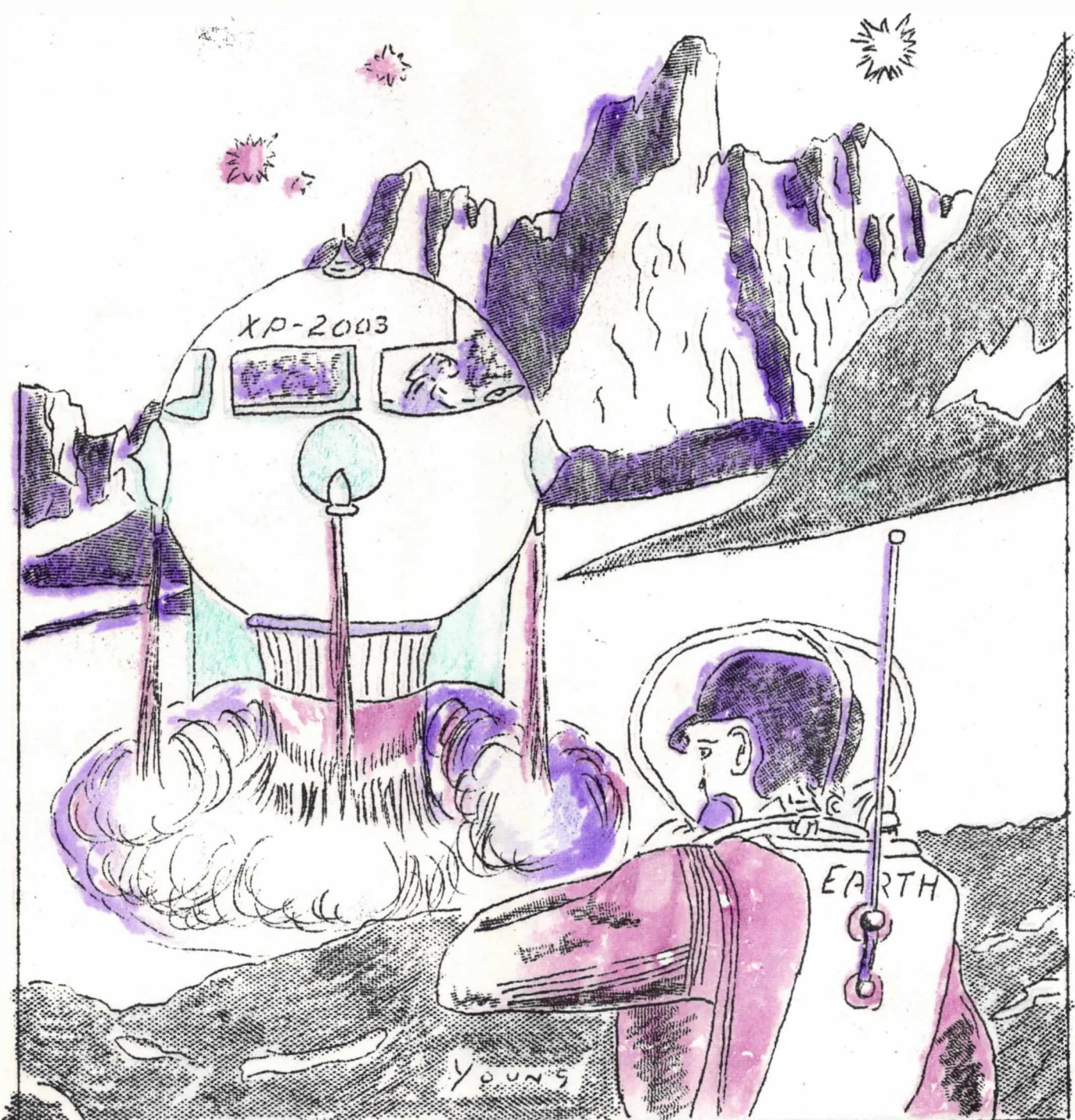


SPACEWARP

107



Cover based on a drawing by George H. Young for SPACEWARP 14, May, 1948.

The Lost Chord

#10 SPACEWARP 16
July 1948

I haven't the heart to get sore at Morgan Botts -- after all, it wasn't his fault -- but I do wish he'd figure out some way of getting my envelope back.....

Botts was at his usual table as I entered Joe's Tavern. Obviously he'd been nursing one beer for three hours, waiting for me to show up and buy him more.

"The world's full of jerks," I told him, seating myself across the table and plopping a fat manila envelope down on its marble top.

"Meaning?..."

"Meaning you, of course," I assured the stfan-inventor blithely. "But more particularly meaning the dope who bumped into me and almost knocked me down just now on the Fourth Level Ramp."

"Some people never look where they're going," agreed Botts. "Of course, I suppose you were entirely blameless?"

"Well, I might have been a bit abstracted," I admitted. "After all, an occasion like today is plenty to give one that walking-on-air feeling."

"What's today?" asked Botts, waving for Joe the bartender to hurry up with the beers.

"Today marks the emergence of a glorious new addition to the ranks of stfwriters," I told him modestly. "On the table before you is the story which will make me famous in the annals of our noble literature. I have finally succeeded in my long efforts to crash the prozines!"

"I knew it," commented Botts gloomily. "Didn't I always say stf is going to the dogs? I never thought it would degenerate so far that your crud would sell, tho."

"You're a mere fossilized relic of prehistory," I told him. "Grab a beer and help me celebrate this memorable occasion."

Joe approached with a heavily-laden tray. "Do me a favor, Joe," I told the bartender. "Run out to the corner and drop this envelope in a mail-slot for me. It's gotta get into the evening pickup."

"Sure, Bud," said Joe. "So you finally sold one, hey? Congratulations."

"Thanx, Joe," I said. I fondled my manila-clad brainchild affectionately before entrusting it to Joe's brawny grasp.

Botts helped himself to a brimming stein as Joe went out with the envelope. "Awright, give with the gruesome details," the stfan-inventor said, settling back resignedly in his chair. "You will, of course, whether I want to listen or not."

"It's that time-travel yarn I've been working on for so long," I said. "You know -- the one where the hero tracks down the villain after months of effort, but too late to overcome him before the horrible plot to destroy Earth has been set in operation. So the hero goes back in time to the villain's childhood and beats out his brains with a baseball bat."

Botts shuddered slightly and took another long pull at his beer. "Oh, NO!" he pleaded. "You mean some poor deluded simp of an editor actually bought that old chestnut from you?"

"The plot has been used once or twice before," I admitted grudgingly.

"Ye gods! Once or twice!" Botts mumbled inarticulately for a moment, then with an expressive shrug of his shoulders tackled a fresh stein.

"So what?" I said defiantly. "You've often said yourself that there's no such thing as an absolutely new plot. In fact, if you remember Conner's famous book on the subject, the whole secret of successful stfwriting is to make old plots seem new."

Botts regarded me quizzically. "You say you've already sold this story?" he asked. "How comes you're just mailing it out, then?"

"Well," I explained, "I have sold it, but the editor wanted me to rework the passage where I explain time-travel paradoxes. He said I needed to bring in more technical terms so that the science would be authentic, as well as absolutely clear. Since the whole point of the story depends on the time-travel incident, it's important that everyone understands the paradox-theorem."

Botts downed another beer. "I can just imagine you trying to explain the science of time-travel," he said sarcastically. "Your idea of an explanation is to use ten-syllable words to express one-syllable ideas. Your college education has ruined you, Bud."

"Oh yeah?" I retorted indignantly. "At least I know the principles behind time-travel. I bet you couldn't give the basic factors of Wolfgang's Temporal-Continuum Equation without boning up on the subject."

"What's that got to do with a trip into the past?" Botts wanted to know.

"Why, don't you know the seventh transformation of the Wolfgang Parameters alters the hyperspatial matrix so that the plasticity of future-time is also applicable to past-time, thereby generating a Weber Self-Annihilating Paradox? In other words, if you alter the past so that it affects the future, thus creating alternate probabilities, both probabilities cease to exist."

"Oh NO! Oh, Great Simpering Ghu-Lovers!" Botts tore at his hair with both hands. "Bud, don't tell me you've had the Ghu-drenched imbecillity to use Weber's Metaphysical Basis of Extratemporal Physics as your source-book?"

"Why, yes. What's wrong with--"

"Haven't you heard? Haven't you seen the papers?" asked Botts. "The Physicists' Association has just revealed that Weber misinterpreted a quantity in the original Wolfgang Equation and built his entire theory on a false assumption!"

"What!"

"It's all in the latest issue of Science Journal. By the time your story hits print every fan from here to Kokomo will laugh himself sick at your doubletalk about hyperspatial matrix plasticity!"

I was already on my feet, looking wildly around the dimly-lit tavern for Joe. "Where is that guy?" I yelled. "I gotta get back my manuscript before he mails it!"

Just then Joe entered the green swinging doors. I rushed up to him frantically. "Joe! Joe! Did you--"

"Worried about your story, Bud?" asked Joe, smiling cheerfully. "Relax, Bud. I put it in the mail-slot with my own hands. You got nothing to worry about."

"Morgan! What'll I do?" I wailed. "Either the thing will get into print and I'll be disgraced for life, or they'll catch it before the mag goes to press and toss it in the wastebasket. Either way, I'm sunk!"

"This," said Morgan Botts, "Is the time for action!" He slid back his chair, rose to his feet, picked up a beer and drained it in one mighty gulp. "Come along, Bud," he said, hustling me out into the twilight street.

"Where are we going?" I panted, trying to keep up with his swift strides.

"To your place," he said. "You've got a carbon of that manuscript, haven't you?"

"Yeah -- but it's too late to get it into the mail, and--"

"Don't worry, just leave everything to me," said Botts, pulling me along a bit faster.

The next three hours were the most hectic I've ever lived thru. I couldn't figure out what Botts had in mind, but I blindly followed his orders, rewriting the crucial paragraphs and substituting them for the erroneous pages in the carbon copy of my story.

Botts fairly snatched the sheaf of flimsy from my hands. "Now we put this into an envelope and address it just like the original was fixed," he barked. "Make sure it has exactly the same outer appearance."

That finished, we hurried to Botts' apartment. I was beginning to have a dim idea of what he intended to do.

"You're time-machine!" I said. "You're going to switch manuscripts on me!"

"Of course," said Botts. "Don't you remember the guy who jostled you on the Fourth Level Ramp? It couldn't have been anyone but me!"

"Botts, you're a genius," I said. "I don't know how to thank you for all this--"

"Aw, nuts," said Botts gruffly. "I remember how I felt about my own first story. You sit down and have a beer while I fix things."

I watched him step thru the Temporal Disc, then fished myself a plastican of suds from the coolax and sipped thoughtfully as I waited for his return. Eventually he reappeared, a triumphant smile on his dissipated features. "All taken care of, Bud" he announced, tossing the retrieved envelope on a chair. "Fish me out a beer."

It was almost an hour later when a sudden chilling thought struck me. I set my half-empty plastican on the floor beside the others and bent a panic-stricken gaze on Morgan Botts.

"Botts," I said. "I just happened to think...."

"Yeah?" asked Botts encouragingly, brushing a trace of foam from his white moustache.

"Back in the tavern -- when I handed the envelope to Joe--"

"I remember. What about it?"

"Botts! I remember feeling that envelope -- and the manuscript was on stiff paper!"

"Nonsense!" said Botts. "You're letting your imagination run away with you. Here -- look at this manuscript I brought back. See if it isn't the original."

With trembling fingers I tore open the heavy manila. Sure enough, it contained a thick sheaf of bond paper. I gave a sigh of relief -- but then I withdrew the sheets from their envelope, and uttered a cry of horror.

The paper was blank.

"Incredible!" murmured Botts, gazing at the virgin pages. "Do you realize, Bud, that this vindicates Weber's Theory of Self-Annihilating Paradoxes after all?"

"Ghu drench Weber's Theory!" I yelled. "What happened to my story?"

"Unfortunately," said Morgan Botts, "I'm afraid your story has vanished somewhere in hyperspace, or perhaps hypertime. Tsk -- both copies, too. It looks, Bud, as if you not only have to crash the pro-mags all over again -- you also have the job of explaining to an editor just how you happened to mail him a fat envelope full of blank second-sheets!"

- END -

Time And The Torcon

#11 MACABRE V.I #2
June, 1948

"Now look here, Botts," I said, "I got mixed up in one of your goddam time-travel inventions last New Year's Eve, and I still get the shakes when I think how close we came to landing in prison."

"Have another beer, then," the stfan-inventor retorted. "Great stuff, beer. Good for what ails you." He shoved a brimming stein across the table with such a patronizing air that any casual onlooker would have sworn it was Botts and not me who was paying for the suds.

As I paused for a gulp of malt, Botts returned to his previous argument. "All right, then, you admit we got out of that New Year's Eve scrape OK -- even though we were both orry-eyed as passifen at the time. So what possible objection can you have to participating in the foolproof scheme which I just outlined to you, especially since we both know what we're doing this time?"

I began ticking off points on my fingers. "One," I said, "I wouldn't have helped you last time if I hadn't been thoroughly soused. Two: As you claimed at the time, there is a doubt whether temporal telepathy is legally time-travel or not, and therefore may not come under the jurisdiction of the Control Council at all. Three: Only a dope would refuse to profit by experience. Four: How do I know..."

"Shuddup!" yelled Botts. "You're the most obstinate sonofa dero I ever came across. If I didn't need someone who knows stf history for this deal, I'd never have mentioned it to you."

"I've learned more about Twentieth-Century fandom than most of the guys who lived thru it," I admitted. "Couldn't help it, hearing all the hot air you spout whenever you get a stein of beer in your mitts."

"Whadda ya mean, hot air?" Botts was indignant. "Every word I tell you is the gospel truth. Those were the days of real fandom, back in the Fifties and Sixties..."

"Never mind all that," I said. "The fact remains that what you propose now is real out-and-out time-travel in the Forbidden Sector, and all we need is one little tattlebulb flashing on the board at Central Control to put us both in the jug from now till Kinnison conquers Floor."

"Nonsense!" said Botts, raising a brimming stein to his stubbled lips. "You ought to know that when I, Morgan Botts, say I have invented a timefield which will not trip the Central Control alarms, that you needn't give the cops another thought."

"Wel-l-l-l..."

"And look what a cinch this is going to be!" Botts was quick to pounce upon my hesitation. "All you do is go back to 1948, buy, beg or steal a copy of the Torcon Memory Book, and return here. Could anything be simpler?"

"Suppose it alters the Temporal Constants, like what we did last time?" I asked. "We might not be able to straighten things out again, as we did then."

"This is entirely different," snapped Botts indignantly. "We're just going to bring one insignificant artifact from the past into the future. The profs over at Historical Research do the same thing every day, and they don't change history, do they?"

"Well, no," I admitted, "But you know how carefully they calculate the probability lines before they go back in time -- and even then they go three or four centuries back so the Temporal Norm has a chance to re-establish itself."

"True," said Botts. "Only remember, they make important changes -- like the guy who brought back the Holy Grail last week, for instance. We're just going to bring back one copy of a fanzine. Hell, the thing probably wasn't worth more than half a buck when it was first published, and even a second-hand copy will do for our purposes."

"But--"

"Besides, haven't I told you I found an article in a 1987 fanzine that covers this case? Look, come on over to my place anyhow, and I'll explain on the way."

Reluctantly I paid the bartender for our many beers, and left the tiny neighborhood tavern in company with the disreputable and decrepit Stefan-inventor. As we traversed the wintry streets toward his basement apartment, he told me what he had discovered in his file of old fanzines.

"--and this guy, writing in 1987, mind you -- said that there was quite a rumpus in fandom early in 1949, when it was discovered that the Fantasy Foundation copy of the Torcon Memory Book had disappeared from the files. Anyway, they never found where it had gone, so another copy was put in the files. Now, doesn't that sound to you like someone from the future took that first copy?"

"It's possible," I admitted.

"Well, in that case, you know that you'll be able to get a Memory Book without any trouble," Botts persisted.

We entered his apartment, and I moved a stack of dusty promags so I could sit on one of the sagging chairs while Botts fiddled with the gadget on his workbench. I was still doubtful about the project, however.

"Look here," I burst out suddenly, "You never did explain why a copy of the Torcon Memory Book should be so valuable now. After all, if the Fantasy Foundation has a copy, and there are others floating around, it can't be the rarest thing in stf..."

"You're forgetting, aren't you?" asked Botts, softly.

"Forgetting? Oh, you mean -- um, that's right. The Catastrophe was in '51 or '52, wasn't it? Yeh, I guess any 1948 fanzine that didn't get special protection would be sort of scarce after that..."

"--so if you bring one here, it won't cause even a ripple in the Temporal Constants, but I'll be able to get at least a hundred credits for it from one of the big-time fans. You could use half of that dough, couldn't you?"

"This is against my better judgment," I said resignedly as I stepped over to the workbench, "but with payday as far off as it is, I'd strangle Grandpappy JaClem for fifty credits."

"He'd probably jump right out of his wheelchair and beat you over the head with his cane," chuckled Botts, turning on the timefield generator. "He's the orneryest old codger that ever drooled at a Finlay nude."

The weirdly-glowing timefield bubble grew swiftly from pinpoint to basketball size, then distorted into the almost two-dimensional, six-foot disc of a Temporal Lock. With one hasty glance over Botts' shoulder to see that the controls were set correctly, I stepped thru the disc into 1948.....

* * *

"Well, how'd you make out?" Botts asked. There was a queer overtone to his apparently-casual question, which I could not quite identify.

"Oh, pretty fair," I answered. "I've got the Torcon Memory Book, if that's what you mean." Was I seeing things, or did a shadow of disappointment creep over his ugly puss?

"Any trouble?" he said, meanwhile puncturing a couple cans of beer and handing me one.

"Not to speak of," I replied. "You know, this was my first trip back in time. You might at least have reminded me of the change in clothing styles since 1948."

"Ummm. Clean forgot that," murmured Botts, wiping the foam from his lips with the back of one hand. "Get arrested?"

"No -- but thank goodness it was Los Angeles I was visiting, or Ghu knows what might have happened!"

There was a long pause. Botts seemed fascinated by the condensation on the outside of his beer can. He traced meaningless designs in the dew with one grimy forefinger. I began to get irritated.

"Look here, Botts," I snapped, "What's up? You don't even seem to care about the Torcon Memory Book, now that you've got it."

A look that was undeniably sheepish settled on the Stefan-inventor's features. "I'll tell you," he finally mumbled. "While you were gone, I figured I'd pass the time by re-reading that fanmag article about the Torcon Memory Book. Well, I happened to run across another piece in the same ish, which gave additional info on the history of the TMB."

"Yes...?"

Botts polished off his beer in one long swallow, chucked the empty can into the wastedrop, and faced me.

"Well, it seems that when the copy disappeared from the Fantasy Foundation files, one of those wild rumors that are always current in fandom got started. It was whispered that copies of the TMB were as scarce as Merritt's Fox Woman or moreso -- and, of course, every fan who happened to have a copy immediately resolved to hold his Memory Book a few years and then make a killing."

"Ummmmmm."

"So, with everyone hoarding Memory Books, they really were scarce, and the price skyrocketed -- ten bucks or more, even way back in 1960."

"Well, then," I interrupted, "The damn things ought to be worth a fortune by now, shouldn't they?"

"Not on your life!" Botts retorted. "Use your head, man! That senseless inflation couldn't go on forever. It's just like a stock-market boom. Along about 1975 three or four copies of the Memory Book happened to be offered for sale simultaneously. All the hoarders immediately jumped to sell out fast, before the price dropped."

"So the market got flooded?" I asked.

"That," said Botts, "is the greatest understatement of the Twenty-First Century. That hunk of fanpub you brought back here isn't worth the cost of the power to run the timefield."

"&#%#%#%#%#% ???"

"--but if you really want to get some dough, I've got a wonderful scheme all worked out. You just go back to--"

"&#%#%#%#%#%#%#%#% !!! !!! !!! !"

"Awright, awright," said Botts. "If that's the way you feel about it! Let's have another beer."

-END-

Botts By His Bootstraps

12

MACABRE, 1948

"Ah, Spring," murmured Morgan Botts, lifting a brimming beaker of bock to his lips. "At this pleasant season of the year, the pulse of youth and adventure throbs once again in my blood."

"That's not youth and adventure," I told the stfan-inventor disrespectfully. "That's just alcohol in your capillaries."

Botts ignored me. He replaced his empty stein on the marble-topped tavern table and stared intently into my face.

"Do you remember the Torcon?" he asked abruptly.

"Don't be silly!" I answered. "Fifty years ago I wasn't even born yet, let alone a stfan -- do you mean, by any chance, have I heard of the Torcon?"

"What the hell do you think I mean?" Botts snapped. "I know you are just a young whippersnapper....well, have you or haven't you?"

"Hah!" I retorted. "Remember that little incident of the Torcon Memory Book? How could I ever forget the Tor con, huh?" I was beginning to guess what Botts had up his sleeve, and I wanted no part of any more time-travel schemes.

"How'd you like to attend the Torcon?" Botts asked thru the foam of a fresh beer.

So my guess was right! Without hesitation I yelped, "Absolutely, finally, definitely, -- NO!"

"No?"

"N-O-no. Not unless you get a permit from Central Control to visit 1948 for purposes of research. In that case I'd be only too glad to see that historic event -- the first out-of-the-U.S., International Stfcon. But no more of your illegal trips; my nerves won't stand 'em."

"Ah," said Botts. "So you would like to visit the Torcon?"

"What stfan wouldn't?"

"Look at it this way," Morgan Botts replied. "Our earlier experienced proved that my time-machine is undetectable by Central Control; therefore, there's nothing to worry about--"

"--Unless we happen to screw up the Temporal Constants!"

"Yeah, but all we're going to do is watch the Torcon -- we're not going to interfere with events at all."

"Like I said, get a permit from the Council, and--"

"Ah, nerts!" snarled Botts. "You know how much red tape that would involve. Besides, there'd be the license fee, all the insurance premiums, the bond to be posted, the--"

"What the hell makes you so anxious to see the Torcon again, anyway?" I asked. "You attended it, didn't you?"

"Well, yes, in a way," Botts admitted. "No doubt I've often told you I first heard of stf when I ran an errand that took me into one of the Torcon sessions -- however, I missed a lot, since I didn't know enuf about stf to fully appreciate what went on, and, of course, I couldn't know that the Torcon was to become famous as the dawn of a new era in stf. Besides, I'd like to look the thing over again purely for sentimental reasons."

"Or because your memory's dimming with age, hah?" I commented.

"That is a Ghu-drenched lie!" yelled Botts, slamming his glass on the table. "Wait till you get old enuf to try recalling events a half-century in the past, and you'll realize that I have a remarkably excellent memory!"

"O.Q., I apoligize," I answered, seeing that the stfan-inventor was really angry. Botts hates to be kidded about his age unless the remark is a compliment.

"Well, then," he demanded, "Are you or are you not going with me?"

"Ah, hell, I suppose I might as well," I said reluctantly. "Somebody's got to keep you out of trouble....."

* * *

It is a strange sensation, wandering around in the past -- especially when your presence there is decidedly illegal.....you see people dressed in those queer, uncomfortable garments of fifty years ago, carrying on their affairs with no slightest intimation of the events so soon to occur -- the events you know so well from your courses in Modern History I at college -- it makes you feel like getting on a soapbox and shouting your knowledge at them, warning of the coming Catastrophe and the men whose real character lay so long unsuspected beneath the gloss of superficial conformity.....it makes you want to do something, some little, unimportant-in-itself act which would turn the whole current of the Temporal Constants into a different channel than the one it is destined to take.....

"Look, son," Morgan Botts interrupted my musings, "You wait here in front of the building and watch the people if you want. I'm going to look in on that last meeting again. I'm almost sure that's the

one I wandered into.....but after fifty years it's so hard to be sure of details."

I let the opening pass. This was no time for wisecracks about Botts' memory. Besides, I was fascinated by the street scenes. I was watching a man maneuver his quaint internal-combustion automobile into a parking space at the side of the vehicle-way when a touch on my arm startled me.

I whirled, not knowing what to expect. Then, I sighed in relief at seeing it was only Botts, not a Central Control representative.

"Ghu! Don't scare me like that!" I told Botts. "I thought you'd gone inside long ago."

"I did," Botts replied. "But I came back out to tell you something. Look, I can't find myself in that meeting, but they're having a discussion about the future of stf up there that's really funny to hear. Coming up?"

"No, I'll stay down here, I guess."

"Hmmm, I rather thought you would. Beats history books, doesn't it?"

"Hell, it even beats tri-dims! This is the real thing!"

"Well, I'm going back to that meeting. If you see me around anywhere, call me down here, will you? I'd like to see what kind of a looking young'un I used to be."

"Sure thing, Morgan."

It was about five minutes later that I saw the kid. Dirty and ragged, he was leaning against the wall of a building in the mouth of an alley on the opposite side of the street. I watched while, in the shadows swiftly gathering as the sun dropped, he pulled a bottle of beer from his hip pocket and tilted his head back to take a long pull at it. Without a doubt, this was Morgan Botts at fifteen!

What should I do? I didn't want to let the kid out of my sight long enuf to go get Botts, because in the twilight it might be impossible to find him again, but I knew Botts would be heartbroken if he missed seeing himself. The old geezer gets horribly sentimental at times.

Then I noticed a newsboy beside me, busily folding his evening papers to fit into the carrier of his bicycle. I could not help thinking what a contrast this lad's neat, clean-cut appearance presented to that of the half-drunk punk across the street. I called to the newsboy.

"Hey, bud," I said, "How'd you like to earn a quarter?"

"How, mister?" he answered, shoving his stack of half-folded papers to one side.

"Look," I told him, "Go upstairs and find room 213. There's a meeting going on in there, and I want you to find an old gent with horn-rim glasses and a white mustache. Tell him his friend wants him downstairs. Got that?"

"Sure, mister," said the newsboy. "Gimme the quarter, mister."

Clutching the coin, he scampered up the stairs. I waited impatiently for Botts to arrive. The sun sank lower; the shadows deepened; the disreputable youngster in the alley tossed aside his empty beer bottle and lit a cigarette.

It was fully fifteen minutes before Botts came out of the building, however. By that time only the red spark of the cigarette's tip was visible in the darkness of the alley. The newsboy's papers and bicycle lay deserted beside me.

"What the hell took you so long?" I greeted Botts. "Or didn't that kid I sent up give you my message?"

"Oh, the kid gave me the message, all right, but I hated to leave in the middle of the discussion," Botts answered. "Besides, I thought I'd do better to stay where I was."

"Well, you should have come down right away. I'm sure that's you standing in that alley across the street, only now it's too dark to tell."

Then Morgan Botts amazed me. He showed not the slightest interest in the cigarette-smoking juvenile delinquent. Instead, he led me back into the building, laughing heartily. However, it was not until we had gone thru the Temporal Lock into our own time once again that he condescended to enlighten me.....

* * *

"--and if he looked like your description, I think I ought to be insulted," Botts chuckled, a can of beer in his gnarled hand as we relaxed in his apartment.

"You mean that wasn't you? Didn't you drink and smoke when you were fifteen?"

"I'm proud to say I did not," Botts answered. "In fact, I must have been all of sixteen when I first tried beer. Thought it tasted awful at the time, too."

"Well, then you didn't get to see yourself at the Torcon after all, did you?" I asked. "Don't mind it too much, though -- we'll go back again someday and look in on those sessions we had to skip this trip."

"What makes you think I didn't see myself?" Botts asked.

"Hell, that's all you were grumbling about all the while," I told him. "Why, right up at that last meeting, you told me to call you if I spotted anyone who might be you."

"Great Ghu, son, don't jump to half-baked conclusions," Botts shouted. "I told you I remembered just what went on at the Torcon, even after fifty years. I had to do a little play-acting in the interests of keeping the Temporal Constants straight."

"You mean you saw yourself at one of the earlier meetings and were just pretending.....?"

"Don't be stupid! Hell, haven't I told you innumerable times that I first learned about science fiction and fandom by running an errand that took me into the Torcon? Yep, my memory is very good, always has been.....even in those days I never needed to write memos about stuff I wanted to remember, like most people do. Why, I even kept in my head all the accounts for the subscribers on my paper route....."

- END -

AUTHOR'S NOTE: In case anyone wonders, I never did precisely decide what the Catastrophe was. I wavered between invasion by ET's attracted by stf radio broadcasts, and an atomic explosion set off by a bunch of fans trying to build a spaceship. Back in 1948, the notion that pulp-magazine stf might be destroyed by TV was too fantastic to believe.

The GRAPES of RAPP

Cuttin' a Swathe thru Mailing 107 with Power Mower Motor Revvin'.....

Actually I don't have a power mower, but an ecologically-sound hand-pushable reel-type mower. It's too bad the gasoline shortage did not coincide with the lawnmowing season, so I could have a chance to sneer at my effete neighbors.

SPECTATOR 107: We'd have no cause for complaint if SAPS dues are raised; inflation has hit most everything else in the universe, and how long have SAPS dues been at \$2 per year? If the postage costs start eroding that treasury balance, go ahead & raise 'em. Come to think of it, raising the dues and then reinstating the practice of declaring annual dues moratoriums would be pleasant.

SUNSET 2 (Koch): Good grief, how is the N3F Manuscript Bureau operating these days if you don't even know who created the material you get from them? Back when I was running it (1947-8) it was carefully spelled out that any publisher using the material must send the author or artist a contributor's copy of his mag. After all, that is the only reward they get: egoboo. # I hope you'll continue the story. Your attempt to fill in the background sort of slowed up the opening, and a lot of that info should probably be dropped piecemeal into the action later in the story, but it's hard to judge without seeing what you have in mind for later on.

OCTOINVIDIOUS (Lillian): Lessee, your new job makes you a professional comic, doesn't it? # Congratulations on the not inconsiderable feat of attaining a means of existence in New York, and what is even rarer, liking it there. It has been years since I've read anything but condemnation of the Big City from those who actually dwell there.

RESULTS OF THE 1974 PILLAR POLL (McEvoy): Tsk, you fake STARTLING STORIES fan, you; you should have divided the SAPSzines into an A List and a B List. # In answer to your question, this annual egoboo sweepstakes was called a Pillar Poll because it, like, determines who are the Pillars of SAPS upon which rest the foundations of the organization. In fact, for a year or two I believe it was called a Piller Poll, but that was merely because of the inept spelling of the OE at the time (me). # Something to notice is that of the Top Ten SAPS, only four have been in SAPS long enough to have a record of previous standings going back to 1970. This proves that SAPS is not run by an Old Guard -- at least, not successfully.

COSWALSAPSZINE 78 (Coslet): Speaking of amateur poetry, Nancy's college put out its annual literary magazine with material of such ghodawful quality we were tempted to issue an anonymous parody, in the same manner as the one that prodded the college newspaper to upgrade itself. But upon further consideration we decided the poetry in the literary annual was beyond parody -- no matter how we tried, we'd be unable to avoid writing verse of higher quality. In fact, most 6-year-olds could. Well, we didn't really have spare time to turn out a project like that, anyway.

OWLS ROOST (Cox): Welcome back into SAPS, Anne! # Hope you're settled in and enjoying your new apartment by now.

STUMPING 45 (J.Webbert) If a computer turned out 6 pages, would it be eligible for SAPS membership? # We harvested the first cucumber from our vines yesterday (30 June, that was). Also the second and third. Could have picked them sooner, except I was waiting for them to grow bigger. Yesterday Nancy happened to mention that they were small size, dillpickle type cucumbers. Nobody tells me anything around here. Should have tomatoes getting red in another week or so, too. One of our eggplants has a baseball-size fruit growing on it, too. After vainly trying to eat the lettuce, endive, and escarolle as fast as it was growing, I dug the last of it under this week (it was all gone to seed stalks), and hopefully planted some seed for a fall crop. It's a little early for that, but if the summer stays as cool as it has been so far, it ought to grow. Incidentally, after trying all sorts of bottled salad dressing, we finally decided our favorite is a home-concocted one with red wine vinegar, oil, and Great Beginnings salad seasoning. French dressing is nice once in awhile, but as a rule we like the vinegar-oil type better. # Nancy got her A.A. degree in June. With honors. She's miffed because her diploma doesn't say that (unlike mine, from 1949). The honors grads just got an asterisk by their names in the graduation program.

HAVE A CIGAR! (Stoelting): Enjoy, enjoy; the nicest time with kids is before they get old enough to (1) answer back and (2) decide they know more than you do anyway, so there. Congratulations.

ROGER'S 16TH REVENGE (Bryant): One of the great missed opportunities in my life occurred when I sold my old fanzine collection to Martin Alger in 1950. What I should have done was held back all the "little magazine" poetry periodicals put out by Lillith Lorraine, Orma McCormick, and similar more-or-less inept wooers of the muse. If I'd just kept those precious pages another decade or so, until the organic gardening movement began, I could have presented them to some farmer in need of ground cover, to be shredded and spread around the growing plants. Then, after a week or two to allow the wind to pile the shredded paper against the hedges, I'd have been able to stroll up to my organic farmer friend, gesture toward the crops, and innocently inquire:

"How mulches that doggrell'in the windrow?"

In Cornwall it was held that red-haired people can never make good butter. The butter always has a slight tang about it. -- Encyclopedia of Superstitions.

OUTSIDERS 95 (W.Ballard): What you need to do, Wrai, is move back to North Dakota where there aren't all those distractions around to use up your spare time.

FROM SUNDAY TO SATURDAY (Fitch): We've got one baseball-sized eggplant fruit growing so far (4 July). When it was pingpong-ball size something tried to chew on it, so I encased it in a plastic bag, not certain whether it would harm it or not, but since it would get eaten otherwise anyway, there was nothing to lose. Doesn't seem to be interfering with its growth at all. The tomatoes are beginning to lighten in color, so they should start ripening by next week. # Incidentally, Nancy tells me an apple tree will start bearing several years sooner if you drive an iron pipe into the ground al-

ong side the trunk when you plant it. You ever hear that one? # One good use for public libraries is to borrow sheet music to xerox songs you want copies of. It's too much of a rip-off to buy "Great Jukebox Hits of the Forties" or whatever at \$6.50 just to get one or two songs you don't already have in some other music book. It took us years (of not very intensive searching) to find the music to "Lorena" for instance.

BASINGSTOKE 32 (C.Ballard): Gee, I thought ours was the only house in which you can never find a horizontal surface because stuff immediately gets piled up on 'em. ...And then there's my 4x7' tempera painting of a 2,000 B.C. Peruvian idol, plus a 4x4' square of cardboard I'm laminating as a base for a solar cooker (plans in Mother Earth News recently, if anyone else is interested; not counting you people in Seattle who never see the sun anyhow). I have to keep them (large sheets of glued-up cardboard) in the bedroom because I'm afraid the humidity in the garage would undo all my tedious work with Elmer's Glue.

ETHEREAL VIBRATIONS 5 (Smith): I knew there was some reason these mc's were pregressing so slowly: Your mention of beer reminded me I didn't have a glass of it handy. Now things should go more smoothly.

MUNDANE TORPOR (C.Smith): Envy on the freezer; we've been wanting one but it hasn't yet reached the top of the priority list. Meanwhile the one on the refrigerator is crammed so full of food that there's no room for ice cube trays. (The temperature is 90+ today, which inspires thoughts about things like that)...

POR QUE 62 (D.Webbert)P Steven starts Jr.High next fall; jeez, how time flies! # Nancy just resigned from her job, mostly to have the summer free. Next fall she'll either go back there or find some other job, she sez. What she's really trying to do, in a Machiavellian manner, is get hired as a report-writer and statistician, instead of doing any more counseling. Mighod, who, back around Mlg 50 or so, would have dreamed of anyone hiring the publisher of IGNATZ for something like that? (After one semester of statistics, she finds she knows more about how to USE them than any of the Ph.D's on the faculty; except those in the math department itself.) # This being July 4th, I guess I oughta mention that we live only a few hundred yards from where the Star Spangled Banner was written. Fort McHenry is way over on the other side of Baltimore Harbor, but according to the local historians, Francis Scott Key was held on a British ship tied up at the mouth of Bear Creek while he watched the rockets red glare and like that. Bear Creek runs so close to our house that in the wintertime, when shrubbery doesn't screen it, its waters cast rippled reflections on our walls. # Tsk, you're supposed to keep the flower buds pinched off Coleus to encourage greater leaf growth.

SPY RAY (Eney): The most graphic portrayal of what goes on at them there wicked fancons that I've ever seen.

...and due to space limitations, but mostly time limitations, we leave a majority of the bundle uncommented-on this time.

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