

Sinisterza

Volume I

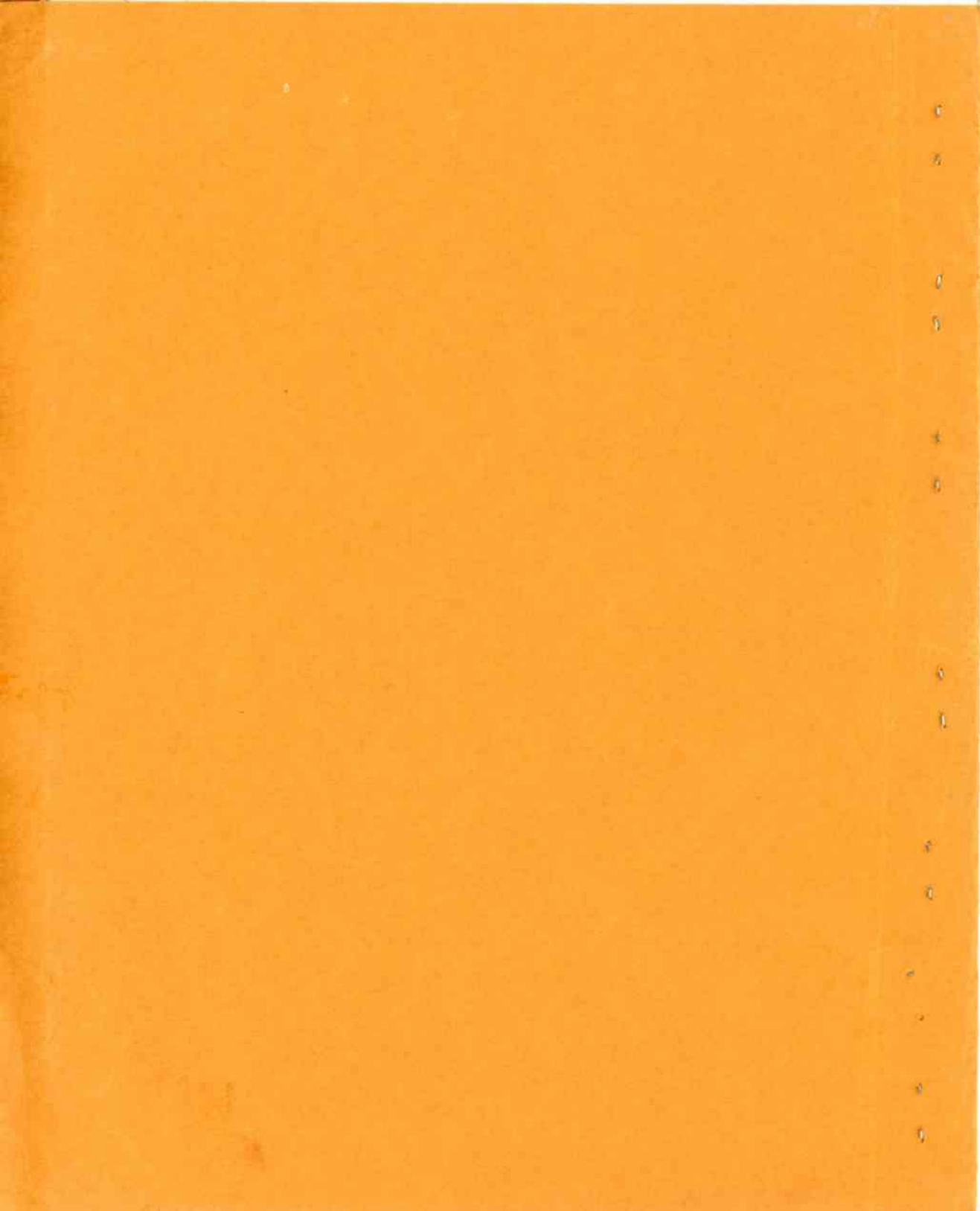
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SINISTERRA

Editorials are a nuisance
For who reads them, anyway?
They are just repetition,
We've already had our say.
Our stuff, we hope, is new and fine
(At least I'm sure that mine is!)
Our characters (!) not drawn from life..
(I wonder what that crime is...)
We try to stick to Washington State
And use our members' hard work
But sometimes they lead us far afield
By commissioning special artwork.
Thus, proudly we show CLARK ASHTON SMITH
With picture by Lin Carter
As part of Bill Austin's article -
(Did he get them by barter?)
We hope you like the photograph,
We planned it so for framing.
Just tear it out and hang it up -
That shouldn't take explaining!
We've still more SMITH with pix to match
We're saving for next issues,
So bear with us, and stick around -
And thanks for your good wishes!

Ye Editors

CLARK ASHTON SMITH: a Deduction
By William N. Austin

About the works of Clark Ashton Smith, much has been written in recent years. Nearly everyone familiar with modern fantasy has read some of his stories, know that they exceed a hundred in number as well as attaining a high degree of excellence. Likewise, they recognize the acclaim that has been bestowed upon his many poems. That much of his work has been collected and anthologized is old news to them.

Many know also that he has established reputations in both the fields of painting and sculpture, besides having worked in a number of occupations at various times.

Beyond these facts and a few vital statistics (born Jan. 13, 1893, self-educated, single, etc.) very little else is known about the man. Rumors of his insuring his privacy with vicious hounds may be slightly exaggerated.

What sort of person is he then, this word-sorcerer?

While most of the answer can be found in his works, an extract of one of his letters appearing in the Feb., 1933 WONDER STORIES is especially revealing.

"... Perhaps I am merely one of those unfortunate and perverse individuals who are constitutionally 'agin the government.' When fantasy is acclaimed by Irving Babbitt, and is published regularly in HARPERS and THE AMERICAN MERCURY, I may take refuge in the writing of case histories..."

One might conclude from this, and from other items mentioned, that Mr. Smith is something of an individualist. Apparently Mr. Smith decided long ago to provide himself with a maximum of enjoyment tempered with a minimum of discomfort. Or perhaps he merely minimized the discomfort occurrence potentiality.

But no! Mr. Smith wrote stories for pleasure --- his pleasure primarily. He continued to write them for only as long as the actual writing provided him with a measure of enjoyment. When, in the mid-thirties, a wave of cold-blooded realism forced straight fantasy into state of disrepute from which it never recovered, cutting down non-technical basic vocabularies to a thousand words, Mr. Smith would seem to have lost most of his enthusiasm and a good share of his potential markets simultaneously. Fantasy's loss!

(Item: Check contents of HARPERS and the MERCURY.)



Secret Love

By

Christophe Des Laurieres

Translated from the French By

Clark Ashton Smith

Illustrated by
Lin Carter

Hung round with silence, fold on fold
thy love, within my veiled and votive heart
Is like a darkling Venus shrined apart
In some lost city legendless and old
Whose mobled walls and domes of blinded gold
Laps in the sand of Syria. None may start
the antique doors, and tapestries of art
Where all the lost dreams are told,
to see within a spikenard scented room
the gleam of clear marmoral breast and limb
the goddess, with her crescent mouth uptumed
to meet the kiss of Adon on the gloom
Her loins grown languid with a dream of him
For whom their pale pentalic altar burned.

OPERATION SHRINKAGE'S

BY

LESLIE H. JONES

"Peter," Mrs. Blakley said firmly, "I've just decided --- I'm going on a diet!"

Despite himself Dr. Blakley glanced down at the expanding universe of his wife's figure. He rose from the sofa and moved to where his wife was standing in front of the mirror at the other end of the room.

As though she were his patient, he gingerly touched the hidden girdle whose battle had so far been lost. "My dear," he said, looking up at her from a semi-bent position, "I believe I have the solution for your excessive flesh; in fact, I'm sure I have."

He scratched his head thoughtfully, started towards the laboratory, which served as a passage between the living room and his office at the other end of the building.

"Just a minute, Peter," Mrs. Blakley called, "If this is one of your own concoctions, you might as well save your energy."

"But, my dear, the test has been completely successful for Mirna, that white rat who had so many youngsters last Friday, lost more than ten decagrams in a day!"

"Peter," she answered in that tone she'd used so often to convey an entire galaxy of displeasure, "I know you have little respect for my intelligence, but please be careful of your comparisons."

"I was only trying to illustrate to you, my dear," he replied, straightening his glasses, "that the formula I've labored on so long is workable."

"I don't care!" She glanced down at the source of her embarrassment.

"I can assure you," he continued, "you'd have nothing to worry about. Medical science has developed a whole new basis of research in the past ten years. I have the required knowledge and equipment."



"Just because it works on a rat," she argued, "doesn't mean it will work on me."

"Actually, the test wasn't even required," the doctor protested. "I had it all worked out satisfactorily in theory alone. Then he added smugly, "The test was merely routine."

"Why don't you try it first?" his wife asked. "After all, we're neck and neck."

Dr. Blakley winced slightly. "Oh of course," he said, shrugging and starting to sit down, "I wouldn't try to force it upon you."

His wife remained standing while watching the automatic vacuum cleaner slowly and silently move back and forth across the floor. She moved as it started sniffing at her feet.

"By the way," Dr. Blakley said, "Uncle Charley is coming for a visit."

"Why, Peter!" she exclaimed. "You should have told me sooner! Did --- did he mention anything about --- well, you know what."

"No. What?"

"What did he say about --- about introducing me to that producer friend of his?"

"He said he'd consider it," the doctor replied. They have a large surplus of singers, however. Young, smart gals who've got that 'television look.'"

"Television look? Peter, you don't think I've aged so badly, do you?"

The doctor's eyes were at her hips.

"I mean, for being forty, I'm not really unattractive? --- except for being --- well, somewhat overweight?"

"I'd say your voice would compensate for a great deal," the doctor said.

"Why, Peter!" his wife exclaimed. "You haven't complimented me like that since you mistook me at the masked ball."

"I'm a scientist," the doctor exclaimed. "I state the facts as I see them."

"When --- when is Uncle Charley coming?"

"Tomorrow," Dr. Blakley replied.

"Tomorrow?" She appeared crestfallen. "I thought I'd just have time to lose a few kilograms before I met him --- and his friend."

Dr. Blakley scratched his chin. "Maybe if you tell Mr. Riley you're planning to reduce, he might not hold it against you."

"Nonsense, Peter!" she answered, hopping awkwardly over the charging vacuum cleaner. "You know I couldn't do that."

"Guess you'll just have to take your chances, then."

They both stood silent for several minutes, the vacuum

cleaner, like a dog, pacing the floor near them. The lights gradually brightened as the dusk outside became complete.

"Peter."

"Yes, my dear?"

"Did you take her temperature?"

"Whose?"

"The rat's?"

"Oh, Mirna. Why, I gave her a complete physical exam."

"And --- and she's feeling fine?"

"Certainly."

"May I look at her?"

"Uh --- not right now," Dr. Blakley answered, somewhat embarrassed.

"Why not?"

"Well, you know how popular she is."

"You're sure she's perfectly normal?"

"Positive. I gave her a complete physical."

"How do you administer this --- this drug you've made?"

"Simple. I just powder a pill and put it in her drinking water."

"I could take it like an aspirin?" Louella asked.

"It'd take more than one for you!" the doctor exclaimed.

"That is," he added hastily, "the effective dosage increases proportionally with an increase in weight."

"How many would I have to take?"

"Oh, you wouldn't want to take any."

"Why not?"

"It wouldn't be good for you --- psychologically."

"But I want to!" his wife protested. "Please?"

He eyed her gravely. "There could be serious psychological disorders," he cautioned.

"Peter!" she stamped her foot. "I'll be more frustrated if I can't impress Mr. Riley favorably."

"Your initial fear indicates possibility of serious---"

"Uncle Charley's coming tomorrow!"

"Your whole life could be affected."

"Peter!"

"Well ---."

"No 'wells', Peter," his wife cried angrily.

"If you insist."

"I do!"

"Just so you're certain it won't cause a serious nervous reaction."

"Nonsense. I know you wouldn't take any chances with my life."

"All right, my dear," he said, rising and trying to hide the glimmering in his eyes. "I'll be back in a minute." He walked off, glimpsing over his shoulder the enormity of his wife.

In the laboratory he stopped near a row of shelves. He rubbed his hands together briskly. Then he reached up to a shelf and removed a bottle of blue pills. He counted out a handful and returned to the living room.

"Take four each hour," he prescribed in a professional manner, handing his wife the pills. "You'll have to stay up till midnight, but you can be resting all the time."

"I don't know if I can rest," she answered worriedly.

He left the room again. Inside the darkened laboratory, he turned on a light and made some notations in his records: "Experiment 378. Subject Human Being, genus homo sapiens. Sex female. Weight 80 kilograms. Dosage 15 decagrams. (Date, time, etc.) Results (blank)."

-+- -+- -+-

Doctor Blakley was dreaming about space monsters chasing Louella from one planet to another breathing heat-rays through dragon nostrils. Finally, his wife floated toward the safety of the Earth. When she landed, the whole world sagged. Dr. Blakley awoke. His wife had just crawled into bed.

"Did I wake you up?" she asked.

"No," the doctor replied. "Did you hurt yourself --- I mean ---." He paused a moment, rubbing his eyes. "I mean, did you finish taking the pills?"

"Yes," she sighed. "And I'm soooo sleepy! And I feel as though I had ---." She stopped to let a yawn pass "--- like I'd swallowed marbles."

"Did you notice what time it is?" her husband asked in some anticipation.

"About twelve thirty," she answered. "Good night." She turned over into a snore.

Dr. Blakley found it difficult to sleep. In the faint fluorescence from the street outside, he watched abstractedly the nervous surge of his wife's large naked shoulders. Fin-

ally, his eyes dropped shut as under the pressure of several gravities, and he was again enjoying adventures that carried his wife and himself light years through space.....

The four a.m. express thundered overhead, and Dr. Blakley stirred. He turned over. Then he awoke. Subconsciously he had become aware of an unusual condition. He wasn't dangerously near the edge of the bed!

Taking advantage of the unique situation, he moved over slightly, delicately using arms like an octopus to gauge the available space.

He grunted in surprise. His arm thrashed around in bed, but failed to touch anything. He quickly put on the light. Sure enough, Louella was gone!

He sat on the edge of the bed, frowning and rubbing his eyes. Had she finally made good her occasional threats that she'd leave him? Yes! Hoping to regain her "youth" again, she had broken from the influence she always said had ruined her career.

This was a deplorable situation, he thought. After having begun his experiment, she had gone without giving him a chance to check the results.

"Just like a woman," he said aloud. "Absolutely no consideration whatever for the advance of science." Muttering angrily to himself, he rolled back onto the bed and squirmed under the covers.

He was almost asleep. Suddenly, something brushed his leg. He tried to reach down. He moved over slightly, and he almost dozed off again. Then he heard it.

It was a small squeaking wheeze, and it was coming from the middle of the bed.

Good Heavens! he thought. She'd left the house through the laboratory and knocked over one of the cages. He remembered the time when a rat had crawled in bed with him. Still groggy, he reached his hand under the covers, finally grasped the creature.

He wearily climbed from bed and stumbled in the darkness out of the room. As he entered the laboratory, the creature squirmed in his hand, almost leaped free. He tightened his grip. The thing screeched painfully.

Without bothering to investigate which cage had toppled, in his dreamy state Dr. Blakley opened the door of the first

empty one and dumped the animal rudely inside.

"I'd have sworn that rat said something," he said aloud.

He shook his head. "I must be dreaming,"

Well, he'd soon be back in bed.

He started away again. At the door he stopped. The rat was still screeching. "Well I certainly don't recognize its voice!" he murmured. "Mirna's is more feminine, and the rest hardly ever squeek."

He strode over to the cage. "Hello, in there. Is that you, Mirna?"

"You damned fool!" it answered back in a clear, albeit shrill voice. "No, it's not Mirna. It's your wife!"

The doctor became somewhat more awake.

"I beg your pardon?"

For a moment the screeching was incoherent.

"Good Heavens! What happened?" he managed.

"You ought to know, you --- you --- you witch doctor!"

The doctor's mind unclouded. "My dear! Do you realize what this means? Why, we've made medical history!"

"You --- you've made a monkey out of me!" she accused.

"You worm!"

"Think what this means!"

"I have!" she moaned. "My career --- gone!"

"Why, dear, even from that standpoint, this development is astronomical! Think of it! Why, all the video shows in the Solar System will be shoving contracts under your snout --- I mean, nose. I'll be able to erect the largest laboratory in North America!"

"But --- my voice. It's ruined!"

With undaunted enthusiasm, he replied, "What's a little thing like that?"



THE END



12.

the perfect story
imperfected by Wally Weber



13.
The restaurant was only mildly busy and a waitress came over to me as soon as I sat down at the counter. I ordered the first thing that entered my mind, a cubed steak, without looking at the menu. To pass the time while my steak was being prepared, I opened the manila envelope I carried with me and pulled out the manuscript of my story. Although I knew the story by memory, it still absorbed my attention. I failed to notice the man who sat down beside me until he spoke.

"You write that story yourself?"

I jerked myself back to reality and looked up, flustered. He was a shabby individual with an enormous waistline, somewhat ragged clothing, and a five o'clock shadow left over from at least a week before.

"Mind if I see it for a minute?" he asked. "I'm interested in writing myself."

"Oh, it's nothing," I protested, struggling to hide the manuscript and succeeding only in upsetting my glass of water. "Just a little something I dashed off for the writer's club meeting tonight. Really not worth reading at all." Actually I had spent all week on it and planned to see it printed in Astounding Science Fiction before the year was out, but I always feel uneasy when strangers read my stories; they never seem capable of understanding my style.

Seeing that further attempts to put away the manuscript would probably result in its complete destruction, I relented and passed the pages to him. He took the manuscript, now a little soggy from the water I had spilled on it, and ran his eyes over the damp typewriting. While I fidgeted and tried to think up excuses for the various weaknesses of my story, the waitress wiped the water off the counter. The man had become so engrossed with the story that the waitress did not interrupt him, leaving without his order, and my uneasiness began to leave me at this show of interest. A minute later it returned, though, when he handed the manuscript back to me without, I noted darkly, finishing the story. However, his next words proved my worries to be groundless.

"Pretty good, as far as I got in it. You must have put quite a lot of work in it."

"Just dashed it off in a hurry," I lied, relieved that he wasn't going to criticize it after all. "But it did come out fairly good, I thought."

14. "I mentioned to you when I first came in that I was interested in writing myself." He had an air of leading up to some startling announcement. "I once belonged to a writer's club, too. I wasn't bad either; might have gone someplace, if I hadn't made my big blunder."

"What blunder was that?" I wanted to know. He was beginning to interest me.

"I developed the perfect story," he said simply.

This was a new one on me! I had heard of quite a few explanations as to why different people had failed in their attempts to become writers, but never had I heard of anything like this before.

"You developed the perfect story? How could you call that a blunder?" I was beginning to suspect he was feeding me a line.

"I'll answer your question by telling you the events as they took place," he said. "First of all, I would like to point out that I said I developed the perfect story. I made no claim to have written it. You'll understand what I meant more fully when I tell you just how everything came about, but first, I want to find out if you know just what the main difficulty is in writing a perfect story?"

"Well," I answered somewhat uncertainly, "I suppose the main difficulty would be finding a story that would suit all the readers despite their varied likes and dislikes.

"Exactly," he approved. "The perfect story would have to be perfect to everybody, no matter what their tastes might be. Naturally, when I realized that, I gave up any plans I might have had about writing such a story. But I was a very persistent youth in my early days and the idea of the perfect story never left me." The man paused to draw a plate of food over to himself, and he began to eat. The food in his mouth did not prevent him from proceeding with his tale, though it did muffle his words a bit.

"My interest in writing dominated my first few years, but I still had time for other things, and one of my other hobbies involved hypnotism. It wasn't long before I began to wonder about hypnotizing a person into believing that he was reading the perfect story. That was the first step.

"I tested my theory that a person could be made to believe he was reading the perfect story by trying it out on my younger sister. I had always imagined her to be a dull,

unimaginative child, but when I put her under hypnosis and told her to read the perfect story from what was actually a blank sheet of paper, she began telling some of the most fantastic, impossible things I had ever heard.

"For a long while I considered the experiment a complete failure, but then it came to me that perhaps the ridiculous nonsense she had uttered under hypnosis was actually, to her, the perfect story. To test my new theory, I remembered what I could of the nonsense she had said and retold it to her. And she thought it was wonderful! To her peculiar tastes, it was the best story she had ever listened to!

"Now my way was clear to me. In order to have the perfect story, I had to hypnotize everybody who was to read it. If people were to read it in a magazine, I would have to find some method of putting the reader under hypnosis by remote control, since I couldn't possibly be everywhere a magazine was being read.

"Accomplishing that was the most difficult part of the entire procedure. It took me fifteen years of research and experiments before I finally found such a method. At last, however, I found a chemical solution that could be absorbed on a sheet of ordinary paper and would cause the surface of the paper to glitter in such a manner that anyone looking at it steadily would be put in a state of hypnosis. By printing the words, 'This is a perfect story,' at the top of the page, the 'reader' automatically geared his subconscious mind to the thought that he really was reading such a story.

"All in all, it appeared to be foolproof. My fortune seemed assured. But I had not counted on the one flaw that was to ruin my entire career.

"I took my sheet of treated paper to the writer's club I had been attending. We had an informal gathering each Saturday night where we sat around and read stories the other members had brought and letting them read ours. That night I had planned to be the feature attraction; and I was---only not in the manner I had anticipated.

"I had it planned very dramatically. I would give my story to the members to read, leave immediately to give them time to look it over, and return to receive their praise and worship. Well, I gave them time to look it over all right, but it wasn't praise and worship that I received when I got back. The whole group swarmed on me, crying outrageous in-

sults and beating at me with their fists. It took several policemen to rescue me from the mob and I spent a week in the hospital being treated for a head injury where one enraged club member had struck me with an ink bottle. By the time I was released from the hospital, the club had blacklisted me with every publishing company that printed English."

At this point the man had finished his meal and was contentedly wiping his mouth on a napkin.

"But why were they all so mad at you?" I asked finally, since it appeared that he wasn't going to say any more.

The fat man looked thoughtfully into space. "They were the biggest egotists in the writing field," he said at last. "When they wrote a story, they considered it perfect. Naturally, when they were under the hypnosis, they thought they were reading a story I had stolen from them. To a writer, there is no sin greater than plagiarism."

With a great show of dignity, he rose from the counter and left the restaurant, leaving me to ponder the story he had just told me. It was then that I looked down at his empty plate and became aware of a disconcerting fact.

"Migawd," I groaned, "That dirty chisler ate my steak!"

ON DREAMING OF DRAGONS

By Gordon Springer

Mythological monster with scales,
Heave open your hideous jaws,
Belch flame at be-helmeted males
Regardless of natural laws.



TECHNICALITY

Wally Weber

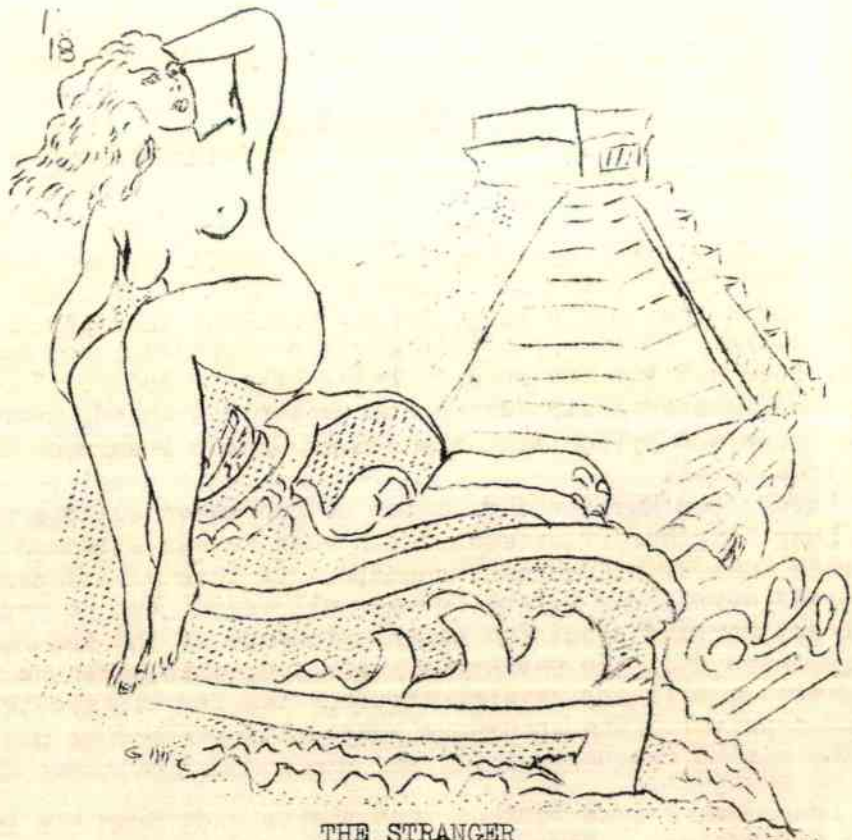
Lung Gung, the naive Martian, was warned by his friends about Terrestrial insurance companies. "You'll get swindled every time," they would krim to him, wockling their frizzles for emphasis. "Better stick to Martian companies; you pay a little more but you are sure of being able to collect." But Lung Gung ignored their advice and went right ahead, drawing up an insurance policy with the Podunk Center Insurance Company from Earth.

Barely ten Martian days after he had taken out his policy, Lung Gung barely escaped death when he was attacked and severely hurt by a huge sand-snaddle. It took a long series of costly operations before he was well again, but he wasn't the least worried about the expense because of the insurance he had taken out. He was greatly shocked, then, when he was faced with a bill for several thousand iks for his treatment in the hospital. The insurance agency had refused to pay it for the simple reason that his insurance did not cover that sort of accident!

Lung Gung was so furious that sparks shot from his luminous crundibles. Declaring that this could not be done to him, he went straight to the nearest Martian lawyer to clear things up. You can easily guess how he felt when the lawyer kraibed through the insurance papers just once and informed Lung that there wasn't a chance to collect from the company.

"But that can't be!" protested the unfortunate Martian. "It says right here that I am insured against injury of any kind by the Podunk Center Insurance Company."

"Quite so," agreed the lawyer. "Unfortunately you were only injured by a sand-snaddle, and not by the Podunk Center Insurance Company."



THE STRANGER

By Aubrey D. Gibson

Home is a far journey
To a fair land
I've never seen....

Home is a sad yearning
For a sweet voice
I've never heard....

Home is unearthly desire
For a Beloved Youth
That never was....

WEIRD WORLDS

By Richard Frahm

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People who feel that modern art is ugly and unintelligible might well regard it merely for the fantasy it contains. --- strange viewpoints, weird forms, exotic themes. These elements are fascinating to discover and enjoy for their own sake, apart from aesthetic considerations. Modern artists really seem to be staking off weird worlds --- strange lands of the imagination --- for themselves, and painting all the outre flora and fauna they conceive there. To look at some of their paintings is like taking a trip to a strange planet, or into the age of prehistoric monsters, or even reading Ripley. You just don't know what queer thing is going to turn up next.

Jean Lurcat, French decorator and designer, whose early days were spent in the serious study of philosophy and medicine, paints a variety of weird worlds. His landscapes are weird barrens, gaunt wastes, in which, perhaps, three sides of a house are made to stand raggedly like cardboard ruins; or where immense fortresses are constructed on whose ramparts strange figures wander in the light of a very wan moon. The total effect is at times suggestive of what might be seen from the seventh ring of Saturn, or the mountains of the moon. Lurcat has a penchant for drawing strange tall people, enormously thin waisted and broadshouldered, who wander like some prehuman race over the strange outlands of this world.

Joan Miro is about the only surrealist who hasn't been publicized or castigated in those encyclopedias of public knowledge --- the Sunday supplements. Miro, indeed, paints such simple works that they are difficult to understand. On huge chart-like backgrounds of yellow, green, and pale blue may be seen crisp little curlicues that resemble enlargements of microscopic life. Blobs of protoplasm, the amoeba and such microbe animalcules; bubbles, lines and dots, pulsate madly on a Miro canvas and invariably remind one of that first drop of milk or water peered at under a lens. I recall seeing in one newsreel, a microscopic study of a disease in the bloodstream. It was a queer little seahorse object that expanded and contracted in a sea of bubbles. The resemblance to a Miro abstract was so striking that I thought for a moment that a mixup had occurred in the film and that I was seeing

20 a preview of the latest Miro painting. To complete the surrealist illusion, there was a tiny clock ticking off the seconds up in the corner. The good surrealist could have copied that study of the bloodstream and represented it as his newest work.

The Russian painter Pavel Tchelitchev, a member of the neo-romantic school paints bull fight and tennis scenes that would be eminently realistic save for the truly terrible foreshortening they employ. A tennis player will wave a life size racket in the foreground while his body lengthens for miles down an interminable court. A Tchelitchev world is a world gone dimensionally mad. Tchelitchev of late has become interested in human plants and many of his new paintings deal with people and things which show an alarming ability to vegetate in a most peculiar manner.

Giorgio di Chirico likes to create terrible people. He is very fond of one type of seated figure that would scare the face off a Frankenstein. For example one figure has what resembles a football for a head and is dressed in flowing Grecian robes. Chirico, like a surgeon, has cut open the stomach, but instead of the customary entrails we see a pile of fresh fruits and vegetables, topped off with a mad conglomeration of machinery. He also likes constructions --- one gentleman of his has a marble temple for a chest, brick legs, and a marble top-piece. The Portrait of an Astronomer appears to show an individual looking at a star map --- only the old gentleman seems to resemble a somewhat worn out robot destined for the scrap heap or wherever it is that worn out robots go.

Fernand Leger, French cubist, modernizes everything and everybody after the manner of modern furniture or architecture. He cuts people up into cylinders, cubes, circles and squares, paints them like robots sitting around steel tables eating glass food out of tin cups. If robots are created in Leger's lifetime --- he would be the natural person to draw the first advertisements for them. The world, to Leger, is just another hunk of chromium and tin.

Francisco Bores, Spanish painter who imitates Matisse, paints in a lost world of shadow forms. Shadow people coming out of darkness merge and then return to a world of two dimensional silhouettes.

And so one goes down the gallery of modern art, invading

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strange lands on alien worlds. Haim Soutine must have anticipated the atomic bomb, for the landscapes he paints are so devastated that the very paint seems ready to fly off the canvas. Eugene Berman paints worlds like those of which Clark Ashton Smith or Lord Dunsany write. Colossal groups of time eroded statuary stand guard over his cities in lands of frightening silence, fabulous architecture where arcades of strangely fashioned columns march into vistas of silent infinity. Marc Chagall on the other hand has turned out creations that foreshadow the invention of an antigravity device, for his people float nonchalantly in and out of buildings and about the skies.

It is a bevy of mad worlds and yet many of them are so ingeniously conceived and fashioned as to be of enormous interest. It is true that some of these artists of today do not echo the classical themes of the masters, but on the other hand are in their own ways engaged in the explorative mining of the imagination. They resemble in their own way our fantasy writers of this age --- De La Mare, Machen, Lovecraft, the subject matters of a Wells or Weinbaum rather than that of the Shakespeare or Tolstoi of the past. There is no purpose in criticizing Van Vogt because he is not Shakespeare, nor modern art because it does not follow Titian or Rembrandt. It is possible to forget the heavy aesthetic quarreling of today and enjoy the wit and eccentricity of modern art for what it is. Why not pick out your favorite weird world and marvel or chuckle over it? Personally I like Chirico bogey people.

NIGHT FOG

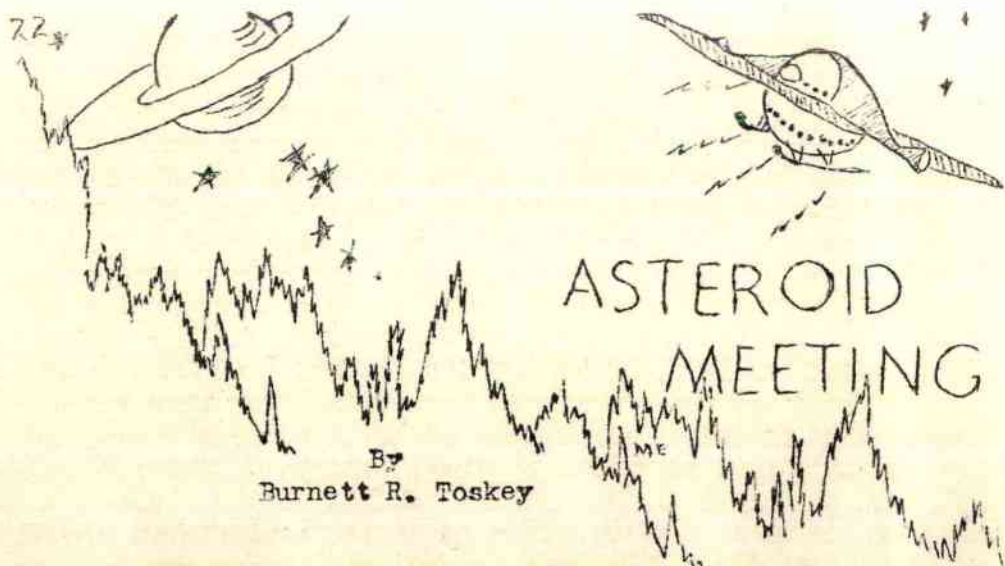
Cold, concealing mist

That comes on phantom wings

And fills the valley with unseen,

Nameless, silent things.

---- Gordon Springer



72*

By
Burnett R. Toskey

ME

ASTEROID
MEETING

Rocke Winter guided his small space vessel over the now visible terrain of the tiny asteroid. The light coming from the front of the ship passed slowly across the wild and desolate landscape, revealing several jagged mountain ranges in all directions seeming to belie the size of the little rock. The light from the sun was but a little fainter here than on Earth, yet, since there was no atmosphere, it was a place of perpetual dark. He guided his small ship over the miniature mountain ranges toward a small valley beyond --- the meeting place --- and set it down as gently as possible on the hard, uneven rock. He saw that he was the first to reach the spot chosen by the alien from the stars for the rendezvous. Soon two visitors would arrive; one would be the alien being, the other a Martian. Here, on Asteroid 160, a great crisis that perhaps meant life or death for Earthmen was about to occur. To Rocke Winter, at least, that was what this meeting meant; to the other it probably meant life or death for Martians.

The first wait was not very long. The Martian was next to arrive in his little spacecraft that was quite similar to the ship in which the Earthman had come. In fact, Earth had given the secret of interplanetary travel to the men of Mars at the time when peace had existed between the two races.

The Martian circled a few times, then spotting Winter's parked spaceship, brought his own to a gliding stop near it. Rocke turned on his radio, tensing himself for anything that

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might be transmitted by the Martian, but the loudspeaker was silent. With their two planets so bitterly at war with each other, Rocke knew that he could expect nothing friendly from the enemy in any circumstances. He wondered vaguely why the alien being from the unknown, distant star had not shown up.

Certainly, he thought, a race of beings, possessing the much sought knowledge of interstellar flight, must be far in advance of Earth's civilization. Why had they requested the meeting of minds on this lonely asteroid in this manner? It could be to negotiate. But there were other possibilities.

Just then the thin, high voice of the Martian broke off his thoughts. The voice was cruel, cold, passionless, as it enunciated slowly.

"You are, I presume, the representative selected by the Earth council to represent Earth here at this meeting? I am Sar Len Gop, the agent of Mars. I see that the man from the stars has not yet arrived."

Rocke was quite surprised at the civility of his choice of words. Sar Len Gop was one of the high officials of Mars and thought to be one of its most fanatic patriots. Each of them had been vested with complete power to act in behalf of his own world in the crucial meeting with this greater power which might be a threat to life in the Solar System. No one knew what the attitude of the aliens toward their two worlds might be. All anybody knew was that this being had demanded over a radio that a representative for each inhabited planet in the system meet on the asteroid called Una and catalogued as 160. Between Mars and Earth, the two worlds inhabited by creatures capable of interplanetary flight, a truce had been declared until the outcome of this meeting could be learned. Thus two enemies were brought face to face.

"Greetings, Sar Len Gop. I am Rocke Winter. We're both on time for the meeting requested by the stranger, but I see that he isn't on time himself. Strange, isn't it?"

"Yes," replied Sar Len Gop, "it's strange that he's not here to meet us, since he called the meeting. Yet one can't fathom the mind of a being whom one has never seen."

"I'd also like to know what he looks like, but I'm more concerned about what he has to say." Winter sensed that his words were coming fluently, as though he were talking with a friend instead of an enemy. Sar Len Gop noticed it too, for when the Martian spoke again, his voice had lost most of its

24 cold passionless quality.

"I'm also more concerned with what he will tell us when he comes." After a few seconds pause Sar Len Gop continued, "Doesn't it seem strange that we should be talking so freely with each other? Is it possible that the importance of this meeting has so overwhelmed our thoughts that the war between us is but a minor issue in our minds? I must confess that I don't feel the enmity towards you that I had first imagined. Can you account for this, Rocke Winter?"

Rocky could hardly credit his hearing. Was the Martian lying? A sudden warmth of emotion filled him as he recalled that whatever a Martian might be, friend or enemy, he always was truthful. He realized that these words were actually an overture of friendship.

"For some unexplainable reason, I feel the same way you do. It might be merely that you're a familiar being to talk to in this lonely place. Yet I feel that if our worlds were not at war we might even begin to trust and like each other. I'm beginning to wish now that we were not enemies."

Sar Len Gop spoke again frankly and seemingly from some hidden depth of feeling. "I have no reason to distrust you. I know that your race is as intelligent as ours, even though ours is older. Actually, though I've never permitted myself to harbor the idea, within myself I have never believed that this war we are engaged in is a just war. After all, it was you who gave us space travel, sharing your knowledge with us to our gain. And now we're using it against you. I've felt that it's the fault of our power mad leaders that we were at war in the beginning. This truce is the best thing that has happened since the war started. If only this alien from the void isn't planning to conquer the universe! If it could be that he is only come in peace! It's almost too much to hope that he might come to enforce peace between our worlds! Our planets could exist peacefully together very well, don't you think? There is room for all of us in the Solar System now, just as there has been in the past."

Rocke listened to the Martian's words without surprise - as if they were inevitable; began to feel a similar attitude toward the situation. Nodding an unseen agreement, he said, "I believe that that thing from space isn't going to show up at all, since he's so late already. But I suppose we really shouldn't leave yet, at least not until we receive word from

him. Did you realize," his voice failed as a sudden thought²⁵ struck him, "that if he doesn't come, we will have the power to stop this useless war? All we need to say is that if the war doesn't end immediately, both planets will be destroyed! What do you think of that?"

"I agree," the Martian wasted no time replying. "Let's do so by all means. In case the alien fails to appear, that plan can't fail! The mere fact that he was able to blot out all our radio systems at once has been enough to terrify the peoples of our planets into truce, and surely that same line of argument would be enough to make the peace permanent."

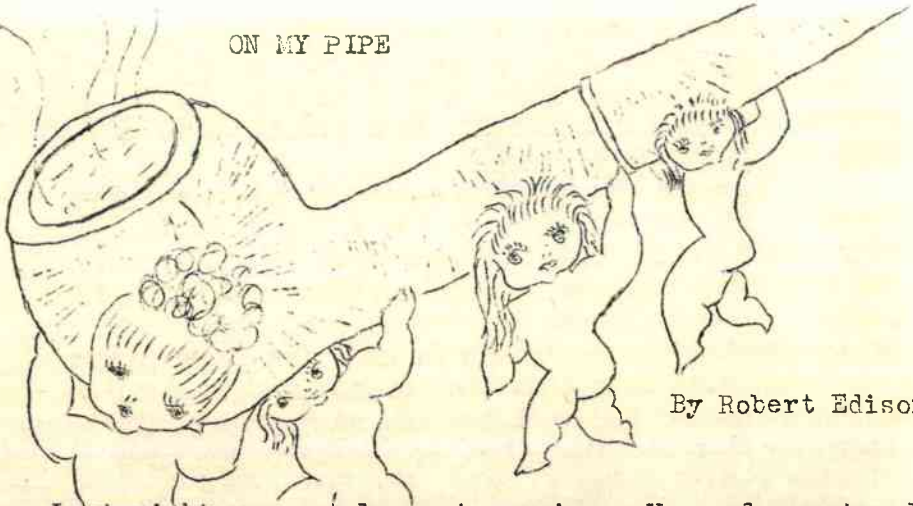
The hours passed as they waited within their spaceships for the one who had declared the rendezvous. The hours were long for them at first, but as the certainty grew that their visitor wasn't going to come, the two erstwhile enemies grew increasingly enthusiastic in plans for peace between the two worlds. While they were engrossed in perfecting details for smoothing out the small difficulties of interplanetary trade and ironing away differences of outlook that greed and false pride magnified to mountains of hatred and misunderstanding, the hours flew so quickly that it was with a sense of astonishment that Rocke noticed the warning flag flash out on the oxygen gauges.

"I can't wait any longer, Sar Len Gop. I've got barely enough air to take me home. I'll have to go now."

As he turned swiftly to the controls of his little ship he heard the Martian say solemnly "Rocke Winter, our chance, impossible though it seems, has come."

"Yes," Winter replied, "we must return at once and stop this terrible conflict. And a new friendship will spring up between Earth and Mars."

As the receiver went silent within the alien spaceship, the being smiled. He watched from his place in the distance as the two little spaceships were launched on their homeward journey, one on its way to Mars, the other toward Earth. He knew that both had meant what they had said on the asteroid. They couldn't help it. The compelling force of his emotion-izer trained upon their unsuspecting minds had brought forth the truth which lay hidden within them. It was assured that they would carry out the plans without fail. He knew, as he set his controls for his home, that he would be complimented on a job well done.



By Robert Edison

Last night was a pleasant evening. Very pleasant. In every sense of the word, too. The day had been rather successful. For me, at least. I had come off victorious in the latest engagement with my mortal foes, the flies. In fact, I had decisively routed them.

Well satisfied with my efforts, I retired to the living room, and soon had a great fire blazing in the fireplace. Relaxing in a comfortable easy chair, I let my mind wander, and reached for my pipe. Usually, I keep it beside a mahogany humidor on a small table by my chair. But this time it wasn't there. Wasn't anywhere, in fact. Absolutely nowhere. Much disturbed by this rather ignominious end to a perfect day (imagine being without a pipe in the evening!), I reluctantly arose and proceeded systematically to go over every inch of the living room, from chandelier to hardwood floor.

Rather exasperated at my inability to locate my missing briar (a very exquisitely carved one, as I shall mention later), I had finally reduced my search to the area of the floor and was continuing my quest on my hands and knees.

Two things occurred then that caused me no little amount of anxiety (in anticipation of future inconveniences, of course). One was soon encountered as I was anxiously peering behind the davenport. I had just rounded an arm, when suddenly a veritable cloud of dust descended, or, should I say, rose into my face from some undreamed of origin, and I momentarily had visions of future difficulties in combating this new menace. However, not to be deterred, I went on, and pres-

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ently,, at the fifty-eighth nail from the left, on the north side, caught my pipe in the act of disappearing into a hole in the wall. Just in time too, I might add. For, to my amazement, the pipe moved! Yes, it moved! Oh yes indeed! You may imaginemy extreme astonishment and dismay upon witnessing this act of witchcraft on the part of what I took to be an animated pipe.

"My word," I muttered, "Are my eyes deceiving me? Is this some prank?" My questing eyes soon found the answer however. Indeed they did! I should have suspected it from the first. To my wondering eyes a small clawlike paw reached out quickly, and tugged hurriedly at the stem of the faithful briar. Upon closer examination, I discerned the paw to be that of a mouse, half hidden in a small hole in the baseboard.

"Ha," I muttered in delighted satisfaction, "I have got you now. Yes indeed, I have you!" I pounced upon the pipe just in time to prevent it from disappearing completely in the hole. I succeeded in retrieving it, but was late in my attempt to capture the wily culprit.

"Indeed," I stormed as I got to my feet, and brushing myself off, regained my chair before the fire. "I never dreamed that they would stoop so low as to purloin my pipe. Indeed not! Oh, good gracious me, no! The very audacity! The VERY audacity! I don't mind if they put string in my spaghetti, or salt in my coffee, but to steal my pipe! Oh!"

Thus muttering to myself, I reached in the humidor for some tobacco --- only to find it empty! "By George," I thundered, "they try to steal my pipe, and, to add injury to insult, my tobacco! My tobacco!!" Fuming, I angrily rose, and obtained a fresh packet from the cupboard in the hall, and upon returning, lit up, firmly resolving to wage total and unceasing war upon the second of my sworn mortal enemies, the mice. However, not wishing to totally disrupt the happiness I was now enjoying, I decided to begin the battle on the morrow, and, at last at peace with the world, nestled in my chair in eager anticipation of an evening of comfort and pleasure. The glow from the fireplace diffused ruddily through the room, and I sighed in deep luxury for pure joy of living.

I glanced dreamily upward through the haze of smoke that hung tenaciously in the air above me, and was brought erect most hastily when I fully comprehended the "things" I shall call them, that I saw in the smoke haze. I really don't know

23 What "they", the "things", were, of course, but could only sink back and gasp, "My word," at the amazing events that followed.

My pipe emitted smoke in great quantities; and, when I think on it, the tobacco must have been tampered with by the devilish mice. I'll fix them --- I'll ---; but to get on, I actually had seen figures in the smoke.

"Figures, as I live and smoke, er --- I mean breathe," I muttered amazedly. "Good gracious me." The figures resembled most markedly human forms, and they capered about as if dancing for Pan himself. Breathlessly, I watched, as the figures, condensing seemingly from the smoke, cavorted madly about the room. Indeed, they seemed to have taken over my very house, making themselves at home, and taking quite comfortably to various articles around the room.

During this amazing exhibition, I had loosely held my pipe in my right hand, and was now further astonished to feel it jump and move, as if wanting freedom from the confining grasp. Indeed, this was true, as I found by glancing toward my hand. I was shocked to see the elaborately carved cherubs on the bowl of the pipe come to life and prance away with several of the --- the --- the pixies, I shall call them.

Meanwhile, the havoc caused by the mischievous impd was indescribable. A pair of them had succeeded in lifting the metal cap of an antique stein I had on the mantel, and were industriously engaged in pushing a third member of their party into the receptacle. As I turned my head, my eyes rested upon a whole crew of the little devils laboring heavily upon a vase perched precariously on a small end table. At last, they succeeded in tipping it to one side, so that it fell to the floor, utterly smashing to bits. Oh, quite definitely so! Smashing to bits, I mean. Away the pixies raced as angrily I started from my chair and pursued them.

Laughing at my futile attempts to prevent them from destroying my prized possessions, the whole ragged mob of the vaporous beings were now intent upon the destruction of a grandfather clock near the door. One pixie kicked in the glass; another bent the hands; a third swung on the pendulum, while still another ripped jagged gashed in the wood with a razor he had somehow procured from my medicine chest, and the rest were equally divided in taking apart the works and attempting to topple it to the floor. Unable to further wit-

ness such vandalism, I determined to end it, and sprang after the creatures. Unfortunately, or, perhaps fortunately, I tripped on the rug, which they had rumbled and cut to a good degree, and fell forward, one hand clutching a window shutter and releasing the catch, thus throwing open the shutter. Immediately a cool breeze entered and rapidly cleared the room of smoke. 29

At the first breath of fresh air, the creatures began to waver and fade, ceasing their activities. Nevertheless, rising, I threw open the other shutters, thus hastening their departure. The little vandals fairly wailed in anguish at having their game thus put to so abrupt an end; but faded, nonetheless. Wearily, I returned to my chair, and sank into its comforting depths, dreading what I would find, or should I say, not find, when I assessed the damages. I leaned over and retrieved my pipe from where I had dropped it when I started from my chair. Curiously, the carved figures were still there. Unwilling to believe my eyes, I gazed fearfully about the room, and to my extreme pleasure and astonishment, found every object in its original place; the clock in perfect condition; the vase remarkably restored, and no pixies in my stein! No pixies in my stein. Oh, good gracious me, no, none at all!

Astounded, I pondered over what had happened, wondering what could have caused my --- my --- my hallucinations. Not finding an answer (as was usual), I picked up my pipe with a feeling akin to admiration and placed it carefully in a glass case, which I used from time to time to mount specimens from my butterfly hunts in.

I returned to the study, and idly picked up my pouch of tobacco, noticing as I did so its strange label. I held it close to the fire, and peered more closely at it. I made out one word on its face. One word. Catnip! Catnip? Catnip!! Beyond the shadow of a doubt, catnip! "Upon my word," I gasped, "I must have confused packages!" I never realized I had catnip! My word! And to think I smoked it! Actually smoked it! Oh, dear me! And those things that happened, and those things I saw! I think I saw them. Did I? I did. I think. Perhaps I didn't! I wonder if Pussy sees the same things when I give her a bit? Or do they look like cats? I must ask her sometime. My word! Pixies! Catnip. Oh, dear me, catnip!



(Some stories are forgotten almost as soon as they are printed. Others stand the test of time. We wish we could forget this one.)

Because "Rejects of Space" has flunked this test flat, it has been nominated for SINISTERRA's Hall of Shame and is printed here.

Nominate your own favorite stinkers! Send a letter to us. All suggestions are more than ignored.)

Newt Curtain bent grimly over the electromicroscope at the end of his cluttered laboratory, unheeding the long shadows that crept across the harsh, airless plain outside. Many hours had he stood thus, unmoving, grim, intent on the complex instrument before him. Newt Curtain, better known for his dazzling exploits in space as Lieutenant Futile, was not one to give up easily. Under the electromicroscope a piece of newsprint lay which he scanned with set jaw and scowling visagg. He was rather nearsighted.

Newt was the son of the famous Doctor Curt Curtain, a retired chiroprapist. Puttering about one day in his workshop in East Tarsal, Wisconsin, Dr. Curtain discovered by sheer accident the principle which today drives our ships to the stars (and our physicists to drink, because theoretically it doesn't work.): The Tibia Effect, so called because it reacts on space rather like a kick in the shins. It has much the same effect on the ship's occupants, as you old spacehounds well know.

Needless to say, young Newt absorbed the Romance of Space

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with his very Pablum. At the age of twelve he had become a strapping youth. Mostly he strapped smaller children. Consequently he left school quite early, at 8:45 A.M. in fact, and enlisted in the Solar Lunar Outworlds Patrol, familiarly known as S/L.O.P.

During his recruit training he earned words of praise from Admiral Jettism, the space academy commandant, - but he never got them. Instead ---

"Curtain, why in the name o' blame can't you learn to steppoff on your left foot when you march? If anybody is capable of stepping off on his left foot, it should be you - you've got two of them."

Graduating with the highest honors the space academy could bestow upon a man who was unable to read or write, Newt was commissioned a fourth lieutenant in the patrol. He became famous for the weird crew who rode the space detours with him in the dashing ship "Womet" (The "W" is pronounced in the Germanic fashion).

Kyuk, the robot, navigator "par ordinaire" -- he who in time of crisis would always help Newt find the airlock. Yoyo the pathetic synthetic whose undercooked plastic might melt a bit in the heat and run at the edges, but who was always good to the last drip.

And finally, weirdest of all, Hiram Lefft, who had once been a human being (of sorts). Lefft, an aging famous (every one is famous in this, and you might as well get used to it) psychoneurotic, had been given eternal life in a strange manner. Before his death, his spinal cord and endocrine system were placed in a cocktail shaker filled with sea water and Wheaties, which was then hermetically sealed. There were those who felt that this procedure may have hastened Lefft's end, but be that as it may, in that shaker survived the personality of Hiram Lefft! Hiram's contribution to Newt's crew was more subtle than that of Kyuk or Yoyo -- in fact nobody knows what it was, not even Newt himself. But that will give you a rough idea why young Newt Curtain, at the tender age of fifty three, was already known throughout the system as --- Lieutenant Futile!

Where the Patrol rode, even in those first wild years of the frontier in space, evildoers cowered and honest citizens knew safety. Where Lieutenant Futile rode, however, the reverse was generally true.

32 One of his earliest legends concerns his rescue of Hakon Saak, the pirate, from an enraged mob. Saak, a villain through and through (and also around and about), had finally been captured in a foolhardy attempt to rob the payroll of Asteroid Metals, Inc. on Ceres. Had he but known, to coin a phrase, that the company was flat broke, he could have saved himself the trouble.

The outraged Korean colonists, snarling drunk on the native beverage "pflerd" (diesel fuel laced with old amalgam from the refinery sump), determined to end Saak's sad life by lynching him. But no! -- not with Lieutenant Futile near.

Crash landing his ship (as usual) in the middle of the village, Futile wrested the Sad Saak from the clutching hands and began marching him toward the "Womet". Hesitating for a moment over whether to step off with the port or starboard one of his two left feet, he inadvertently stepped off with both and dropped his blaster. In the ensuing confusion Saak grabbed the blaster and escaped with the "Womet". This was easier than it sounds (yet), as Kyuk, the robot, had unshipped his legs in order to shine his footplates more easily, and Yoyo, the pathetic synthetic, had gone to sleep beside the engines again and melted himself into an utter puddle, a condition from which it always took him some time to recover. Hiram Lefft rattled the stirring rod of his shaker like mad, but no one paid much attention. The resultant publicity earned Newt Curtain an assignment on special detached service, "in charge of all space more than six light years from any inhabited planet," on condition that he never come inside the orbit of Uranus except under official escort.

So now, at the height of his, you should pardon the expression, career, we find Newt Curtain standing over the electromicroscope with the scrap of newsprint clamped on it, staring grimly, silently, patiently, intently, dauntlessly, gallantly, doggedly, relentlessly --- oh what's the use?

He's reading the funnies, and he'll be at it for hours.

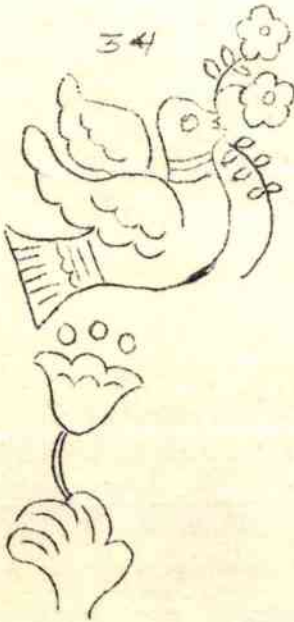
Let's go shoot pool.

Further adventures of Lieutenant Futile will appear in this magazine over our dead body.



I don't care what the real cause is.
You have got to have canals!!

Wally Weber



Kindergarten Questions on Interstellar Navigation

How far away are the planets?
How many light years apart?
Safely to land in one's old age,
What youthful age must one start?

Galaxies, - are they expanding?
Can we pass outside our own?
How many stars in a cluster?
How may an orbit be shown?

Distance - (too great now to measure
Less than in lifetimes of years) -
Will it be conquered for pleasure
Or to prove Man more than fears?

When all these questions are answered
Would it not be rather odd
If they proved our great Solar System
Is only a Molecule of God!

To L.L.

Martin Wall

Erato, forced into a rigid corselet of style
and dressed by scholars in affected words of poesy
(Struggling to breathe beneath this cheap finery
That smothers all her beauty but her smile -)
With timeless patience lets pedants caress
The superficial beauty of her formal dress.

But when a worshipper with more seeing eyes
Looks from his heart beyond her flowery garb
Seeking a beauty not of noun nor verb
With that mute passion words can but disguise,
Erato shows herself as naked as the truth
And fills his soul with her eternal youth.

Grammarians quibble over an empty gown -
While Poets make the living Muse their own!

SPACEBLUES #1 - Autumn
August Adelund

You'll never know, you'll never guess
The beauty and the loneliness
Of fallen leaves and branches bare-
Of rainswept skies and dampfilled air -
Of sodden earth whose promise sleeps
Until the planet southward sweeps...
Unless, spacebound, you've watched Earth fall
Into a distant, blue-green ball,
And tasted but the tropic air
The spacecans hold, knowing that there
Will be - for you - no more at all
Of the somber charm of Terra's 'Fall'.



BLACK MAGIC - G. M. Carr

Father Time is a wicked magician
That will not leave beauty alone.
He withers the loveliest flower
And crumbles the hardest of stone.

His horrid and loathsome black magic
Robs us all of the things we hold fast...
Takes our beauty and youth, strength and
wisdom,
And even our life at the last.

Spaceblues #2 - Young Philosopher
August Adelund

Honor is better than kisses, but who
Is old enough to know that, are you?
Virtue is better than passion, they say,
Who fold their hands and kneel and pray.
Honor and Virtue are decent and right,
But kisses are sweet and passion, delight.
In the cold night my honor may guard me from harm,
But Virtue's too chilly to help keep me warm!

AGONY COLUMN

IRRITATED by unpleasant neighbors? TOO YOUNG to die? Professor Pinkley's Priceless Protective Potion will protect you from any Construct-A-neighbor kit. Each form of death. Money back guarantee. Produces two neighbors. Professor Pinkley, c/o, Psycho Sanitarium, Pluto.

Easy to follow directions. Write: [redacted] to Neighbors Inc. 1313 Z Street, Robotsville, Jupiter. LOST; strayed or stolen: one soul, slightly frazzled and green around the gills. Contact Dr. Faustus, Gehenna. Hot reward.

MAKE A MILLION overnight raising: Zitzers. Amazing rabbit mutation that can reproduce 500,000 in a six hour period. Males and females shipped separately to avoid mounting postal rates. Last seen in illustration by Miles Eaton. Return to Baudelaire, cell #2222, Deepest Pit, Hell, via SINISTERRA, Issue #3

ATTENTION to all robots. Does your wife or husband make noisy clanks and rattles when traveling over hard surfaces? Have her treated with a new, revolutionary underseal job at Joe's Garage, 1677 Hydramatic Drive, Gearshift, Pennsylvania. FOR SALE: One ambition, large size, first class working condition. To highest bidder. Smocho, Thought wave #19.

FOR SALE: One pair fangs, in somewhat used condition. Will sacrifice. Owner no longer needs them. Write Blood Banks, Inc. "Love Life of the Zitzer" Mint M. Dracula, prop. Wash. D/C/condition with original asbestos dust jacket. Box 1 Polarisburg, Polaris VI.

HELP WANTED: FEMALE. Girls, are you young, beautiful, talented, graceful, and slightly dumb? There is an opening for you among our first class temptresses. No exp. necessary. Earn as you learn. Contact Chief Temptress, Inferno Div. of Eternal Damnationville, Mercury.

ARE YOU HANDICAPPED on your job? Learn how you too can grow an extra arm or leg. Mutants, Inc., Contact Chief Temptress, Inferno Div. of Eternal Damnationville, Mercury.

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