato pie specialties.

Woolworth's: southwest corner Main & 4th St. 9:30-5:30 Mon-Sat. Grill, ice cream, donuts, candy apples.

BROADWAY: 2 blocks east of hotel along Capitol

Minute Man, Scramble Snack: northwest corner B'way & 4th.

MM open 11 a.m.-11 p.m. daily including Sunday

SS open breakfast 6:30 a.m.-10:30 a.m.; lunch 10:30-2 p.m. Closed Sat & Sun

First National Bank Bldg. Capitol & B'way.

Golden Host Cafeteria: ground floor, 7 a.m.-2 p.m. Mon-Fri.

Farkleberry Tavern: second floor, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.; bar open til 8 p.m. Mon-Fri.

Jacques & Suzanne: 30th floor, 11:45 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Mon-Fri; 6:45 p.m.-9:15 p.m. Mon-Sat; require coat & tie, serve "cuisine", priced accordingly.

Holiday Inn, 6th & B'Way, Restaurant & Lounge

Judy Judy Judy's: 8th & B'way northeast. 10:30 a.m.-10 p.m. Sun-Thurs; til 11 p.m. Fri & Sat. Burgers, chili, StufUrSelf salad bar. New place.

ALSO WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE:

Golden Host in Blue Cross Bldg. across 6th St. from hotel, same hours as one in bank bldg.

Steak & Egg Kitchen; 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ blocks west along Capitol from hotel, same side of street, open 24 hours.

Schlotzky's: 210 Center (4 blocks east, 3 north) 10:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Mon - Fri. Super sandwich.

THE INNER FAN CONT'D

ALSO DOWNTOWN BUT FAR ENOUGH AWAY YOU'D WANT TO DRIVE:

T.G.I.Friday's: 3rd/Markham @ Victory (west along Capitol to Victory, right 2 blocks, it's on the left painted blue.) Open for lunch & supper daily except Sunday.

The Shack: across 3rd/Markham from Friday's. 7 a.m.- 9 p.m. xc Sundays. Barbecue pork sandwiches specialty

The Train Station: on down Victory from Friday's & The Shack; Victory runs into parking lot. 4 places:

Slick Willy's: game arcade & pizza

Sidetrack: Disco

Buster's: cafe serving "a variety of savories". Don't know if open for dinner.

Tracks Inn: good steak place, not too shockingly priced. open for lunch & dinner during the week, dinner only Saturdays. ?? Sundays.

ROLL YOUR OWN:

Kroger-----: I-30 & Broadway in NLR: cross Arkansas River on Broadway headed north, turn right onto Broadway/NLR, Kroger & K-Mart are at I-30 front-age road on your right. Kroger open 24 hours. platelunch takeout/deli open lunchtime-suppertime.

Wonder Bakery Thrift Store: south side of bakery building 1 block west of hotel. 8:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Mon-Sat at least.

Farmers Market: parking lot northeast corner 3rd & Main. Fresh produce off back of trucks. Saturday only.

LIQUID SUPPLY (21 yrs. MINIMUM AGE FOR ALCOHOLIC LIQUIDS PURCHASE)

Capitol Liquor Store in hotel lobby. Has been advised of Tullamore Dew fandom; will be open Saturday afternoon as long as business seems to warrant.

Warehouse Liquor: 10th & Main (south on Broadway to 10th, east to Main) Case lots beer, soft drinks; some bottled goods too. Open til Midnight daily xc Sunday. (Arkansas is DRY on Sundays)

Other restaurants listed in LITTLE ROCK TODAY, copies available in your hotel room or at hotel desk.

A VISIT TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET by Harry Partin

I suppose that I might be classified as a devout Anglophile. There is nothing more pleasant for me than strolling the busy streets of London or wandering aimlessly through the narrow, twisting side streets of Soho or Bloomsbury. It was while pursuing this delightful pastime a couple of months ago that a circumstance occurred which allowed me to indulge myself in another of my minor vices.

While taking a shortcut from Shaftesbury Avenue to Charing Cross Road along Denmark Street I discovered "Forbidden Planet". Now my wife knows (and understands, thank heaven) my passion for bookstores. She spotted the sign first and pointed it out to me. There it was--a new science fiction bookstore! Last year, I had found (again quite by accident) "Dark They Were And Golden Eyed", in a dingy, damp little alleyway off Wardour St. It was touted as "the largest SF bookstore in the world" and may well be, for it was an SF buff's dream

Forbidden Planet is not as large a store as Dark They Were and Golden Eyed, but their stock was magnificent. They have most every in-print science fiction and fantasy paperback published in the States and the UK. In addition there are racks of various fanzines and prozines, many difficult-to-find hardbacks and a mind-boggling stock of comics both English and American.

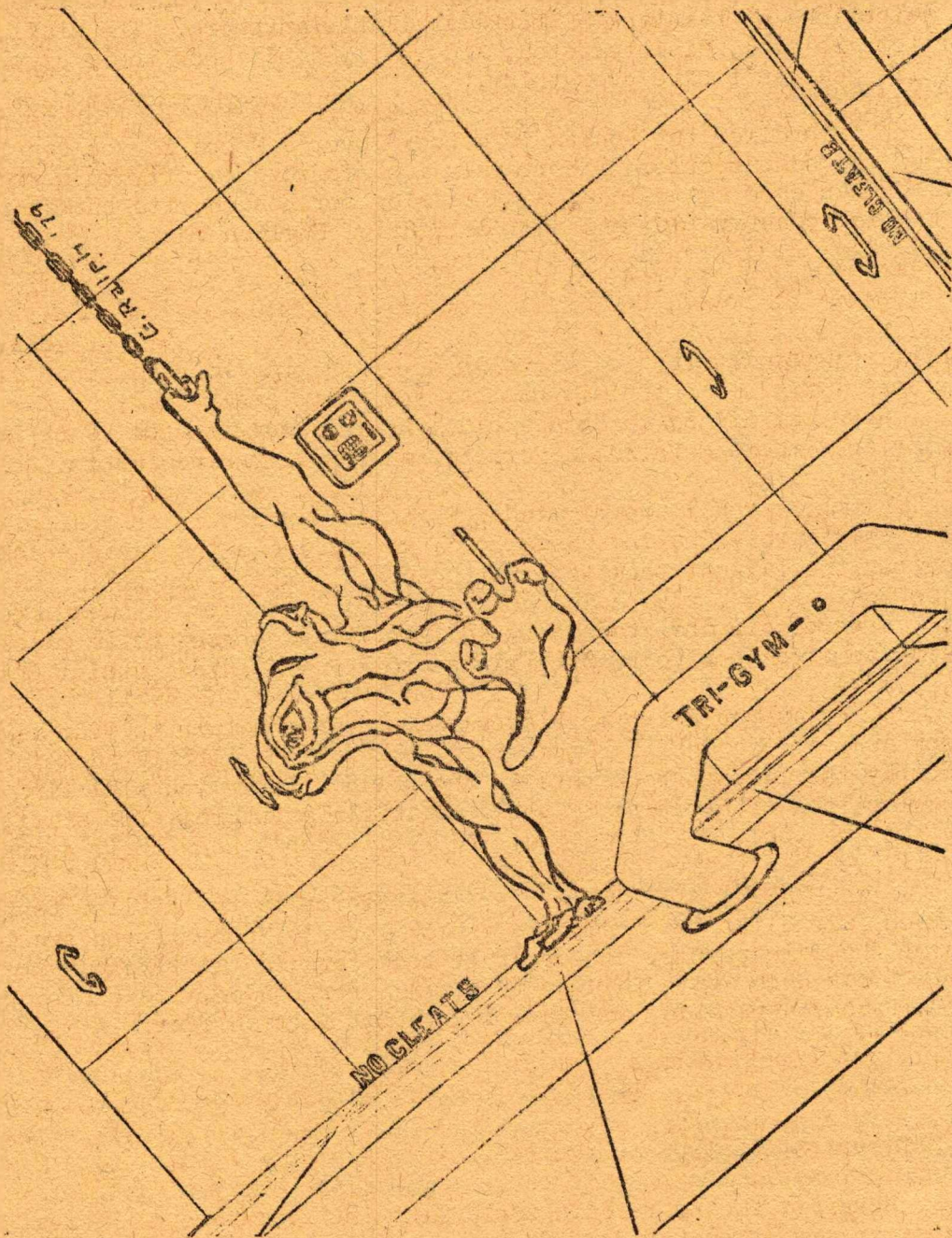
Now the personnel in many London bookshops tend to be a bit standoffish and gaze disdainfully down their long English noses at anyone who has the temerity to ask them a question. But not so the proprietors of FP and DTWAGE. They went out of their way to help me find the books that I wanted, to get me a copy of their latest catalogs, and to add my name to their mailing lists. I suppose that being SF and Fantasy devotees themselves, they tend to identify with the ecstasies of a fan like me suddenly turned loose in bookstores like theirs.

I purchased such goodies as Saul Dunn's three volume series about the CABAL (the nastiest bunch of SF heroes in a long time), Chris Carlsen's BERSERKER series (not to be confused with Fred Saberhagen's BERSERKER novels as these are heroic fantasy), Richard Kirk's RAVEN novels (four volumes of heroic fantasy about a swordswoman), and James White's latest SF novel, UNDERKILL (not yet available in the US)

Science fiction and fantasy paperbacks are priced in the UK about the same as in America but if one orders bymail, the postage can eat you alive and postal service is notoriously slow. However, if any readers would like the addresses of FP or DTWAGE, I will be happy to send them (send SASE please to Box 425, Hinds Junior College, Raymond, MS, 39154)

As you leave Forbidden Planet, if you turn to your right, just one block away across Charing Cross Road, you will see the facade of Foyle's, which is probably the largest bookstore in the world. There you will find one of the largest selections of hardback SF books available anywhere. The staff, however, as noted earlier are cool, disinterested, and really don't know their stock very well. Oh, well, you can't have everything.

Bookstores in the smaller towns of England are much friendlier but London is a book lover's Mecca if you can ignore the snobbery of the salespeople. I certainly look forward eagerly to next year when hopefully I can once again indulge my passion for London, its bookshops, the magnificent English countryside, and that delightful English beer.



HOW TO NOT SELL A BEARD DESPITE REALLY TRYING by Steve Simmons

For those of you who don't know, I've had a beard since before I became an active congoer in the midwest. Oh, there was a three-day period when I shaved it off, but the result turned out to be that most people neither recognized me at the con nor remembered my presence there afterwards. So when Paula Smith and I organized the Coulsons to Newcastle Fund for the purpose of sending long-time fans Buck and Juanita Coulson to Seacon, I had a hunch that a beard auction would be one of the things we'd try.

Somewhere along the route, we came up with a variant on the whole idea. I don't really know whose idea it was, either mine or Mike Short's, but it boiled down to this-- a double-ended auction, where cash is a vote whether to keep a beard or shave it off. All cash, no matter which side, went to the fund. We planned it for Windycon, and began whipping up support.

Preliminary stuff was interesting, but not particularly lucrative. Mike and I accumulated about \$8-\$10 apiece, most of it going to the 'keep it' funds. The big push arrived when Bob Passovoy sold us off at the Fan Fund Auction.

Mike went first, with a total accumulation of about \$60.00. He ran screaming up and down the aisles, with people shouting out figures and destinations, shoving money into his packets. Bob stayed up on stage exhorting for both sides. I made the tactical error of going out into the audience urging people to give to the 'shave it off' fund, which Mike noticed and remembered. Passovoy did a countdown for final votes, with Mike screaming to be able to keep that glorious red bush of his. At the end Mike sat on stage and counted each pile, 'shave it off' first. About halfway through the 'keep it' pile he heaved a sigh of relief, having pulled ahead. Then it was my turn.

I too ran up and down the aisles, screaming to keep it. People like Elan Litt and Teresa Minambres were very generous to me, but Mike kept coming over with piles of money and saying: "Here, all this is to shave it off". Fear struck my heart when Mike Glicksohn stood up and shouted: "\$20 to shave off half of it!" It seemed some sort of rallying cry, as people began putting up droves for half of it. My protests were to no avail, it just poured in. Things got more and more frantic as Passovoy stood on stage counting-- "Five...four...three...two...twentydollarstokeepit...onezero!" I sat down on the stage, caught by breath, and started counting. I don't remember the exact figure, but there was almost \$70 in the 'shave it' pile. I felt the much smaller wad in the other pocket, and now I was doomed. For form's sake I started counting. \$20. \$30. \$40. (after only three bills!) I started on the ones and fives. \$64.00. Start the change. First the quarters. Ohmigawd, it's close. Start the dimes. Partway through the dimes I collapsed in ecstasy and exhaustion. Made it. Total clearance was about \$2-- one percent of the total take for the evening. Glicksohn complained that the fix was in, and I was appropriately grateful that it was true. Between the two of us we took in about \$200, a very hefty chunk for about 20 minutes work, but I'm not sure I like the pay scale enough to try it again.



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DOG EAT DOGMA short fiction by N.A. Collins.

The patrons of the Marketplace paled and exchanged stricken glances as the low chanting began. The constant bantering, yowling, and shouting of the bazaar faded away and the mysterious chanting grew closer. The hagglers, thieves, and buyers of the Marketplace quietly parted to give the black-robed chanters ample berth.

There were thirty of them marching two abreast, dressed in the long hooded cassocks of the Brothers of the Moon God. They moved like a huge black snake, twining its way through the streets of Phele.

Three strangers in the Marketplace did not skirt the strange religious men. Indeed, they pushed their way to the front of the human corridor formed to let the Brothers pass.

One was a tall young woman with shoulder-length red hair, shifting green eyes, and the garb of a White Nomad from the Cimenon Track. The woman on her right was slightly older but much smaller. She boasted a darkish complexion and hair and was dressed in the long-sleeved tunic, tights, cape, and boots of a Thief. The youth to the left of the Nomad was gray-haired before his time and dressed in the browns of a Mercenary. He kept one hand on his weaponsbelt and the other on his wineflask.

They were R-Zor the Fierce, The Cat, and Grayfriend of Atlantys, respectively. When the last of the Brothers trudged past, the human corridor shuddered and fell in on itself.

"By the Hadean Chimes! What is going on?" Ra-Zor stood with hands on her hips, staring after the retreating Brothers. "Since when have the Brothers of the Moon God caused such out-and-out fear amongst their parishioners?"

The Cat shrugged. "I am as puzzled as you, my barbaric friend. The Brothers of the Moon God are a rather sedate sect. They stay in their abodes...Moon Temples, I believe,...and pray and offer harmless sacrifices to their gods. They have no reputation for cruelty or unhealthy sexual habits. They breed their own priests, for that matter. They are so overwhelmed by the do's and don'ts of their Order they've made themselves virtually extinct, as a viable religion. Nice people, but extremely stuck in their ways."

Grayfriend shook his head in disgust. "You said Phele would be safe to hide out in until Earth cools down! 'Nothing ever happens in Phele'. Hah! I should have known better! We're going to get involved in something!"

The Inn they had chosen for themselves was near the outskirts of Phele. It was a modest affair with the customary tavern and stable. As soon as the sun went down and twilight thickened into night, the inn's proprietors began hastily shutting and locking the windows and doors of their establishment.

The trio looked up from their meal, rather confused by the frantic actions of their hosts.

"My good sir! What is the meaning of all this...activity?" The Cat waved a hand to indicate their urgency.

"My lady," puffed the aging innkeeper, shooting the bolt of the inn's door, "we do all of this for your safety!"

Ra-Zor lifted an eyebrow. "Our safety? Are their brigands about? Nightraiders?"

"No, my lady. Something much worse."

Grayfriend grimaced. "I knew it!"

Ra-Zor looked thoughtful. "Would this have anything to do with the Brothers of the Moon God?"

"Everything, milady!" The innkeeper's voice became low and strained. "The Hierophant of the Brothers has been possessed by some foul hell-thing that has turned the gentle Brothers into fiendish murderers!"

"Do they threaten the farmers and townspeople?"

"They simply take things. Goats, lambs, cows, kids, rams, horses... Any kind of livestock. Anyone who dares defy them is paid another visit. And a child is taken. The point is clear. The lesson is learned. The "punished one" lets them steal his prize hogs and cattle rather than chance another loved one be stolen away to the Moon Temple!"

Grayfriend was about to say something when there came an equine scream from outside.

"Our horses!" Ra-Zor leapt from her seat and made for the door. Her way was blocked by the ample body of the innkeeper's wife.

"No, I beg of you! Let them take your horses! Better some poor dumb beasts than yourselves!"

"Madam, please...!"

Fleshy fingers dug into Ra-Zor's tunic, anchoring her to the spot. "We defied the Brothers! We know! They took our baby!"

The Cat pried the two apart. "Good woman, our hearts go out to you in your grief... but my friends and I must go after what is ours. Do you understand?"

The trio hurried and strapped on their weapons, getting directions to the Moon Temple as they readied themselves.

"Do you think they'll make it?" asked the innkeeper.

"Why not? Fools are the blessed of the gods."

The Moon Temple was typical of its ilk: a large edifice with a dome in its center made of ivory. It sat atop the lonely hill like a fallen moon, ominous and uninviting.

"What do you think?" whispered Grayfriend to the Cat.

"Ridiculous architecture..."

"No! About the Hierophant being possessed by daemons! Or was it just one?"

"I think the Hierophant of the Brothers of the Moon God may have a bad case of insanity. No doubt caused by congenital problems or a hyperactive dose of the clap."

"I thought you said they didn't have any unhealthy sexual habits!"

"I did, but I didn't say they were celibates!"

"Would you two stop discussing the sex lives of high religious rulers and tell me if this is what I think it is?"

Ra-Zor pointed to a large alabaster statue that now rested in a thicket in several varying pieces. Once it had been a handomely-carved man-bull with a full moon resting between its horns.

"It's the Moon God! The one the Brothers worship!" gasped Grayfriend.

"I thought so."

"Maybe the tales of daemons are true. Knowing how enamoured they are of their Code, the Brothers would have to be possessed to destroy one of their god's images... ZOKK!" A strong hand clamped a damp rag over The Cat's face from behind. From the stench she knew the concoction to be sleeping dust mixed with black lotus essence. As she fell into the drugged depths of unconsciousness she was barely aware of Grayfriend and Ra-Zor struggling against similar fates.

"Well...What have we here? Disobedient strangers who have come to reclaim their 'rightful belongings'!"

The voice was high-pitched and irritating. It made Ra-Zor's head hurt. The dizzy Nomad lifted her head and forced her eyes to focus on the man who sat on the canopied throne atop the jeweled dais.

He was slim, almost effeminate, with close-cropped hair and watery eyes outlined with charcoal. He wore a flowing orange robe with the arcane symbol of the Moon worked into the breast.

"You are the Master of the Brothers?"

"Master, Controller, Lord, God...What difference does it make?"

"You are the Hierophant?"

The Hierophant smiled indulgently. "Indeed. Oh, do not fear for your friends, D'Zari...they are not damaged."

The Cat coughed and stood up on wobbly legs. "That's good to hear...so you're the daemonic Hierophant!"

"Granted, in this form I am hardly, um, imposing. My human constitution is inherently weak. My mother and father were sister and brother. Thus I was born to this body."

"Why did you steal our horses? For that matter, why have you been stealing the parish's livestock? Do you sacrifice them to the new god you have toppled the Moon God in favor of?"

The Hierophant smiled in such a manner that The Cat wanted to tear it off his face.

"In a way, thiefling. You see, by the Code of the Moon God I am the personification of the Moon God here on La. My will is absolute. My word is law. I am the god of these cattle." He gestured to the thirty robed and silent Brothers that stood in the cavernous throne room. "Until now they have been contented cows, mindlessly chewing their cud. They are neophobes! They fear new ways of thinking! They are happy buried in their archives, cataloguing that which is Forbidden. The Moon God died centuries ago from rigor mortis and was replaced by such deities as Mafta, Zokk, Yoggoth, Yaman, Hiss, and a hundred others. But these blind inbred fools have not noticed it! Because of their insane fear of New, of Change, they are responsible for me being a throne-ridden cripple!" A rage overcame the Hierophant, shaking him like a sick pup, spittle

flying from his slack lips. After he regained control of his errant body, the Hierophant hurled the golden sceptre of his Order at one of the stone-silent Brothers. The priest did not move and the sceptre struck him squarely in the chest.

"So you see," he continued nonchalantly, "I abandoned the god I am to represent incarnate. I turned to a far more potent god. A god that could give me physical power, the ability to satisfy my lusts and quench my passions! I turned to the Dark Side of the Moon God. He whom I had been raised to detest from birth...The Howling God."

"Zokk and Mafta!" gasped Grayfriend.

As the Hierophant spoke he began to change. His face grew longer and narrower. His ears elongated themselves and became pointed. His facial structure shifted from the Human to the Lupine. His meagre body was gradually thickened by sturdy bone and muscle. His snout and teeth became broader, allowing for Human speech. His hands coarsened and became claws. His entire body was covered by a thick mat of silver fur.

"Werewolf!" Ra-Zor felt the barbarian's distrust of the Unnatural swell in her to the point of hysteria. The innkeeper's wife was right. There was a daemon!

The Hierophant stood up, luxuriating in flexing his mutated muscle. "The Howling God is good to me. He gives me the dual blessing of Shape-Changer and Immortal." He strutted and preened, admiring himself in the Divining Crystal set beside his throne. "The Hierophant of the Moon God was a weakling crippled by genetics. The Hierophant of the Moon God controls all who surround him! And all the Howling God asks of me is an occasional Human soul."

"You mean to sacrifice us to your wolf-faced god," Ra-Zor made it a statement rather than a question.

"Frustrated, barbarian?" The Hierophant walked down the steps of the dais until he stood muzzle-to-face with the Red-haired D'Zari. "Why don't you kill me? I saw to it you were left your boot-kriiss..."

Ra-Zor was moving even before the Hierophant was finished with his sentence. There was a soft "thwuck" sound, and the other two saw the Hierophant standing, unmoved, Ra-Zor's kriiss hilt-deep in his chest.

"A nice amusing try, D'Zari." The Hierophant plucked the kriiss from his person as if it were no more than a bothersome thorn. "Have them taken to the holding pen."

Grayfriend was still too shaken by the sight of his first actual werewolf to be overly concerned with being ceremoniously disemboweled. The Cat was pacing the length of the room with the ill-ease of a caged jungle animal. Ra-Zor sat staring at nothing in particular. They all snapped to wary attention when a key ground in the lock.

In came a Brother with a food tray. They silently watched him as he placed their last repast on the table. As he turned to leave, Ra-Zor came to her feet and firmly gripped the jailer's wrist. She did not apply pressure nor did she try to break his wrist. She simply held him where he stood.

"You! You are not mind-controlled. I can tell it in your eyes!"

"That is true. Few of us are truly mesmerized."

"Then why do you follow and obey that monster? Why haven't you killed him?"

The eyes in the Brother's bland face widened in actual shock. "You blaspheme! He is the Moon God Incarnate."

'Don't you mean the Howling God Incarnate?' purred the Cat?

"We steal because the Hierophant must eat. The Hierophant commands it. Render unto the Hierophant that which is the Hierophant's."

Ra-Zor let go of him and the Brother hurried away. She made a disgusted sound. Civilized religion!

The Cat made an abrupt meowing sound and beat her gloved fist repeatedly into her palm. "Silver! Silver will destroy a werewolf! My my mother's coin-changer, that's it!"

Ra-Zor grinned and went over to where Grayfriend was crouched and proceeded to try to take his wineskin from him.

"Wait a minute! This is for emergencies! You said so!" howled the young Atlantean.

"Water Rat, if this is not an emergency, you have a strange sense of priorities!"

Ra-Zor took the wineskin and The Cat produced a swithblade no bigger than her little finger from the folds of her cloak. Ra-Zor unceremoniously ripped open the skin. The unfortunate flask bled profusely for a few moments then dried away. With the skill of a barber-surgeon, she turned the wineskin inside out and disgorged a pound of silver coins.

She then poured the coins into one of Cat's stockings and secured the open end. Ra-Zor hefted her handiwork in proud hands. The Hierophant would indeed be surprised.

The Hierophant was still in his wolf-form, his long pink tongue dripping like that of a ranch hound. He stared down at the marked sacrifices to his god, his yellow eyes alight with diabolical pleasure.

"The Howling God will be very pleased with your souls. You have lived full, exciting lives. You will be a delightful change from the bland souls of stolen babies!"

Ra-Zor took a step forward. "Before you condemn us to a nice ritual sacrifice, Hierophant, would you allow a poor, uneducated, unsanitary desert savage try to prove brute strength over the Supernatural once more?"

The wolf-face of the Hierophant grinned even wider. "Why, of course, D'Zari." He relaxed into the arms of his throne. "It is most amusing".

Ra-Zor pulled the black stocking from her tunic, gripping it tightly. She began to swing the weighted garment in tight circles, modifying the standard movements of the hunting bolo used by her people. She increased the speed of the makeshift blackjack as she came up the steps of the dais to where the transformed Hierophant sat.

"A bludgeoning? How unique!"

With a practiced snap of the wrist, Ra-Zor brought the blackjack down squarely on the top of the Hierophant's head. The werewolf was still laughing when the silver-filled stocking sank through his fur, skin, skull, and gray matter.

As he died, the Hierophant reverted to his human form. Ra-Zor pulled the somewhat soiled weight from the Hierophant's ruined skull. Dirty money, perhaps, but money nonetheless...

The Brothers of the Moon God seemed to be shaken from a sleepwalker's dream. They congregated numbly about their once-master's cooling body.

"You...You killed him! You killed the Hierophant!"

"Please, no elaborate gestures of gratitude. Simple thank-yous will do." The Cat had retrieved their weapons from the hollow base of the Hierophant's throne.

"You have blasphemed! You must be punished! The Codes demand it!"

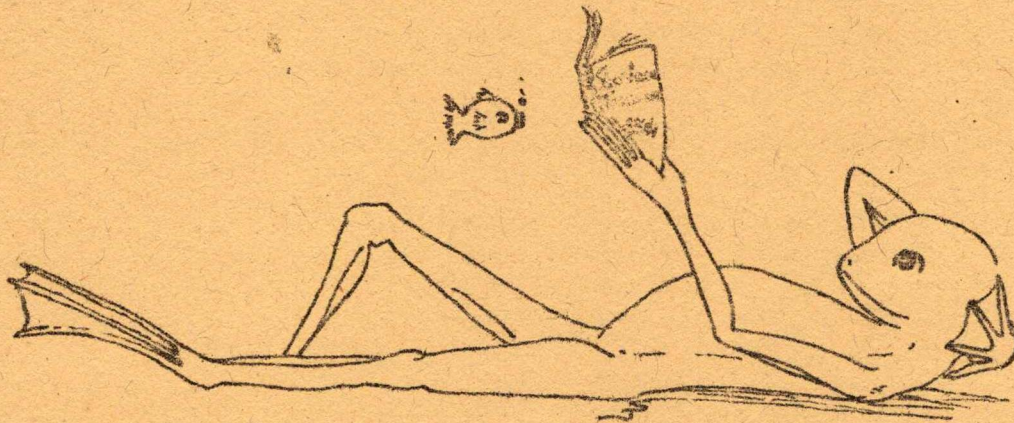
Ra-Zor hefted her barbed scimitar so every one of the thirty Brothers could see its saw-toothed edge. "You can't please anyone anymore! I will assume that the late great Hierophant had not gotten around to dining on our horses. At least not all three."

"You have slain the Hierophant! You have murdered the Moon God Incarnate!"

"He may have been your god, but he wasn't mine. If any of you dear Brothers try to stop us from leaving, we'll have to hurt you. Fatally." smiled the Cat. "Good morrow".

The trio left the confused, leaderless Brothers milling around their deceased man-god in befuddled consternation. What were they to do? The Codes said nothing on how to detain heretics who did not want to be Punished for Grand Blasphemy.

One thing was for sure...it would be a very difficult embalming.



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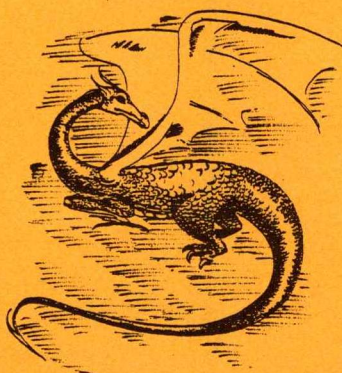
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