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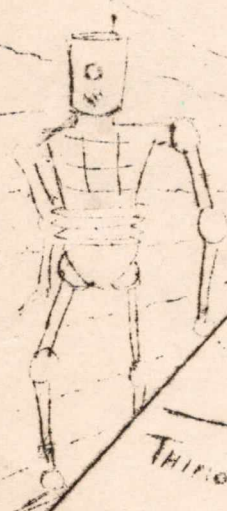
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SPARKY



BLIND ALLEY
TRENDS
LITTLE LOST BOY
The Big + The Little
NIGHTFALL
FOUNDATION
RUN AROUND



THE MULE
LIAN!
New York Sci-Fi
PEBBLE IN THE SKY
PEOPLE IN THE SKY
And Now You Don't
THINKING LINE



The
A SIMON
ISSUE

SPARX 9

SEPTEMBER 1949

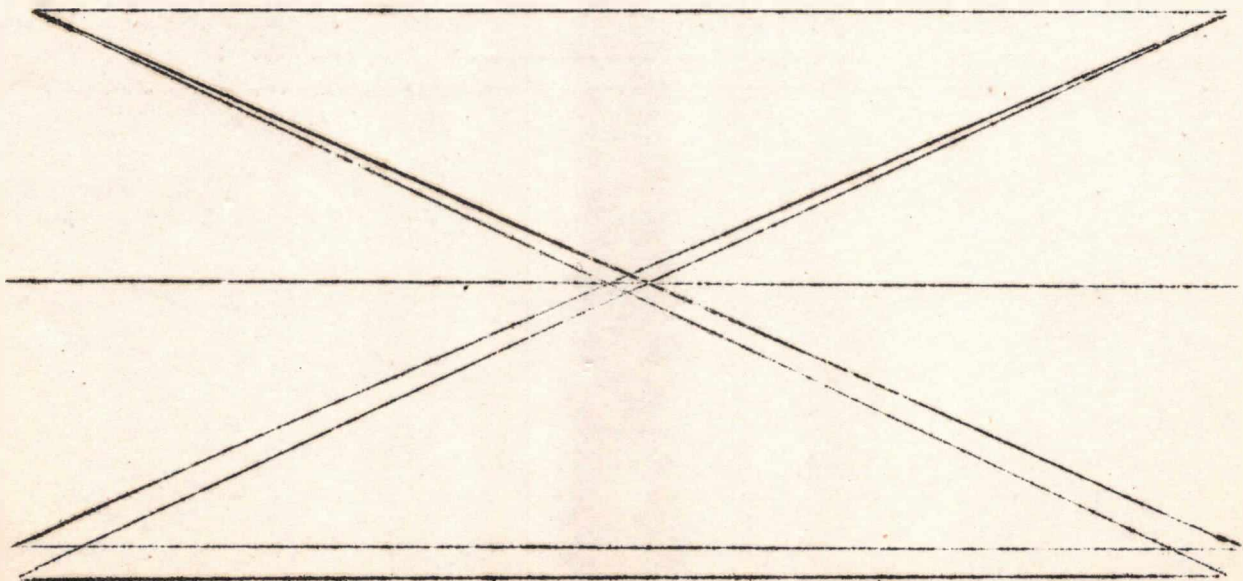
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A

S

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M

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V

MAN

1. Personal: Age, 29---Height, 5'9"---Weight, 130 lbs.---brown hair---blue eyes---married in 1942---no children---born in Rahshah (USSR to you)---came to U.S.A. in 1923---citizen since 1928---lived in New York from 1923 to 1942 (in Brooklyn, actually); in Philadelphia from 1942 to 1945; in New York from 1946 to 1949; and now I'm in Boston---in the Army for a while, Corporal, Quartermaster Corps.

2. Professional:

a- Chemist--All my degrees came from Columbia, up to and including my Ph.D., which I got in 1948. I have done research on oxidizing enzymes, on anti-malarial drugs, and am now tackling cancer. My present position is that of Instructor in Biochemistry at Boston University School of Medicine.

b- Science-fiction--Wrote my first science-fiction story at age of 16; my first science-fiction story with intent to sell at 17; sold my first science-fiction story at 18. The first story I sold was the third I wrote. It was "Marooned Off Vesta" and Amazing Stories bought it. I didn't hit Astounding until I had collected eight rejection slips from Campbell. The first story he took was "Trends". Campbell's statement in "Of Worlds Beyond", while approximately correct, is not entirely so. He did not reject twelve, but eight, as said, before accepting "Trends" and of these eight, I eventually sold five elsewhere. Campbell was undoubtedly the man who made science-fiction possible for me. He encouraged me, talked my stories over with me, suggested ways of improvement, and in all respects showed unlimited patience.

Isaac Asimov

WORKS

In order of publication:

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1- | Marooned Off Vesta | Amazing, March 1939 |
| 2- | The Weapon Too Dreadful to Use | Amazing, May 1939 |
| 3- | Trends | Astounding, July 1939 |
| 4- | Half-Breed | Astonishing, February, 1940 |
| 5- | Ring around the Sun | Future Fiction, March, 1940 |
| 6- | The Callistan Menace | Astonishing, April, 1940 |
| 7- | The Magnificent Possession | Future Fiction, July, 1940 |
| 8- | Homo Sol | Astounding, September, 1940 |
| 9- | Strange Playfellow # | Superscience, September, 1940 |
| 10- | Half-Breeds on Venus | Astonishing, December, 1940 |
| 11- | History | Superscience, March 1941 |

- | | |
|--|--|
| 12- The Secret Sense | Cosmic, March 1941 |
| 13- Reason # | Astounding, April 1941 |
| 14- Heredity | Astonishing, April 1941 |
| 15- Liar! # | Astounding, May 1941 |
| 16- Nightfall | Astounding, September 1941 |
| 17- Superneutron | Astonishing, September 1941 |
| 18- Not Final | Astounding, October 1941 |
| 19- Christmas on Ganymede | Startling, January 1942 |
| 20- Robot AL-76 Goes Astray # | Amazing, February 1942 |
| 21- Black friar of the Flame | Planet, Spring 1942 |
| 22- Runaround # | Astounding, March 1942 |
| 23- Foundation ## | Astounding, May 1942 |
| 24- Bridle and Saddle ## | Astounding, June 1942 |
| 25- Victory Unintentional # | Superscience, August 1942 |
| 26- The Hazing | Thrilling Wonder, October 1942 |
| 27- The Imaginary | Superscience, November 1942 |
| 28- Death Sentence | Astounding, November 1943 |
| 29- Catch That Rabbit # | Astounding, February 1944 |
| 30- The Big and the Little ## | Astounding, August 1944 |
| 31- The Wedge ## | Astounding, October 1944 |
| 32- Blind Alley | Astounding, March 1945 |
| 33- Dead Hand ## | Astounding, April, 1945 |
| 34- Paradoxical Escape # | Astounding, August 1945 |
| 35- The Mule ## | Astounding, November 1945
December 1945 |
| 36- Evidence # | Astounding, September 1946 |
| 37- Little Lost Robot # | Astounding, March 1947 |
| 38- Now You See It--- ## | Astounding, January 1948 |
| 39- The Endochronic Properties of
Resublimated Thiotimoline | Astounding, March 1948 |
| 40- No Connection | Astounding, June 1948 |
| 41- The Red Queen's Race | Astounding, January 1949 |
| 42- Mother Earth | Astounding, May 1949 |
| To be published: | |
| 43- ---And Now You Don't ## | Astounding, November 1949
December 1949
January 1950 |

(# Positronic Robot story-----## Foundation story)

Three of my stories have appeared in anthologies, as follows:

- 1- "Blind Alley" in THE BEST OF SCIENCE FICTION, edited by Groff Conklin, Crown Publishers, New York, 1946
- 2- "Nightfall" in ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE, edited by Raymond L. Healy and J. Francis McComas, Random House, New York, 1946
- 3- "Victory Unintentional" in INVASION FROM MARS, edited by Orson Welles, Dell Publishing Co., New York, 1949
- 4- "No Connection" is to be anthologized in THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES: 1949, edited by Everett F. Bleiler and T. E. Dikty, Frederick Fell, Inc., New York, 1949 (Scheduled for publication on August 2., 1949)

((continued on page 9))

WORTH

So you never heard of Isaac Asimov. Okay, it's possible. You've been reading an issue of *Astounding* every so often for a year or so, a few of the other mags every so often, maybe one of the hard-cover collections, and you don't remember ever running across any of his stuff. So now you've heard somebody mention him as one of Campbell's top authors, and you're wondering what he's done to rate that position.

That's possible, all right, because, somehow, there's never been much fuss made about Asimov. Some of the authors in the field seem to make the headlines in fan discussions and evaluations all the time; but this, it should be noted, is not necessarily a point in their favor. Van Vogt, for example, has been the subject of a veritable deluge of critical verbiage, but this is more a reflection on his ability than a favorable manifestation, since most of this output would have no reason for existing if he had ever taken the trouble to correct his more obvious writing faults. So fans keep writing articles about What's Wrong with van Vogt. The same goes for Lovecraft, E. E. Smith, and others. Asimov isn't taken apart periodically in the fan press because he's never displayed the idiosyncrasies that would make him an object of interest to the dissectors.

Well, all right: but, you want to know, what sort of writer is he? What has he done? To begin with, he's been producing for *Astounding* for a long time, longer than many people realize; in fact, Campbell's "new" period in *ASF* is often dated from the appearance of Asimov's first story, Trends, in 1939. That's ten years. During that decade, he's kept up a more or less steady flow of material. He's been a regular for quite a while.

That's swell, you say, but what does he write? Anybody can keep going for ten to fifteen years and still be a hack: look at Hamilton. You're right, of course. The test is the quality.

Well, Asimov's stories divide themselves into two large categories, the Foundation stories, and the robot stories. Neither is a series, strictly speaking; they're primarily frameworks, backgrounds against which individual stories are set. To deal with them in order: The first foundation story appeared in 1942. It described the origin of a tiny state on the fringes of a declining Galactic Empire, a state supposedly destined to eventually replace the Empire as the leading power in the Galaxy, and in doing so to cut short the inevitable inter-regnum dark age. Considering the smallness of the original state--the Foundation--its predicted rise to political and cultural ascendancy is made to seem extremely unlikely. Nevertheless, according to the statistically probable laws of psycho-history, the Foundation can't miss; its future dangers have been foreseen, and all it has to do is act with normal intelligence in crises.

Asimov developed this situation in the stories that followed, tracing the vast process of the Foundation's growth over the centuries, and showing how hard it is, often, for individuals to decide just what the laws of psycho-history might regard as the normally intelligent course of action. The series is still running; it's to conclude with a three-part serial, ---And Now You Don't, later this year.

I think most readers will agree that this is one of the most compelling series ever to appear in ASF. It can be compared only to Heinlein's History of the Future stories in its Olympian view of history, a view capable of jumping from century to century and tracing out its sociological concepts in terms of the experience of successive generations. To read a Foundation story is to be given an unusual, an almost unparalleled sense of time and space conquered, of participation in a drama incomparably more impressive than the space opera of many a science-fiction "epic". However, the personal level is never submerged; Asimov avoids E. E. Smith's error and doesn't drug himself with vasty concepts. Throughout the series, all the leading characters act normally (i.e. selfishly) and only incidentally serve to fulfill the higher purpose of the Foundation. Characterization is always realistic, which is quite an achievement when the narrative background is as remote as this from the reader's experience.

The positronic robot stories are somewhat different. Here, Asimov is closer to Earth, less preoccupied with the tides of history and more with the possibilities to be developed from a fascinating tangle of gadgetry and strict logic. The background is about a hundred years in the future. The manufacture of robots has been perfected--or almost perfected--and robots are on the way to being culturally assimilated. All robots produced, however, must have certain laws of conduct implanted in their positronic brain systems, to prevent accidents and also, perhaps, to avoid having such a remarkable technological stride frustrated by the boggy of Frankenstein's monster: one, a robot may not injure a human being under any conditions, nor permit a human being to be injured because of inaction on his part; two, a robot must follow all orders given by qualified human beings as long as they do not conflict with rule one; three, a robot must protect his own existence, as long as that does not conflict with rules one and two. What Asimov does with this seemingly limited framework is to be marveled at. It's impossible to give examples, but read a story like Liar! or Evidence and you'll get the idea.

Here, again, characterization is at a high level; and, in addition, he shows an apparently inexhaustible talent for contriving situations which utilize to the fullest extent the possibilities offered by his background. Story after story, nine so far, reveal new ways in which the three laws can be made to contradict each other, or special cases in which the three laws can be made to contradict each other, or special cases where the laws work to unexpected ends (as in the case of the telepathic robot who couldn't help telling people exactly what they wanted to hear--otherwise he'd be hurting their feelings and thus violating the

first law). The free play of imagination goes to work on a simple set of materials and does a top-notch job of producing variations. But, of course, the robot stories have to be read to be appreciated.

Some stories don't fit either of these classifications, and one of them, curiously enough, is probably Asimov's most memorable single work, Nightfall. This is one of the most successful stories that the Campbell regime has produced, in the opinion of many readers. It describes a world which only experiences night once every two thousand fifty years, by a peculiar combination of multiple suns. During this time, people have the opportunity to build up a formidable fear of darkness; so when night finally falls, it's a shattering psychological shock. Everybody goes insane, all the cities are burned to provide light, and the net result is the complete disruption of civilization. And so the archaeology of this world displays a series of two thousand year cycles up from barbarism to a fairly advanced culture to the inevitable nightfall. Tremendous idea, first-rate story. It put Asimov in the top ranks of Astounding's writers when it first appeared, and, although no single story has rung the bell quite so completely since then, the Foundation series has revealed a fulfillment of talent.

So that's Asimov's work. But, you ask, why isn't he worshipped as a god? According to this description, he's just about the greatest thing that's happened to science-fiction since H. G. Wells. But he isn't often listed among the top authors, as determined by the fan polls. He hasn't yet appeared solo in hard covers--and everybody, but everybody, has done so. How come?

Now we're back where we started. You're right. Asimov doesn't get attention. This is partly due to his lack of faults, like van Vogt's confusing plots or E. E. Smith's two-valued orientations, as I have pointed out. Also, he's been writing exclusively for Astounding for seven years now; fans who read all the mags naturally see more of the authors who write for everybody, and, as a result, tend to rate them a little higher.

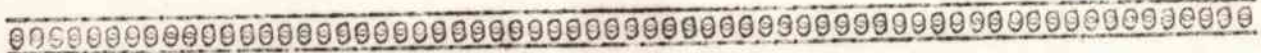
Another point to be remembered is that Asimov as a rule doesn't turn out stories that will knock you out of your seat with their overflowing inspiration. You get used to him, get used to reading a robot story every so often, and liking it, but not being conscious of its being any better or worse than the last one. His style is sober; it lacks the verbal impact of the Merritt school of prose poetry writers, and you don't go away feeling dazzled by the stylistic pyrotechnics that the author has been throwing at you. It's something like the case of Weinbaum, who also relied more on quality of content than impressive presentation; but Weinbaum's ability stood out more, coming as it did in an arid period, when sf writing standards were at rock bottom. Also, his untimely death focus attention on him.

Of course, Asimov does make an occasional excursion outside of orthodoxy. You probably heard part of the furor that raged after he wrote a straight-faced "article" in ASF about a substance

called resublimated thiotimoline, endowed, in deadpan, with all sorts of interesting characteristics like dissolving in water so quickly that it actually dissolved before the water reached it. The implications were played with in an uproarious job, which had angry readers--and readers who quite sincerely wanted to find out more about thiotimoline--taking pen in hand for months. Maybe this is a step in the right direction.

He has a novel--original, not reprint--coming from Doubleday in January, which is another step in the right direction. But, in any case, the best way for you to find out why Asimov has stayed up there for ten years and why he will probably continue to stay up there, outlasting many of Campbell's touted new names, is to stop asking people who he is and to start reading what he writes. By their works...

David J. Thomas



WORKS (conc)

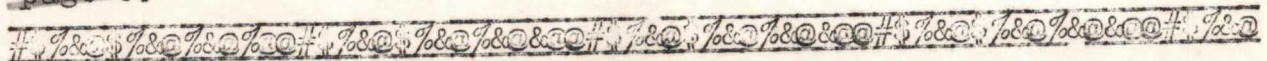
In addition, a full-length novel entitled "Pebble in the Sky" will appear in book form. The publishers are Doubleday and it will appear next January perhaps. This book has never appeared in magazine form.

In addition to the forty-four stories (including the book) which I have listed, there remain about eight or nine stories that I have never succeeded in selling and two or three that I have never succeeded in finishing (all of these dating previous to mid-1942).

That takes care of all my writing except for the single last item entitled "On the Reaction Inactivation of Tyrosinase during the Aerobic Oxidation of Catechol" which will appear in the Journal of the American Chemical Society in about half a year or so.

Eratum: BEST SCI-FI STORIES: 1948 on page 5.

Isaac Asimov



THANK YOU, ISAAC!

I'd like to take this space to thank Isaac Asimov for going to such great trouble to make this issue possible. On August 4th I wrote him, broaching the subject of devoting a lot of space in SPARX to Asimov. On August 14th, after trading a couple of letters, he wrote me a letter, including the two excerpts published above. Thank you, again Isaac.

DON'T FORGET TO BUY "PEBBLE IN THE SKY"!! PLEASE DON'T FORGET!!!

YOU WON'T BE SORRY. I'M SURE THAT YOU WON'T. IT'LL BE GOOD!!!!

E

T

C

COUP DE MONDE

TIM CRROCK

(Curtain opens to dark stage in dark house. Outside are trampings, as of an army. They begin quietly as the house lights dim, crescendo to the noise of the opening curtain. Suddenly, door downstage right opens, casts flare of light into the room. A man enters quickly, shuts the door. All is dark again. Tramping fades, and we can hear the man breathing hard and moving about. He turns on a light.)

Man: Here at last.

(It is a blank room, with doors downstage right and upstage left. A table at the back in the middle of the wall with the lamp. Book case and radio along left wall.)

Radio: (whistle) burp.

Man: What's that?

Radio: Secret Agent 12 reporting.

Man: The war's over.

Radio: You don't mean it?

Man: Sure.

Radio: Maybe I'd better unplug that bomb then.

Man: Do.

Radio: Right back. Burp. (whistle)

Man: Wonder who that was. (Goes to book case, removes volume about five inches thick, begins to read avidly.)

Radio: I unplugged it. Can we leave now?

Man: I suppose you may as well. Pretend you're UN employees and act it perfectly. After a few years you'll be do thoroughly UN employees that you'll be perfectly adjusted.

Radio: Swell. Agent 12 out.

Man: For the glory of the universe.

Radio: Hunh? (Clank, whistle) Roger.

Man: Of course you could go out and be farmers.

Radio: That might be fun. Get a sun-tan.

Man: Remember, whatever you do, always act the part of the world minded individual. You must pretend without flaw, in order to attain that which you pretend.

Radio: Over, Roger, Wilco, hic.

Man: Fine. (Reads)

Radio: Squadron 4 reporting, Captain z-5 commanding. What next?

Man: The war is over.

Radio: (sarcastic) Fine.

Man: You asked me and I told you.

Radio: It is over?

Man: Entirely. Absolutely. Completely. Keput.

Radio: What next?

Man: Land your squadron where you won't get murdered by the populace and surrender to the UN. Ask for clemency and permission to tend your gardens. (Laughs) If you can't adjust, pretend to and make an art of pretending. You may not be able to do that as well as the spy corps, but you can try. If necessary, try to get into the UN protective corps.

Radio: Better than being a civilian. What about the Economic Race which has enslaved the world?

Man: Which one?

Radio: The one we fought.

Man: Better forget it. Better men than us have been slaves and never known the difference. If you feel that you will, go to Africa and fight the tse-tse fly.

Radio: Not a bad idea. You know, I didn't think that They would turn us over to the UN. I thought they'd try to administer us themselves.

Man: Manifold are the ways of Chance.

Radio: Chance?

Man: Or whoever your private deity may be.

Radio: Ah well. To the UN. Out.

Man: The best of luck. (Reads)

Radio: Battalion 4 reporting. We hear the war is over.

Man: Yes. I advise giving in to the nearest UN authority...

(The lights dim and voices become fainter. A clock strikes somewhere, and we see the hands of one on the back wall illuminated and twisting violently through twelve hours. Stage lights up.)

Man: ...the UN will have complete control of the situation.

Radio: I wouldn't have expected that much from Them. Out.

(A knocking at the door. Man shuts off radio, sits down with his books again.)

Man: The door is open.

(Men in ambiguous uniform enter. Leader steps forward. He has enough braid on his uniform to distinguish him from the men, but not too much.)

Leader: Who are you?

Man: UN agent.

Leader: What have you been doing here?

Man: Making sure that nobody disturbed things here in the Headquarters.

Leader: How long?

Man: Most of the day. Since the others left town.

Leader: The radio has been in operation.

Man: Oh?

Leader: Yes.

Man: Ah. I used it.

Leader: That is more or less what I was implying.

Man: And?

Leader: You communicated with the enemy.

Man. I have no enemy. Neither do you. The war is over.

Leader: Since when?

Man: It was proclaimed yesterday--about fourteen hours ago.

Leader: By what authority?

Man: By the highest council of the world.

Leader: (contemptuous) The Security Council, I suppose?

Man: Quite right.

Leader: (stepping forward) Who gave you authority to operate this radio?

Man: The Security Council's committee on World War III. I have have broadcast to large numbers of--as it happens--your own men; about two thirds of the forces in this quadrant are disarming and proceeding to the UN depot for clearing. Similar measures have been taken in other quadrants and with the opposing forces. At my last general report, about fifty minutes ago, the disarmament was ten per cent complete, with at least sixty per cent more convinced and hastening to the depots. We have set up a very large system and staked several million dollars worth of labor to produce at least ninety-six per cent disarmament on both sides within the next ten hours. Split teams of men will be used to clean up pockets of resistance--that is, split from each army. We have comparatively sure methods of quick-scaling men for this service from volunteers. (At the last words of this paragraph, the man's voice shakes slightly.)

Leader: Oh damme! No! (He watches the man closely.)

Man: I swear it.

Leader: Here. (Thrusts his pistol at the man) Pile your rifles in the corner, boys. Unless you want to go and help clean up? God!

(The men are quiet an instant, then there is a general surge to unload rifles, etc., at the side of the room.)

Man: There is a depot in this town, and if you take the things there you'll get some hot coffee... The things can be better re-distributed for cleaning up, there, too.

Leader: Gaud. (The hysteria of the unexpected miracle.)

One of the Soldiers: Where's that depot, sir?

Man: Three blocks down this street, two to the left. They should be getting it posted about now.

Leader: Fine. You can find it, can't you, men?

Chorus: (not too loud--rough but fairly sure--only a few hesitant) Sure. (They leave. The leader remains.)

Leader: I'm glad, but I didn't know you had---the strength.

Man: When we began, I wouldn't have bet we could find a hundred men who could and would work for this. We found ten thousand.

We're still slightly unofficial. But there are enough of us to lobby into full world government now--with this coup. You had a good group for our purposes. I didn't hear a grumble.

Leader: We've been having a tough time. Dirty.

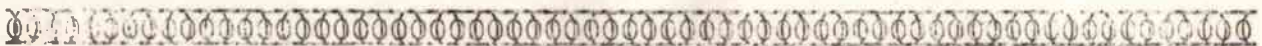
Man: I wish you luck in peace. I've got to get back to work.

Radio: (whistle) Burp. Central, where are you?

Man: Here. Come in.

Radio: Tank Corps 110. We hear that the war's over...

(Leader and Man grin. Curtain closes to the last phrase.)



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SUMMONS

A story with a core of truth, alas.

VINCE WILLIAMS

Spelman III raised his shaggy head and looked significantly at Dave Thomas and me. The occasion was the May Stranger Club meeting, and, as it happened, there had been so little of any significance at all going on; so the look was a shock. Thomas shuddered. Orrok was wandering by at that moment, and Spelman beckoned to him. "Come here," he said. Orrok stepped over, trying to keep out of reach, but Spelman III heaved out an arm and pulled him bodily into our midst. "Siddown," he breathed. Orrok sat down.

"I am out of a job." A fantastic light seemed to shine from his eyes. We looked at each other---then, insight struck me. I screamed, and leapt from my chair. Thomas and Orrok seized my legs...As it happened, Spelman had a tight grip on them, and they saw no reason why I alone should escape. "And," he continued, "I am getting out SPARX." Benign grin. The noises from the rest of the crowd penetrated dimly. We were meeting at Phil Roulon's, and a half a dozen people were fighting over the controls of the Hammond electric organ, which was now the control console of a space ship, off somewhere beyond Van der Graaf's star. You could hear the high pitched squeals as air escaped, crunches, plates rending (plates never break, you know), and, thundering down the empty corridors of the ship, you could hear the low rumble of the atomic engines, full tremulo. In the distance, we could hear the screams of Roulon's immediate family, begging for mercy. Perhaps they thought that we were unfriendly aliens. We weren't. We were peaceable emissaries from an unthinkable great distance across the blackness of imperial space. Automatically, I tried to come to attention and give the imperial salute, but Orrok and Thomas were holding me too tightly.

"I shall expect stories from all of you," said Spelman III. "But immediately." He grinned savagely, and his tentacles---tendrils covered tentacles---twitched in the gentle current of fluorine that flowed through the ventilators. Orrok screamed, released me, and went into an epileptic fit, shouting poetry at the top of his voice.

"That won't do," said Spelman. "This isn't Vanguard, you know." Alien laughter filled the cosmos, mocking harshly.

Thomas groped stunnedly towards a pile of old prozines, picked up a True Love Detective Story and began reading it through at several thousand words per minute, trying to find a good plot. Orrok rolled himself up into a little ball, retiring from the world, proclaiming loudly to anyone who wanted to know that he was a frustrated artist. Between sentences, he was still talking

poetry. It was lousy.

"Shut up," said the Third.

Orrok snarled, and spat between his raised knees. "If I had my banjo here, you'd suffer for that." Thomas screamed at the thought.

In the background, the sounds from the organ swelled, as the spaceship dove on some time-forgotten planet, and raped three million unfortunate inhabitants by remote control. Then scuffles and squawks...More mutiny. The pilot fought his way back to the top keyboard, tried to recover control; but someone was well established on the lower board and the foot pedals. He was playing Song of Worlds Unseen.

Spelman rubbed his hands together; grinned. "You'll have you stories ready by next Sunday?" It was, more accurately, a statement of fact. Thomas and Orrok, cowed, looked daggers. But somewhere within me rebellion arose.

I leapt to my feet, grabbing the gizmo ray which Chan had left, and pointed it at Spelman. "Do you think," I roared with space-shattering confidence, "that there can be in this finite universe a Spelman IV? You can't hope to come to life again!"

Spelman III laughed, gratefully, and similarized a bolt of lightening from the organ's power supply at my head. But I faded away, leaving only a mass of tangled apparatus that smoked and fused...

-3-

EDITOR'S NOTE

I hope that you don't believe all that Vince said in the above. There is some truth. BUT I don't have tendrils on my tentacles. I have tentacles on my tendrils. HMS III

SACRED

TO

THE MEMORY

OUR POETIC AUTHORS

REDD BOGGS

Shakespeare did it; Sir Walter Scott did it; fantasy authors do it. Some of the best known prose writings by many famous and not so famous fantasy writers contain scattered bits of original poetry. Ten such selections are quoted below. How many can you identify?

Match the verse fragment in part one with the correct author in part two. For each correct answer, give yourself 5 points. Add another 5 points if you can name which story contained the poem in question. A score of 40 is fair, 50 is average, 60 very good, and 70 or more is excellent. (100 is a perfect score).

PART ONE

- (1) "Out of dead darkness and into clear night
Marking a pathway on high,
See how they soar on a happier flight,
The birds that were lost in the sky..."
- (2) "-- And the mighty swords of flame
Carving out hot destiny
From the worlds enfettered all by clouds.

To sing again with newborn joy
That mankind was not decadent,
That furious sons from Earth's unrest--"
- (3) "Have you seen Dahut ride by,
Swift as cloudy shadows fly
O'er the moon in stormy sky
On her stallion black as night?..."
- (4) "He looked on His work and found it pleasing, meet for a
race that was yet to be.
He thought of Man--Man came into being-- checked his thought
and searched for the key...."
- (5) "Trig Darling, he has a foul temper;
Trig Darling's as red as can be;
Oh, nobody here loves Trig Darling,
Throw Trigvy out into the sea!"

(6) "I travel upon the god-roads and am not afraid. E-yah! I have killed the panther! I have killed the fawn!

E-yah! I have come to the great river. No man has come here before...."

(7) "A Martian wolf saw her whelp chasing
A hunter and cried, 'Oh, how rude!
Junior, I've told you so often
Never to play with your food!'"

(8) "I once was a lady as you may divine,
Though the fact it is hard for to see.
Rare beauty and riches and romance were mine,
Before I ran into a tree...."

(9) "Slumber, watcher, till the spheres
Six and twenty thousand years
Have revolved, and I return
To the spot where now I burn...."

(10) "--And travellers now within that valley,
Through the red-litten windows see
Vats frauds that move fantastically
To a discordant melody...."

PART TWO

Robert A. Heinlein

Kurt Von Rachen

Manley Wade Wellman

Edgar Allan Poe

Thorne Smith

Ross Rocklyne

H. P. Lovecraft

Steven Vincent Benet

L. Sprague de Camp

A. Merritt

Correct answers appear on page 21

betyoucheatbetyoulookattheanswersbeforeyoutryitbetyoureacrookibe

THE EDITOR BABBLES

This issue might be called the spur-of-the-moment issue. It was stencilled in about four days. As of P(rinting) Hour minus 24, I still don't know of a five page story tentatively promised will appear in this issue. I hope it will.

The quiz above, "Our Poetic Authors", is a reprint from SPARK 4. As that issue appeared in the much delayed Philcon Memory Book (which finally appeared), I figure that most of you never saw it. Try you luck!

(more later)

LIFE EVERLASTING:

LIFE EVERLASTING and other tales of science, fantasy and horror; by David H. Keller, M.D., Lieut. Col., U.S.A., Ret.; Collected by Sam Moskowitz and Will Sykora; with a critical and biographical introduction by Sam Moskowitz. The Avalon Company, Newark, New Jersey, 1947. 5 unno. l., 9-382 pp.

A review of Life Everlasting must be divided into two separate and distinct sections. First we must consider Dr. Keller's work; then that of Messieurs Moskowitz and Sykora. Hmmm. No, I guess we will approach them in the reverse order. For it is far easier to discuss the physical book than the literary.

Life Everlasting is typographically one of the sloppiest books that I have ever laid eyes and hands upon. It is in a class with the two Merritt Bok volumes. The printing is not clean. There is even a part of an inky fingerprint on one page of my copy. There are numerous black smudges, and generally messy pages. The text is not well centered on the pages. The quality of the paper is none too high. The frontispiece picture of the Colonel stinks. The dust jacket is not striking. In fact, only the binding is satisfactory. And that hardly redeems the physical book.

Now for the contents: I cannot quite agree with Dr. Keller that the title story is the best thing he ever wrote. It is a good story. His judgements on the actions of people under given circumstances are beyond reproach. But the story failed to impress me as unusually good or bad. It may be that so many people have used the idea since that it seems old stuff to me. (Incidentally, who and where was it done in much the same way, except that time off from immortality for procreation was possible?) Life Everlasting is a good, run-of-the-mill story. But it is hardly great.

There is one story in the volume that I did like very much. It is not strictly fantasy. It certainly isn't science-fiction. But it did impress me. A Piece of Linoleum. Just a good bit of very realistic, very believable monologue.

The one other story that impressed me was The Dead Woman. It too is not strictly fantasy. But it has atmosphere; it is disturbing; it is good reading.

On the whole, Dr. Keller's part of the book is competently done; all the stories are readable. Some I did not like. But these will appeal to other readers, of differing tastes. It is in Mr. Sykora's department that the book fails. The sloppy printing job detracts from the spell of the stories. It does the book great harm. I doubt that it sold well to the public. The two bit sex novels are more attractively put out than what Moskowitz promised would be Keller's equivalent of The Outsider.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| (1) Manley Wade Wellman | "Men Against the Stars" |
| (2) Kurt von Rachen | "The Rebels" |
| (3) A. Merritt | "Creep, Shadow!" |
| (4) Robert A. Heinlein | "Universe" |
| (5) L. Sprague de Camp | "The Wheels of If" |
| (6) Stephen Vincent Benet | "By The Waters of Babylon" |
| (7) Ross Rocklynne | "The Bottled Men" |
| (8) Thorne Smith | "Topper" |
| (9) H. P. Lovecraft | "Polaris" |
| (10) Edgar Allan Poe | "The Fall of the House of Usher" |

How'd YOU do on this?

howdyoulikethisfeaturedoyouwantmoretellmewhatyouthinkandilloblige

EDITORIAL BABBLINGS

I'm not setting any further subscription prices. SPARX is too irregular, and so is the editor. In the future, copies will go the FAPA, and to others by request only. Present subscriptions will be honored. Contributions, both cash and of material will be muchly appreciated. I need lots of both.

Ad on page 15 is the result of a crazy colaboration between Phil Rulon and ~~Tim~~ Orrok.

The next issue, if any, will have another author analysis feature, I hope. Dunno now who it will be. Any ideas? Whould you like to do the criticism on him?

Party pictures on last page are the results of my trip to the Philcon. SPARX 10 may have a similar array of Cinventioneers. There isn't room on this stencil for a key to the pics, and I'll be darned if I'm going to cut any more stencils. I need sleep.

If this is the next to last page, then the story I mentioned didn't come through. If otherwise, I hope you like it. I hope I like it. I'll see it, maybe, before it's printed.

To keep on hoping, I hope that you all enjoy this issue. It seems to me to be the best yet. The material is, to my mind, better than that in previous issues. What do you think?

FIFTEEN YEARS

DAVE THOMAS

When Howard reached his office in the Terran consulate building that morning, he was already half an hour late. Usually there was nothing important to do before lunch, but today he found a pile of pages written in Martian lying on his desk: a dossier that Kimball must have left for him to check. He sat down, rubbed his eyes, and began to read, making occasional notes in the margin. Halfway through the second page his head dropped forward and the stylus fell from his hand.

In the dream he was crawling down a narrow tunnel. There would be light and air, he sensed, if he could only reach the end; but the passage seemed to be growing even more cramped and stifling as he advanced. He dragged himself forward desperately, feeling tiny streams of sand trickling down around him in the darkness. Soon his fingers were bleeding from pawing through the sifting dirt. Then, in panic, he felt the weight of earth around him shift; the tunnel was collapsing, was choking in the rising rubble, he would never get out...

The feeling of someone watching him woke him up; he raised his head and saw Kimball staring at him. He tried to say "Good morning, Mr. Kimball," but his lips were dry and all that came out was a strange croak.

"Aren't you feeling well, Howard?" Kimball was frowning. "Been having trouble sleeping?"

"No, sir. I sleep all right, most of the time." Howard remembered the preceding night. He had been awakened toward midnight by a feeling of danger somewhere very near him; a net of menace seemed to be hanging around him in the air of his darkened bedroom. He had turned on the lights and searched the whole apartment, gun in hand, convinced that someone was concealed there. But he had found no one, and the street, weakly illuminated by the nearer moon, had been deserted. After a while he had gone back to bed, but he had not been able to get to sleep again. And it was like that always now; always the feeling of eyes in the night, malice flowing around him like an underground river. But of course he mustn't tell Kimball that.

"All right, then." Kimball shrugged and turned toward his office. "Try and have that dossier ready by noon. I'll need it this afternoon." He went out.

Howard looked down at the papers again without seeing them. The bastard, he thought. He had always used to like Kimball well enough, until the day he had forgotten his briefcase and returned after hours to get it; Kimball had been talking with someone in his office, and his words had come through the half-opened door: "Howard? Yeah, I know. He's stuck on this idea of his, that the Martians are all plotting some Day of Reckoning for the interlopers. He thinks every native he sees is going to knife him as soon as he turns his back. But I suppose when you've been out here for fifteen years things must get a little twisted. It's too bad, because Howard has brains. It's just that something is a little wrong somewhere, some balance wheel isn't working." So he had come to realize that Kimball, like the rest of them, was working against him. He was alone against them all, so alone that he even drew a strange pride from his isolation.

Still, there were times, like today, when he found himself wishing for something different. He got up and walked to the window. Winter was coming, he knew, but the traces of the brief Indian Summer of Mars were still surviving: the dry wind from the desert, the clear network of sunlight in the waters of the canal, the white blossoms on the vines. He tried to imagine what it would be like now in Syrtis or some of the other big cities. But they were too remote; he had been away for fifteen years, stationed first in Icaria and then here in Alanor, and despite himself the world of taxis, elevators, and radium lighting had faded.

He watched an old native making his way painfully down the main street. During the first few years, he remembered, he had waited confidently to be transferred, watched the mails every day for the notice of promotion. Only gradually had he come to realize that this was to be his pigeonhole, that the notice was never coming. Of course, he understood that this was all to the good, because the revolt, when it came (as it must, he told himself, any day now), would be visible during its first stages, the stages when it could be checked, only to men close to the country. He was undoubtedly more valuable to Earth here, as a sentinel, than he would be in Syrtis. But still...Leaning against the window and staring down into the street, he thought of the years of his childhood, before he had ever dreamed of coming to Mars.

The sound of the door opening disturbed him. He turned and saw a scrawny Martian boy, probably not older than thirteen, standing on the threshold. "Well?"

"The boy said nothing; he looked down at the rug and scraped his feet. Howard was annoyed. "What the hell do you want?" he asked angrily.

Kimball must have overheard, because he appeared suddenly in the doorway of his office. "Oh, sorry," he said. "I forgot to tell you. This is Joe. I hired him to do odd jobs around the place, sweeping the floor and things. I thought we needed some extra help. Joe, this is Mr. Robinson."

At first Howard could hardly believe his ears. Before he could recover the boy had disappeared into Kimball's office. Kimball turned to follow. "Hey, wait a minute," Howard said weakly. He swallowed, thinking: Kimball must be crazy. "What in God's name...Are you nuts? Hiring a Martian to work here, where he can spy on us and read all our confidential stuff?"

Kimball sighed. "Listen, can't you get it through your head that we're at peace with Mars? Until they give some sign of hostility, why can't we assume that they're friendly, and trust them just as we'd trust any other equal, friendly race?"

"Equal!" Howard's fists clenched. "This bunch of half-starved savages? They didn't even have electricity in their cities until we installed it. Can't you realize that they resent our superiority? They're just waiting to get us off guard!"

Kimball's face had turned a mottled red. "Look, Howard," he said, speaking slowly and weighing each word. "I know you've been out here a long time. It's hard to keep an even keel in a post like this. But it's no easier for the rest of us. Anybody resents this kind of job, but I think we owe it to Earth not to take our resentment at the job out on the Martians. Let's not blame them for our frustrations. Don't you ever have the feeling that your work here should be creative. Don't you ever want to build up a closer relationship between the two races, instead of always working to weaken harmony?"

Howard turned away and stared out the window again. It was his own fault, he thought bitterly, for letting himself get into an argument with Kimball. He should have remembered that the man was working against him, against Earth, just like everybody else at the consulate. The thing for him to do was to conceal his knowledge, make them think he didn't understand the depth of their treachery. He grunted noncommittally, not trusting himself to speak. Kimball went into his office after a moment, and that crisis was past.

But he remembered it, dwelling on it with a morbid satisfaction. I can't let them know, he thought, sitting at his desk and doodling idly in the margin of Kimball's dossier. Can't let them know I know...He started sketching in a girl's face, darkly passionate, with long black hair and heavy lips. Can't let them know I know...

Then he was in the dream again, the same dream that he had been having so often. The tunnel was collapsing around him, and he clawed blindly at the smothering sand, hearing his screams muffled in the closeness. He knew that if he could have crawled just a little further he would have been able to escape into sunshine, into clean air, back to friendly faces. But it was too late.

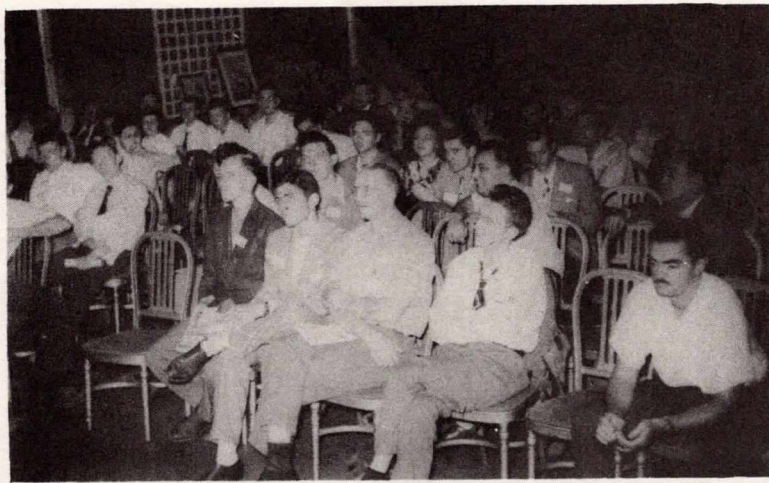
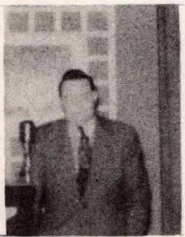
A noise awakened him suddenly. Joe, the Martian boy, was standing near the desk. Howard's glance took in Joe's frightened face and the dossier lying open before him. The dossier... confidential information...

He jumped to his feet, trembling with rage, and stepped toward the Martian. He knew he should speak calmly, question Joe, try to establish guilt firmly, but his fury was so great that when he opened his mouth only an animal snarl emerged. Joe broke out in a stream of rapid Martian, incomprehensible to Howard, who had never mastered the spoken language. Joe was waving a wet rag, pointing to a pail of water on the floor, making rubbing motions. His meaning was clear. God-damned little liar, Howard thought. Thinks he has the perfect alibi for spying. Suddenly, overcome with rage, he struck Joe on the side of the head with all his strength. Joe went down, and, falling on top of him, Howard hit him again and again with both fists. The boy screamed shrilly and tried to ward off the blows with his thin arms.

Then, as abruptly as it had come, the fury left Howard, and he was left with a terrified sense of the enormity of what he had done. He had given himself away. Afterwards he had only a confused memory of flight: the consulate steps, the dry air of the street, the native girl he collided with and sent sprawling. When consciousness drifted back to him he found that his own apartment had taken shape around him. One thought was revolving in his mind: They knew he knew. He was unmasked now as a spy in enemy territory, and the web of malice that had been woven around him would close in.

He waited with a curious passivity, for it was as though layers of cotton had been wrapped around him, and the street noises seemed to reach him from a remote distance. Daylight drained slowly from the room, and at last it came, as he had known it would: footsteps on the stairs, and the sound of his doorbell. The attack had begun. He had a gun in the bedroom, but that was two whole rooms away, thirty feet of hostile territory, with enemies behind every chair, inside every closet; he knew he would never get there alive. Motionless, he leaned against the wall. Years of silence passed. Then the doorbell rang again, and in the flat buzz he seemed to hear his own doom; as in a dream he felt his legs giving way, felt himself collapsing, and quietly, almost gratefully, he watched the tide of darkness rising around him.

SPARX



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