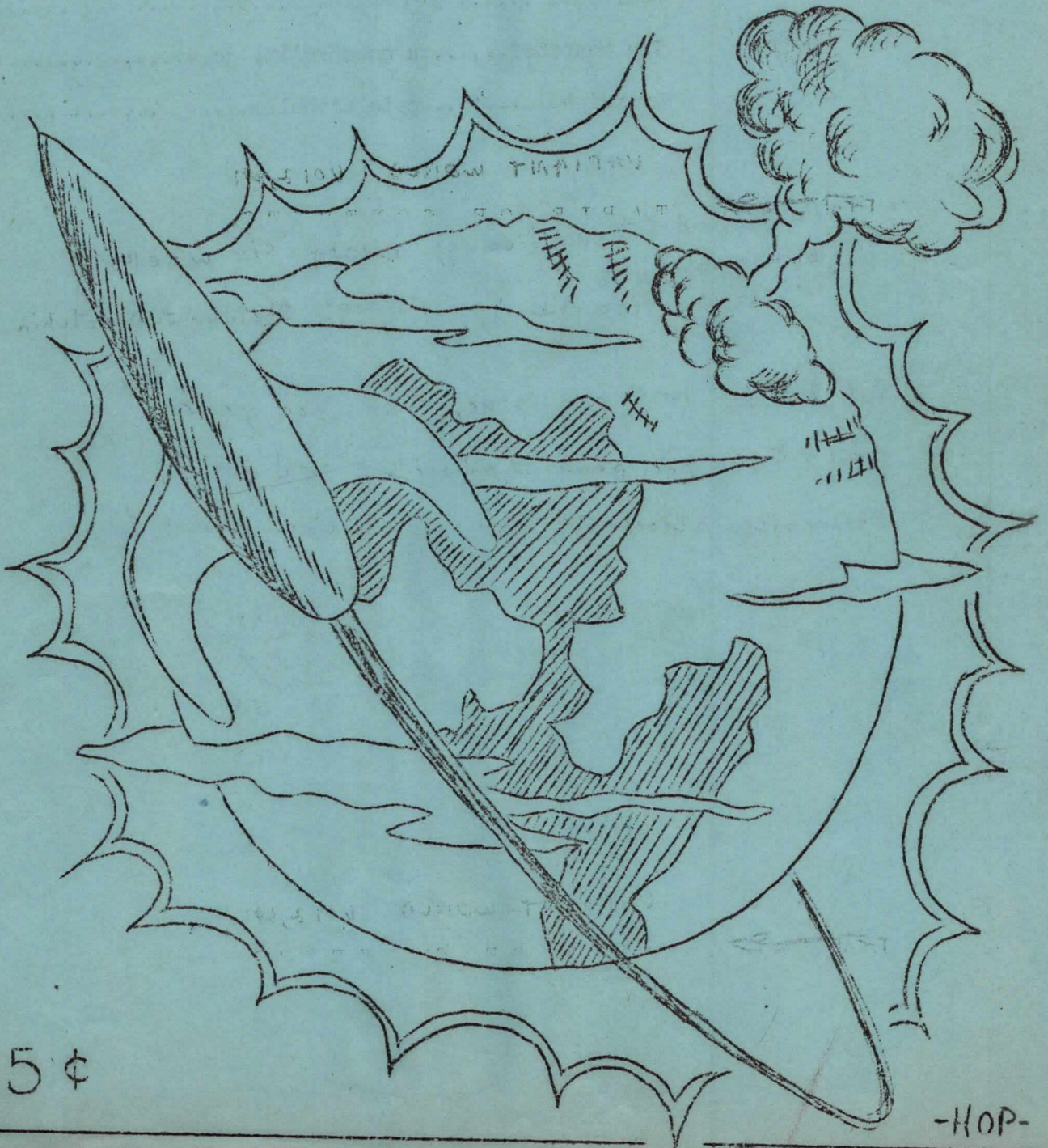


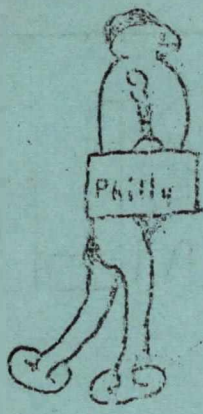
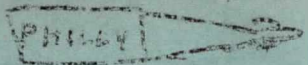
VARIANT WORLD

VOL. 2 No. 1



15¢

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Ye Ed

Speaking of elections, Hank Moskowitz said that we should make the President's term of office two years instead of one so as to give the poor guy time to do something before he's kicked out. A vote on that will be on the ballot also.

One of the Variants, Lyle Kessler, tells me that he's putting out a bi-monthly fmz called FAN-WARP. Vol. #1-#11 will have nothing in it but pro work (it sez here). Twenty cents per, or a buck a year. Order from Lyle at 2450 76th Avenue, Philly, 38, Pa.

Speaking of subbing to mags, for most of you, this is a free ish. I managed to save enuf out of last year's dues to meet the costs of this ish, but that's all. Please send in your dues as soon as possible, if you haven't done so already.

More address changes (thot I told you to stay put.)

Miss Stephanie Szold, Box 1529, WCUNC, Greensboro, North Carolina

Miss Marian Cox, HO 521st A.D. Gp. Air Base, Sioux City, Iowa

Gerald X. Diamond, Herbert A., French Dormitory, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, 31, Ohio

Roy C. Seiler, (someone nail him down!) 20 Buena Vista Ave., San Francisco, Calif.

Hal Hostetler, SR 499-76-62, Co #140, 43rd Batt, 4th Reg, USMTC, Bainbridge, Maryland (whew)

Anybody know whot happened to Doyle Whiteaker and Joan Willig?

I guess I've rambled on enuf for now. And don't forget, if you have any unusual ideas you want tried out, and you think they're good enuf, send them in to me.

@haaaaa

Shel

Shel

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HOME POME OF THE ROBOT

by Mr C'lovic.

I wish that I could go to Mars
'Cause my legs are rusting here.
To heck with trains and gas-fed cars
And this humid atmosphere.

*Let's go,
PHILCON!*

Back on the reddish plains I could
Run like mad in the dust,
But all I can do on Earth is brood
And slowly turn to rust.

PRELUDE TO THE VETERAN

by

the

editor

When I first read some of Dave Merron's work, I thought it was beautiful. A bit rough perhaps, for no writer is fully skilled the first time, but still some of the most beautiful writing I had seen in a long time.

This was with Dave's first piece, A DIAMOND (to be printed shortly). Then came a second, entitled RAUBLES (also forthcoming), and with it came PLACES I'VE BEEN, a piece that was completely different from anything else that I've ever read, and which I am still getting rave comments on.

"But" I thought, "these must be all that Dave can write, they're too good!" Then I was proven wrong (and I'm glad of it). Dave sent in his wonderful play, WITCH, which has no equal in the annals of fanzine writing I am sure -- unless it's Dave's new play, THE VETERAN; which follows this article.

After I had read WITCH, I wondered if Dave could possibly write another masterpiece like it and wrote to him, asking for another play. I got an answer about three weeks ago saying that another play was under preparation, a different type this time. A play against war and, in Dave's own words "...it's even STF."

I got the play today and it's marvelous. It even surpasses WITCH in its own way. Its sensitivity and handling of character amaze me, for beauty and power, this play positively has no equal in fandom.

I could go on like this for hours, but I'd like you to read "THE VETERAN" for yourselves. It's on the next page.

Shel

T H E V E T E R A N

by

DAVE MERRON

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days in this dark world
and wide.....

----Milton

SCENE I

Sidney Steinweiss sits in a straight cane-bottom chair facing the audience at the extreme front of the stage. The stage is divided into three sections. Inky blackness is all around Steinweiss at the front. He is seen only by his outline and profile; his features are not disclosed. The mid-part of the stage is bathed in very bright sunlight. In this sunlight, action in pantomime is being performed. There are twelve silent players: Six patients and Six nurses. The patients are in various stages of convalescence. One man is rolled along on a flat bed; one is walking quite normally; two are in wheelchairs; one is on crutches, another with a cane. They are all accompanied with pretty young nurses with who they laugh animatedly and happily. All appear to be enjoying themselves very much.



It is against this that Steinweiss is sharply contrasted. He sits alone at the left. When he speaks his voice is lonely and rocky. He never speaks loudly; rather his voice ranges widely in volume, but it is always on the mezzoforte side. At all times it varies in intensity, like a child playing with the volume control of a radio.

Steinweiss. Come you, little daemons. Dance for me. You must dance for me. Dance ---- surely you can dance / Slight pause/ Certainly you can dance--- dance slowly, quickly, dance sadly, dance gaily. That is how you must dance ---- dance gaily for me. / Pause/ But you must dance. / Louder/ You have to dance --- else how will I be entertained? You are my amusement! You must dance!

/ Pause; then softly, questioningly/ oh? / A little louder and more firmly./ Very well, then --- I will tell you a story. But then you must danceOnce upon a time... / Long pause./ no, I won't tell that story. I will tell you another: a true story....One time in my home town there was a blind man who stood at the railroad depot. He had a concertina that he played all day,

5

cont. next page

THE VETERAN
(cont.)

and a little tin cup that he held in his hand for people to put money into. He wore a blue engineer's hat and overalls and a faded brown shirt and his face never changed expression. This was when I was a little boy and went around with a crowd of other little boys. We were not bad boys, but we were cruel ---- as all little boys are cruel. Like any other boys we got into meanness. We were in more meanness than --- than a gang of daemons!

/Split-second pause and slight chuckle./ Sometimes we would go to the depot and watch this blind man. We would watch him and listen to him play the concertina, and we would stare at the tin cup he held. Then some of us would sneak up and put slugs or washers into the cup. Or we'd sneak up behind him and yell, all of a sudden, "Look out! Here comes a train!" But he would never move; he would merely go on playing his concertina, or sometimes he would smile slightly. I should say that they, the other boys, did these things, for I never did. I always felt too ashamed and sorry for him.

/ Slight pause; his voice becomes very bitter./ Do you want to know the moral of the story? It is that there is no such thing as poetic justice.
/ Slightly longer pause./ Well, now that I have told you a story ---- and a true one --- you must dance for me....And dance gaily.

/Offstage there is a rustle of starched clothes and a woman's quick footsteps. At first the audience hears these as Steinweiss does: loud and resounding. But as the Nurse enters right, they fade to their proper perspective. She enters right, opposite Steinweiss. Pale grey spotlights are thrown on her, but the only parts visible to the audience are the white nurse's uniform, the white nurse's shoes, and the white hat. Her features are invisible; seem only, as Steinweiss', against the sunlit rear stage./

Steinweiss. / In a fierce stage whisper./ Go, little daemons.
Quickly, go away now. / Aloud/ Is that you Nurse?

Nurse. Yes. / Moves across stage to him. Spotlights follow her./
How are you today?

St. Fine, fine, and you?

N. Oh, just fine. / Short pause./ Say --- don't you get tired of sitting here not doing anything? Why don't you get some sunshine? It's very warm outside today.

St. I don't like to go out. / Becomes sarcastic; speaks very savagely./
The sunlight is too bright --- it hurts my eyes.

N. /Falters; at a loss for words./ Well...it's...it's very... warm....

St. What is there out there that I can't have in here? / Almost viciously now./ Sunshine? --- You want sunshine? All right, just a minute...Okay --- now I'm in Florida lying on the beach. The sand is very sandy; the ocean is very wet; and the Sun is very hot. Boy, you ought to be here. Just smell that salt spray!

THE VETERAN
(cont.)

N. /Determined to make a joke out of it/ I never thought of that
before. You can go anywhere you want, can't you?

St. Sure, I can ever go to the movies. All I have to do is pick out a
setting I like, the actors and actresses, and work out a plot. Then --- I have
a movie. I even did it once.

/ His voice loses its bitterness as he becomes slightly interested
in what he is saying./

N. And that's another idea. Why don't you try writing something while
you're here? Have you ever thought of that?

St. Yes --- I was going to write a long anti-war tract but I never did.

N. Goodness knows, with the ways things are today, we certainly need one.
Why didn't you go ahead with it?

St. / The sarcasm returns./ Because I'd rather sit here and be
bitter.

N. Now this is no way to feel.

St. Nor is it a good way to be.

N. Anyway, you have to take your medicine. / Produces small bottle
and spoon from uniform. She carefully measures the medicine into the spoon and
sticks it to his mouth. He swallows it, seriously and gravely./ There ---
I guess that fixes you.

St. / With gravity./ Yes, it should, for, of course, it is magic
medicine.... And after I swallow a couple gallons of it, I'll be able to see what
you look like.

N. Then I must stop giving it to you. / Raises watch to eye./
Oh --- it's almost two--- I've got to run.

/ Exit right. Again her footsteps and clothes rustle sound very
loud and gradually fade away in the same proportion./

St. Goodbye. / Long pause --- he whistles aimlessly for a moment; then
hums a bit./

oh..... / Shorter pause./ Ah, come you, little daemons. Come
here. Come here, little daemons --- you must dance for me. You must dance gaily
for me.....

THE VETERAN
(cont.)

SCENE II

The stage is set almost the same as before. Steinweiss is still seated at the front of the stage, but his strip of darkness is narrower than before. The silent players are still onstage, but their area of sunshine is only half that of Scene I and there are only one-half as many actors. They are on the left, playing in a grey light. They are as happy as ever. On the right, at the centre of the stage, there is an office. It is in bright electric light. There is a desk with a telephone. There is a chair in front and behind it. Behind the desk is Doctor Kubelik, a solid man with a greyed head and rimless glasses. In front of the desk sits Rafael Warfield, an Adept. Steinweiss talks softly, inaudibly except at times when the audience catches a stray word like "daemons", "dance", and "story".

Warfield I can make him see.

Kubelik I have heard that you Adepts can do miracles.

War We can / Slight
Pause. / I suppose to you that sounds smug --- or egotistical, but we are neither. We have an ability bestowed upon us and we are humble before it. I, personally am scared by my own powers at times.

Kub Yes, I can see why. How does it feel to be able to read --- and control a man's mind?

W. I imagine, Doctor, that you know as much about it as I do.

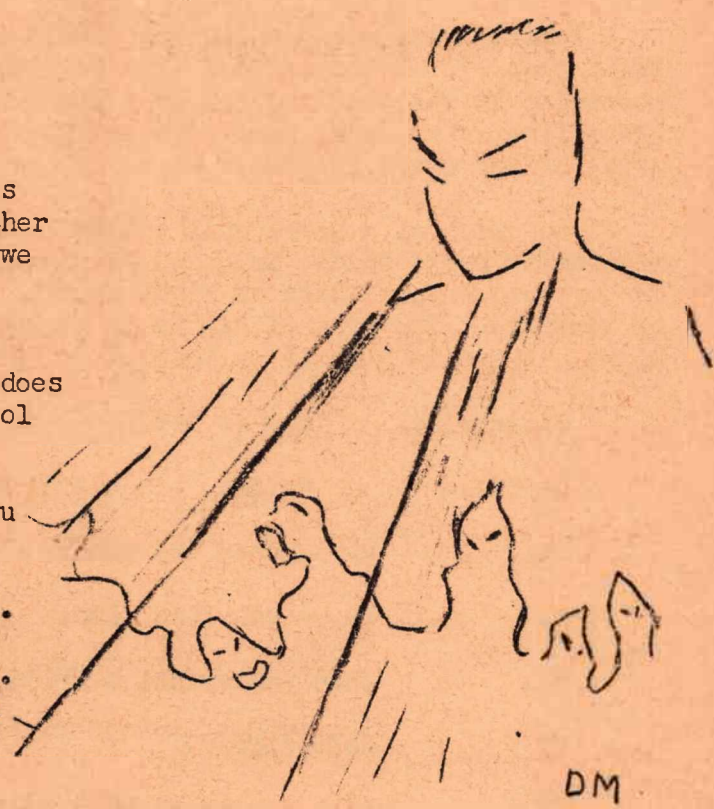
K. But I am no...and Adept....

W. True, but you are a doctor. You have taken the Hippocratic oath, and you know the physical secrets of many people. Is it much different?

K. Not much, I suppose. Of course, I have to secure the permission of the patient before I can treat him.

W. That is about the only difference. And it is a condition born of necessity.... if the patient knew I was removing psychosomatic blocks, he would, unknowingly or not, set up mental guards against aid. Of course, I work only with cases that are known positively to be psychosomatic...which, I imagine, is why you summoned me in this case.

K. Yes --- I have examined Steinweiss' eyes repeatedly, and I am certain there is nothing wrong with them...physically, anyway.



THE VETERAN
(cont.)

W. Can you tell me anything about him? I'll have to learn everything from him, of course, but I'd like something to begin on. At least a conversational tack.

K. I'm sorry, but I don't know anything. He was a veteran of the War, and like other veterans, came from a makeshift Army hospital with no records.

W. Ummmm --- a veteran. They have very deep-seated faults sometimes.

K. I can assure you that Steinweiss does. He is very bitter.

W. Well, I'll take a look at him now. / Slight pause./ Or rather, a talk with him.

K. Well, good luck --- I'll see you here later.

Warfield rises and walks into Steinweiss' darkness. Instantly the electric light goes off on the office. The original force of nurses and patients in pantomime is restored and the grey light is off them, replaced by the sunshine. The office is removed, unnoticed and the strip of grey that was originally in the midst of the stage is gone. There is now only sunlight and darkness.

The swish of a serge suit and the footsteps of Warfield are heard as Steinweiss hears them; loud and resounding. They are heard as they usually are as Warfield enters stage at right front. A grey spotlight is on the legs and feet of Warfield. The rest of him is in darkness with outlines again against the sunlight. There is a chair on the left of Steinweiss, facing offstage.

Steinweiss. Who is it?

Warfield Friend / Sits in empty chair and crosses legs./

St. With money and wine?

W. No -- not this time.

St. Then you're not a friend.

W. Gold-digger!

St. Well you don't seem particular who you have for a friend.

W. You are determined to insult me. I am very discriminating about my friends.

St. But you choose from the halt and the blind.

W. I told you I was discriminating.

St. You're probably incriminating. /Suddenly, earnestly./
Why did you come here --- who are you?

THE VETERAN
(cont.)

W. My name is Warfield, if that helps any. Rafael Warfield. Rafael Gary Warfield. I came to see you.

St. Me? --- why me?

W. Why not?

Steinweiss becomes silent. Warfield is silent also. He sits quietly, draining Steinweiss' mind. He rearranges everything with ultimate justice. Some thoughts he eliminates entirely; some he changes; he implants a few original thoughts. His leg swings idly and slowly.

St. When you visit friends you've never met, do you usually sit in a chair without saying a word?

W. Sometimes; it all depends.

St. Upon what?

W. Various things; however, I will talk to you. Do you think there will be another World War?

St. Sure, I think there will always be another World War.

W. You sound like the bitterest enemy of war.

St. Isn't everyone the bitterest enemy of war?

W. Obviously, everyone isn't, or there would never have been war in the first place.

St. A brilliant observation, my dear Watson.

W. And so naive, Sherlock! So ducededly naive! / Long pause./
You lost your sight in the last one, didn't you?

St. You have done it again, Watson.

W. Do you hate war on that account or on general principles? Or do you know?

St. I don't really know. You might call it a fierce but undecided mixture of both.

W. But you are bitter with life --- that is no reason to be bitter with life.

St. That's what the fruit-picker said to the lemon.

W. And he was right. There is fresh air, and blue sky, and green trees, and fresh streams.

THE VETERAN
(cont.)

St. So they tell me.

W. Don't you believe it?

St. Well, as they say, seeing is believing.

W. Then you should believe soon.

St. Believe? What do you mean?

W. Nothing / Looks at watch/ I have to go. Goodbye.

/ Goes offstage. Spotlight follows his feet. His footsteps are not heard in great volume./

St. Goodbye. / Sits silently in darkness./

SCENE III

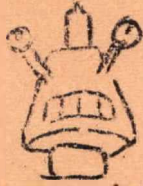
The scene is in grey light again. A bed is on the left, flush against the wall; a door is in right rear. An open window is at rear centre, directly facing audience. The door at the rear opens and Steinweiss enters. He grips the door-jamb, then slowly inches his way around the wall, feeling his way very slowly and cautiously. He turns the corner and comes to the window. Here he halts. He feels the width of the window sill, then sticks his head out and breathes very deeply. Then he continues on, and comes to the head of the bed; he feels his way slowly along it and finally reaches the bedside. He feels of the top spread.

Steinweiss. A blue spread. I like blue. / There is a long pause and suddenly he realizes/ Blue! It's blue! /He rushes to the window and sticks his head out./ A blue sky! And green trees!

Suddenly there is a great explosion on the outside. The noise is deafening and for a moment there is an unbearable light from the stage. Suddenly the room is plunged into absolute darkness. Then there are more explosions and flashes of light, but they are fainter. Steinweiss is seen only by these fitful glares. He turns from the window and goes to the bed, inching his way around the wall as before. The bed creaks as he sits on it. His actions are very slow and deliberate. One shoe falls; then, after a long pause, the other. He lies on the bed.

St. Come you, little daemons. You are once again and forever my companions. I have something to tell you. It is of a thing I have just seen. I have just seen a Bomb fall. The World Wars are come ---- they are once again and forever our companions. I can lie here and think and know that after this one is ended the Ninth will begin; then the Tenth; the Eleventh; the Twelfth.....

C U R T A I N

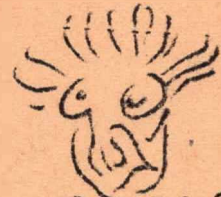


Mechanistra

HOW TO WRITE A SCIENCE-FICTION STORY

by

Burt Krunzinski



FANTASIA

Fan-writers should know how to write one story properly. In fact, it is imperative that you write one. This one.

For a beginning, I am going to teach you how to write an old story. Perhaps it is the oldest in science-fiction. It is an alien-invasion theme. It is a "Do you believe me, dear reader?" or "They think that I'm insane, but look out!" type story. Everyone is familiar with the plot and style and ending at the outset of the sotry. It is terribly trite stuff to them. So you must learn to write it; they expect it of you.

The beginning of the story is this:

"I must write this story, so that you may be warned. Oh, they say that I am crazy, but I know. This is the truth! The Martians will kill me, but you must be warned."

That is the only proper beginning. That is what you must write; it is expected of you.

You must write it.

Then you must write what we authors call "small incidents". The introduction to them in this story must begin always with "When I first found out about the Martians, I was....." Then you can fill in any details you may want to from your own sweet little imagination. Try to build suspense. You may not succeed, but don't let it bother you. It is not necessary.

Then comes the "Revelation of a Plot Complication". This comes just before the middle of the story. Here is what you must write:

"the Martians are able to assume any shape at will"

You will notice that I have refrained from using any punctuation whatsoever here. Since it is obviously necessary to emphasize this statement, I leave the method to you. Some use capitals; others put as may as five exclamation points after the statement. A few merely resort to italics.

After this, use some more "Small Incidents" to pad out the story. One of these must include: "That was the first time I had ever seen a Martian in its natural form!"



HOW TO WRITE A SCIENCE-FICTION STORY

{cont}

Then describe the Martian thusly:

"The Martians in their natural form are so horrible as to be almost indescribable. They are blobs --- simply blobs --- of green stuff, looking quite rubbery and pulpy. It is sickening to watch them move. They have tentacles or pseudapodia that slide menacingly along. It is by these that they propel themselves. I could discern no vital organs whatsoever about this one.

Then cut short your description of the Martian in natural shape with this: "Then somehow --- I can not explain it --- it sensed my presence. I fled from that scene with a terror that was terrible."

Then must come the Climax or Big Event. This must be the discovery that your best friend is a Martian. It also must include a big struggle with him. This is it:

"Yes, you are right. We can change shape at will."

I gasped. Bill, my friend Bill, was a Martian. We were alone in his office. And before my eyes he changed into his natural Martian shape!!!!!!

With horror in my heart, I kicked with all my might at the monster, knowing all the time that it was a futile and useless gesture. Then I slipped and fell to the floor, knocking a pitcher of water to the edge of the desk.

I lay on the floor, watching the Martian creep toward me. I could not tear my gaze away from that menacing, evil shape. It crept closer and closer.

Then the pitcher of water fell from the edge of the desk, drenching the creature with the fluid.

Then an incredible thing happened.

The creature uttered a shrill, high, peircing shriek of alien terror. Then it seemed to blacken and shrivel. It died an alien death at my feet.

The greatest weapon against the Martians is plain old Earthly H2O!

You must write that. It is expected of you.

Then you must pad the story out some more --- drag it out as long as you possibly can --- with the details of how the Martians happened to find out about your knowledge of them and about your flight from them in stark utter terror.

Try to make all this mess suspenseful if you can. It is not too important in the telling of the story, of course. Why else do you think I am Leaving it to you?

Now comes the ending. You must write this:

"The Martians are closing in on me. I will soon be found, and they will kill me.

You must believe me, dear reader,

E G O B O O & D R E A M D U S T

by

Fred Chappell

I. The Ole Historian, Psychologist, and Qualified Bird-Watcher Talkin' ----
I am going to spout about the development of modern science-fantasy, because I think it is one of the most important fields of literature in the world today. It is a very new field; I am speaking of modern science-fiction and modern fantasy.

For fantasy is one of the oldest --- if not the oldest ~~f~~ forms of literature extant. But only recently --- very recently--- has it come to take on the dignity and force it deserves. Before this time, fantasy was divided into two forms: a story of wonder and imagination which had marvels as its basis; and the other was merely a vehicle for the author to express his ideas and opinions on anything.

But not until lately has the concept of modern science-fiction existed. This is that of creating a wondrous marvel and showing its effect on man; or men. H.G. Wells' stories are the primordial ancestors of this concept, but unrealistic, because their scope is too wide to allow a personal sympathy with any of his heroes, and therefore concentrating your attention on the phenomena the author has created.

James Branch Cabell's stories are not truly modern fantasies. But they are a unique variation upon the old themes; the separate marvel and vehicle idea. He weds them together in an exciting form. In Carl van Doren's book, The American Novel, he says that Cabell "has mixed oil and water --- and added fire." But his stories are not modern fantasies.

Aldous Huxley's are not modern fantasies because they are vehicles of the author's opinions solely and can not show, with out the narrator's intervention, the effects that are to be obtained.

In fact, I do not know, who first conceived the modern fantastic story. It was not born with either Weird Tales or Amazing Stories. Both published the "marvel" story; one was just a bit more scientific than the other.

I am not a completist or an old time fan and I don't know who wrote the first story that would conform with my definition of modern fantasy, but I do know that Clark Ashton Smith was one of the first practitioners of it. "The Visitors from Mlok" in a 1931 Wonder Stories still stands as a good example of modern science-fiction. Very briefly, it is the story of a man who is taken to another dimension. There, because it is impossible for him to grow accustomed to the physical proportions of the place, the beings who inhabit it perform an operation upon him which enables him to live there comfortably. But he grows lonely for Earth and so they send him back. He finds that now for him Earth is uninhabitable. Throughout the story, attention is centered on the hero. Each new phenomenon is carefully explained, and its relationship to him is shown in detail. This is the epitome of modern fantasy.

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cont. next page

See you in Philly? Sure!

EGOBOO & DREAMCUST

(cont.)

II. How to Sell Fanzine Subscriptions --- Joel Nydahl, editor of VEGA, has figured the perfect way to sell fanzine subscriptions. Witness the mailing page of VEGA: "You have a sub to this rag. _____ issues coming yet". ---- "We trade. Crud for crud." --- "Please give this poor excuse of a fanzine a good review." --- And last; and least of all: "Free sample. Want to subscribe?".

I predict that Vega will someday equal Life magazine in circulation.

III. The World of the Future --- I have a prediction here too. I predict that some day science-fantasy will become so popular that fanzine publishing will be as popular and widely practised as ham radio operating is today. And in many ways it will be similar to this hobby. Prospective fan-editors will have to procure a federal license to operate. This entails a law regarding the use of profanity and obscene material in fanzines. The type of license might depend on any of several things: method of reproduction, type of material, price of fanzine, etc. There would be about four million publisher-editors in this country and about three million abroad. Each publisher would make about one hundred copies of his zine. Twenty-five of these would go to friends and regular traders; fifty to whimsical choices; twenty would be kept to trade with those who sent copies to him; one would be sent to the Publishing Centre; one kept for his personal file; the others would just lie around the house.

The Publishing Centre would be a place supported by a nominal fee paid by the editors for a year's membership --- say, approximately two dollars a year. It would read and file every fanzine received. Out of these fanzines the workers who had been paid to read them would nominate stories, essays, artwork, etc., which they thought particularly good to the Yearbook Committee. This committee would read the nominations and decide which among them would go into the slick, printed, illustrated in colour and with photographs, 250 page, Yearbook. (The workers who made the nominations would also check the zines for obscenity) This Yearbook would go to every publisher who had paid his dues. The Publishing Centre would also publish a Fanzine Directory manual annually. This manual would contain the title, publisher, address, price, schedule, type of reproduction and material of every fanzine extant. These last three matters would be very simply set down in a set of accepted symbols. In regard to the price, if one editor wished to trade his fanzine which cost 15¢ to another whose cost 25¢ he would simply give him a two-issue sub for one copy; and he would expect the same courtesy if he traded with another whose zine cost 5¢.

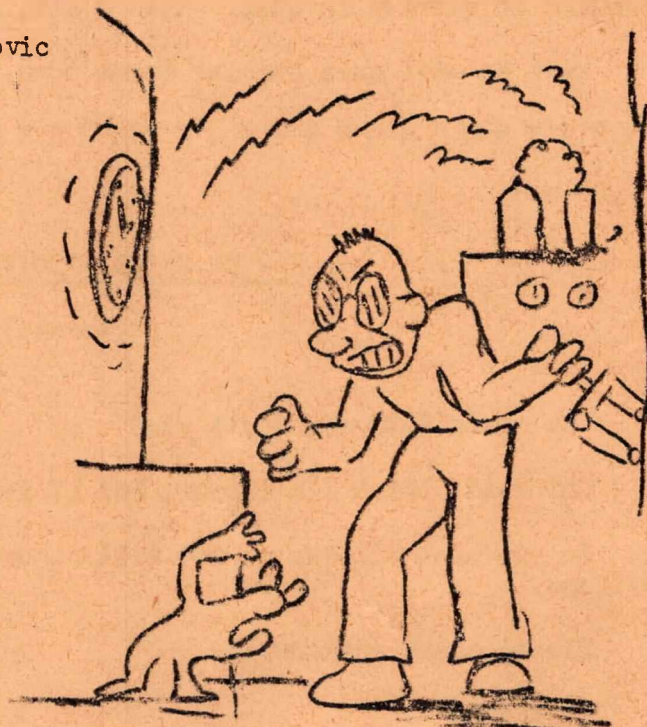
The proxines would be in number just a little more than now, but the field would be sharply divided because of conflicting philosophies concerning science-fiction. Each class would have its own adherents and detractors among the fans. There would be no fanzine review and no letter columns among them at all --- and very few book columns. Crifanac would be the chief evaluator. There would be more books published than at the present time.

The writers of this vast amount of fan material would be chiefly the editors themselves, and the editors' personal friends would write quite a lot of it. There would be more professionals appearing than at the present time --- in fact, many pros would have it as a hobby.

THE LAST OF THE BEM'S

by
Mark R. Cnirilovic

The Eyes of Benjamin E. Mesotron were horizontal slits as he gazed intently at his Bemograph. This was the machine. The LAST machine. All the rest were destroyed....completely... changed into a fine impalpable dust. This machine, too, would destroy it self at a specific time, on a specific day. That day happened to be today. The time was set for 00:00:01, or one second after midnight, as the old terrestriens used to reckon it. In this year....9999 A.D.everything would end. There would be no year 10,000, and none after that. The whole earth would be wiped clean of everything on it, and the deadly zeta rays radiating from the machine would destroy life, even to a depth of 10 miles below the earth's surface.



Earthlings would pay for the fatal mistake that they made when they destroyed all the BEM's in the Solar System. On that memorable day they had all collected on planet "Y" to begin an assault on all the inner planets. The greatest scientist on earth had obliterated them all with the omega ray machines.

All, that is, except one. No one knew that last BEM existed, just as no one knew why every machine on earth and all the other planets had changed into the fine dust. Only Benjamin knew, and he wouldn't tell anyone. Why? Because he was the LAST of the BEM's. He had skillfully changed his appearance to resemble that of a human. He still had the cross-hatched eyes of a BEM, but then he always wore dark glasses when necessary.

The time was now 00:01:00. One minute to go.

The last of the BEM's entered into the time crystal he had built, to prevent himself from being destroyed, along with everything else. So HE thought. It didn't work. Why? Because one of earth's own BEM creations, a fantastic little job with irridescent orbs, had wedged itself inside a vital relay of the time crystal and kept it open. Thus Benjamin E. Mesotron became dust like everything else.

So did the little BEM.

MIDNIGHT PAN-AROMA

by

Fred Chappell

These are the smells of midnight;
The scents that waft past my gabled window
Are odours from the Domain of Darkness,
And they are these:

The stench of bubbling cauldrons,
Prepared in woodland glens,
The beast-scent of unknown creatures,
Huddled in their dens.

The mocking scent of witches' bodies
Drifting from a darkened dell.
Odours from the unmentionable bodies,
Of daemons --- out of Hell!

Terror and horror, in my heart,
Terror and horror are the night.
Terror and horror, terror and horror,
Terror --- horror --- Hellish fright.

My nostrils, repulsed; they cringe,
My soul affrighted; it quakes,
My mind, horrified, is unseated,
My sanity ---- shakes.

I turn again to my room; I turn
My back upon my gabled windows
And the pan-aroma of midnight.
I am repelled by evil,
Utter evil, only evil,
That wafts upon the night.

I turn, with soul of evil, and
Ask myself of me, "Is there
Naught, but evil, utter horror---
That drifts upon the night wind?"
And from within me an answer comes,
And in the air, there is a subtle, gentle perfume:----

"Sleep."

I'm gonna be at the Philcon. How about you?

IN MEMORIAM:

A. Charles Catania

M A N
and
the
U N I V E R S E

The blackness of dying suns was spreading throughout the universe. It was all engulfing, malignant. It was an unquenchable consuming thing, a torrent of infinite death and darkness, eternal.

Here and there, a few younger suns still glistened in the void. Once, they had majestically marched among the galaxies, shining nebulae whose glory had made them stand out among all others. Now, along with that irresistible flood of dying matter, they were succumbing to the forces that governed the universe.

Revolving slowly about one of these, a tiny planet held the last vestiges of life, tiny humans who had been able to overcome all but this last terrible darkness.

They had once thought themselves allpowerful, before some had begun to realize that the encoaching doom of eternal darkness was upon them. Then it was too late.

For man, it had always been too late and on the surface of that tiny planet, scarcely ten thousand miles away from the sun, cruel cold winds blew and the people huddled in the buildings that stood forlornly in the frigid waste. Tiny fires were burning what inflammable material was left.

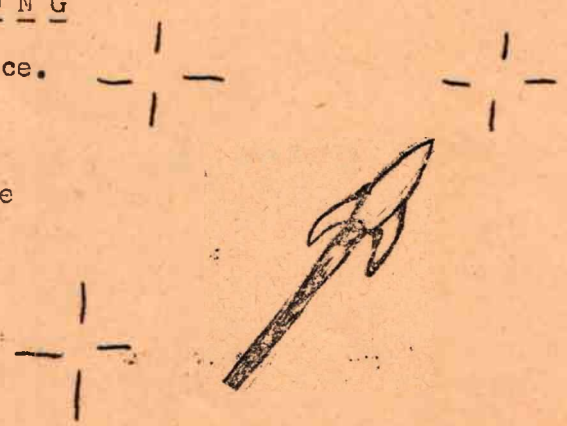
Crouching around those fires, they looked as their cave-man ancestors might have looked, gathered around a campfire during the ice-age. The cycle was complete.

Slowly the fires went out, and the few that were left crept to each other to preserve the warmth. Finally, all the fires died, and a man arose from the tiny group as the spark of life drifted away.

The sun died out, and all the stars. The universe was dark, to dark.....

S T A R S O N G

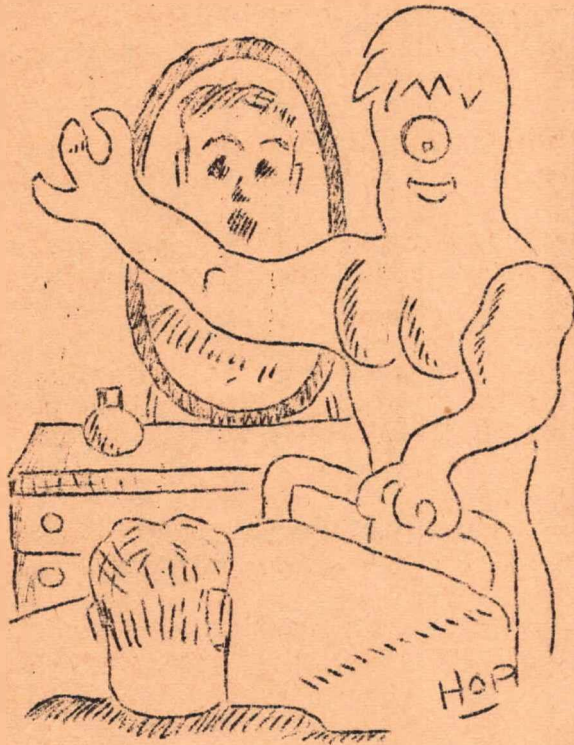
The rocket sped through endless night of space.
It traveled on, and on, for endless time
To reach a faraway and unknown place,
To lift man ever outward in his climb
Of need and yearning. It had still to pierce
The All-embracing murky shield of cloud
That covered Venus' surface, and the fierce
And awful nets of gas, that, like a shroud,
Embraced the whole of Saturn, and the thin,
But still existent atmosphere of Mars.
The rocket sped on outward built to win
Not only notes of planets, but the stars.



AST

Dear Shel,

Well, I went to Los Angeles over the Labor Day weekend and, since I had to stay somewhere, I rented a hotel room. Naturally I took a few of the later editions of Science mags with me, and as I looked through them, looking for an interesting yarn to read till I got sleepy. It wasn't hard to do, either, with all the better writers floating around the country, so it wasn't long before a visitor would have found me very comfortable (?) behind a Startling Stories running my fingers through my hair to keep it down.



I don't know how long I lay there reading, before I became aware of a stuffy, half-rotten smell. I looked up and ---you guessed it, chum ---there stood a BEM, looking at me with the strangest expression I'd ever seen on a face in my life.

"Hello," he said, "My name is Albert, what's yours?"

"Greetings," I replied, not very originally "Just call me Jim. Are you a native Californian. I come from Venus. Ever been there?"

"No, I've never had the honor to visit your fair planet. It must be beautiful though. Why do you have the cloud blanket around it?"

"Shhh," he attempted to assume the stature of a spy. "That's a deep, dark secret. If the boss ever heard me mention it, I would cease to live." he drew himself up proudly. "Our secret is a better-kept one than yours of the atom bomb."

"They don't try to keep the entire thing a secret," I defended, wondering if it would be worthwhile, "Only the method of building it."

"Maybe you're right," he conceded, "but when your earth is destroyed, it will be by atomic bombs, or a variation of them, and directly learned from the very important personages in the atomic energy profession. Their idea of security is certainly backward, when it only keeps its secrets from the beings of its own planet. It was the easiest assignment I ever undertook to learn what it was that will soon lay your precious earth in ruins."

"What're you telling me for?" I wondered, "I thought you wanted it kept secret."

"You don't think anyone'd believe you, do you?" he countered, "Earthlings are too suspicious to believe even one of their own kind. Look at the way they're poo-pooing the flying saucers. And the way the Air Force is trying to pass it all off as 'atmospheric conditions.'"

"You mean that the flying saucers are just what they're feared to be? That they're visitors from outer space?" I asked incredulously. "Are they Venusians too?"

T H E M A S T E R ?

by
A. Mazzeorelli, Jr.

According to what I have been able to find out from the ancient records, it is about 2900 AD. My name is Atu, and I am one of the few of my race that can remember when we were supreme.

The world is just about the same as it was ten centuries ago, that is, except for the Mastefs. They are beautiful creatures, and although their limbs are not as useful as ours, their intelligence far surpasses anything that we ever dreamed of, and the tragic part of it is that they learned from us.

Actually, our life is an easy lot. We are divided into three groups: servants, pets and workers. Each worker is trained in his particular job, and is governed by his own Master. Each Master is in charge of about twenty of these workers, and in this way there is no danger of our overthrowing them. It isn't that these creatures are lazy, but it is because they haven't the right type of body and limbs with which to do these various jobs themselves. These jobs consist of everything from working in the food synthesis factories to making and flying rockets.

The servants do just what their name implies. They clean the dwellings of the Masters and also feed and bathe them.

Being a pet is the easiest and best of the three jobs, and such am I. While they are away during the day, I am allowed to roam the fields, play in the streams, or just lie around. When the Master returns from his daily work, my duty is to make him happy. By doing various tricks, I usually earn extra food or special favors, but if I fail to please him, I am usually tied the next day; so that I can't roam around.

Many of my race are happy and don't want any changes made, but there is a few of us that remembers the time, according to records, when all creatures bowed to us, Yes, even the Masters. The only power these beings hold over us is the ability to control our minds thus stopping the will to resist. Our main trouble is that we don't have any information about them except that they existed in the time when we were in power, but there is no trace of what type creature they are or of ways to control them. Hidden in the vaults of the Master's headquarters is, according to rumors, the secret of their weakness, and also their identity. It is these things that we must find out in order to be able to free ourselves.....

It is early morning, and my Master has just turned me loose as he usually does every day. What he doesn't realize is that I have made up my mind to enter the vault of the Masters, and try to discover the secrets which are in their.



THE MASTER? (cont.)

As I approached the building, one of the guards were standing in the archway, but a stone thrown in the other direction diverted his attention long enough for me to step into the building. When I got to the vault, I could see at a glance that it would be easy to break into it, and I set to work on it with haste. It didn't take very long to open it, but as the ancient door creaked open, I could hear the alarm ring through the musty building.

Even now as I enter the vault I can hear them coming, but, at least, before they get me I am going to know the truth.....

Good lord, no wonder they have guarded this so highly! If my people could only know what these creatures really are, they would realize that we are actually supreme to them; and would rise against them. The only reason they have been able to control us is because we never realized what they actually are, but it is too late for me to do anything now.

Of course you want to know what the secret is before they catch me, but before I tell you I want you to heed this warning less you fall into the same fate that our race has done.

"Never take anything or an being for granted."

Oh yes, the secret!! It is nothing but a collar and on it is a tag which reads:

XX
" # 25636543590 "
" " "
" "1952" "
" DOG LICENSE "
XX

XX Dear Shel (cont.) XXXXXX

"No, they aren't Venusians." came his chuckle, "They're Martians, but they are here for the same thing we are. We're just trying to beat them to the punch."

"My Ghu! what can we do? How can we stop all this?" I'd had a sneaking suspicion that it was all a dream, but all this was getting out of hand now. If it was a dream no body had anything to worry about. If I was awake, I had to figure something out. If the world died, so would I, and I didn't feel like making those sort of plans.

"Don't worry so much about it." he advised, "You only live once, and for only a short time, at that."

"What makes you think we only live once?" I wondered if I could confuse him so he'd let the solution to my puzzle before he thought. "Albert, don't tell us that when we shed this shell, as would a snail or a butterfly, we live forever."

"Is that so?" it was his turn to be confused now. He looked at me thoughtfully for a moment, then, "I'll have to do a little investigating on this little idea of yours I'm going now, but I'll see you later, where ever you are." Then he vanished.

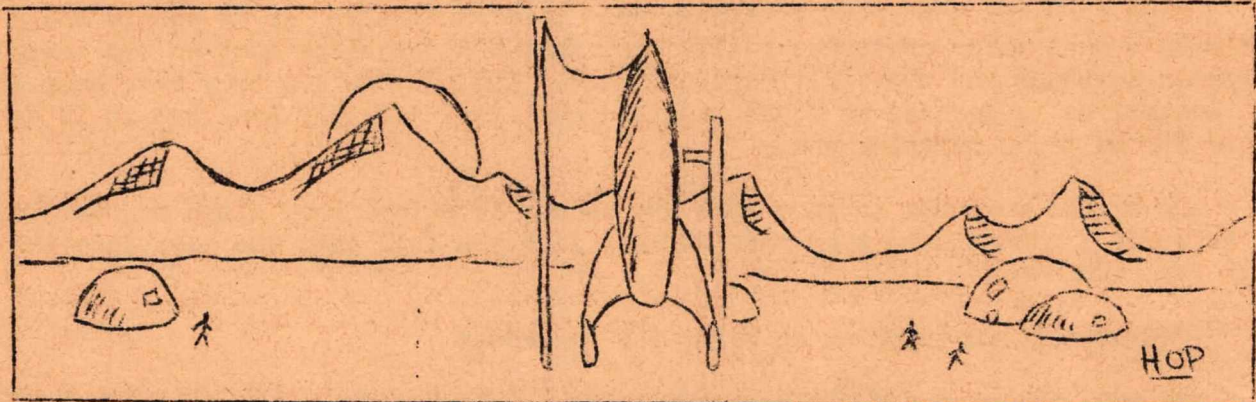
I still haven't woke up, so it couldn't have been a dream, and my friend Albert, hasn't contacted me, either.

OVERSIGHT

by

Pete Cathell

The sun had just finished setting behind the jagged peaks of the Rocky Mountains far in the distance. All that remained of the light was a thin line of orange which silhouetted the mountaintops. The light seemed to be receding, yielding to the onrushing wave of darkness known as night. This was a never-ending struggle -- the battle of night and day. With darkness chasing light around the earth. Or, perhaps, it was just the opposite.



Night fell a little more slowly on the desert, but just as surely. In the darkness was a small point of light coming from an aluminum building. In it the four men were drinking the remains of a pot of coffee. The coffee was a matter of necessity, rather than pleasure.

The room, filled with radio and radar apparatus, left little room for the men, particularly Stan Kingsley. Running his fingers through his hair, he exhaled a grunt of exasperation.

"These charts say we can take off any time between now and three tomorrow afternoon," he said, "is there any reason why we shouldn't go now instead of waiting twelve hours?"

"Listen, Ken ---" Jimmy Rome seemed to be trying to make his voice as soothing as possible --- "you know as well as I that our orders say we're to wait for the tech's all right before we can blast off."

"What of it?" Ken said. "We know every part of that ship and how it works. A helluva lot of good some pot-bellied genius is going to do, with all his mathematical formulas." He lit a fresh cigarette with the stump of his old one and ground the butt savegely under his heel. "It's this waiting that bothers me, we know dammed well the Russians have a ship ready to blast off, in spite of what the higher-ups say."

He was interrupted by a low-pitched hum from the radio. Hank Einstat pulled himself out of his chair with much effort and ambled over to the receiver. The message seemed to shake him out of his lethergy.

"Hey, fellows," he said, "listen to this! G-2 at Washington says Russia has just launched a missile out of the earth's atmosphere."

OVERSIGHT (cont.)

"If that's so," said Tom Gilligan, the crew's radar man, "We might just as well start dismantling the ship because when Russia reaches the moon she'll lay claim to all of it and our efforts will go unnoticed."

"What are you fellows talking about?" Jimmy Rome, shouted, "Our claims will be upheld. Russia can't lay claim to all of the moon."

"That's what you say," Growled Kingsley, whose hot fury of a few minutes ago had now turned into an almost insane desire to reach the moon, "I say take off now. Our ship is faster, and we can catch them before they're half-way to the moon."

"Are you serious?" asked Hank. "What would happen to us if we did that?"

"I'm sorry, Stan," Jimmy said, "but there would be terrific repercussions."

At that moment Kingsley hated every one of them for their cowardice. Trembling with rage, he reached for his gun and pointed at the other three. "Were going to the moon, fellows," he said, "so get ready for the trip."

The order seemed to shock them to the core; their eyes incredulously stared. But Kingsley snapped them out of their stupor with a barking command to switch on the floodlights. This was done and the sleek hull of the Sirius was bathed in a brilliant light which served as a screen for the four grotesque shadows as they approached the ship. Kingsley waited for the others to get comfortably in their acceleration hammocks before he spoke.

"Take-off, minus five, seconds. Five, four, three, two, one, jets fired." He quickly punched a key on the board in front of him.

The hum of the rocket grew to a deafening roar. The vibrations grew closer together till they formed to become a tremendous surge of power.

Outside the ship the floodlights were now off. To an observer far away the Sirius would look like a giant sky rocket. The fire issuing from the bottom of the ship was the only light to be seen and faint though it was, nevertheless light. Suddenly the ship started slowly upward, suspended on a pillar of orange flame which lighted the surrounding area. Light seemed to have gained a victory, but it was short-lived as the ship shot upward at ever increasing speed. Soon it was a mere speck in the sky, and darkness closed in once again.

To the four aboard the Sirius, which had now passed the sonic barrier, the effects of the initial acceleration were over. Tom Gilligan was the first to speak.

"You can throw that gun out the vacuum ejector now," he said with a half smile on his face, "we're going to the moon and there's no turning back, even if we wanted to."

"You know something," Hank said in an extremely jovial mood considering the circumstances, "Now that we're started I'm glad I'm going. At least, they can't blame it on me."

OVERSIGHT (cont.)

"I'm glad you guys feel that way," Kingley said. "The idea of holding a gun on you for a 240,000 mile trip doesn't exactly appeal to me. Say, what's the matter with Jimmy?"

"Boys" he said, "I ain't never felt like this before. I don't know what's the matter with me."

"I can fix you right up," Hank laughed, gliding over to the food locker, "There's a bottle of gin I put here just to be used as a nerve tonic."

He poured a stiff shot and handed it to Jimmy, who swallowed the drink in one gulp. Coughing and sputtering he dropped the glass. When he regained his composure, he asked for another drink--then another. The process was repeated several times before Hank looked at Stan with questioning eyes. He was answered by Stan's order to let Jimmy have the bottle. After all, he wouldn't be needed till they landed.

"Hey, Stan!" Tom announced. "I'm picking up something on the radar. It must be the Russian ship. I figure it to be about twenty thousand miles ahead of us."

"If the jets are turned on full we should pass them in two hours," Stan told him. "which will leave us plenty of time to land."

The ship sped through space. They passed the Russian ship and gleefully radioed insults to the commanding officer. They knew everything was all right, so why worry? The atmosphere of happiness was increased when Jimmy became rather tight.

The moon's surface swung into view. They were coming close to earth's satellite. The landing, as everyone knew, was to be the hardest part of the whole trip.

"Distance from Luna, five hundred miles," Tom said.

"Fire breaking jets," ordered Stan.

Hank reached up and pulled two small levers. A look of confusion spread over his face. He kept snapping levers on but nothing happened.

"What's the matter?" Stan asked.

"The Jets don't fire. I don't know what's wrong."

"Those jets better fire! We're only two hundred miles from the moon." Tom's voice was tinged with fear.

Stan rushed over and inspected the instruments. The tension mounted as he ran his experienced fingers over the rows of gauges. Tom and Hank strained to hear the answer. Stan straightened up and stared at the other two. He felt no fear --only remorse.

OVERSIGHT (cont.)

"Those jets aren't going to fire, now or any other time," he said. "I know now why we had to wait for the technician. He was to install a vital part in the landing mechanism."

Tom and Hank fell back in their bunks. Stan knew all about the vacuum in the pit of their stomachs. He could see that they were straining every nerve and muscle in their bodies to keep from becoming panic-stricken. Even with this great effort their sanity seemed to be slowly ebbing away. The only person unaware of the tension was Jimmy, now in a drunken stupor.

The ship gained momentum, the speed increased. They sat as statues --- unmoving, unhearing, unthinking. The moon's pock-marked surface grew nearer, it seemed to leap in their faces. The ship grew nearer, still nearer.....

Then space was rent with a terrific explosion. The fuel went up in a tremendous flash of light, which clearly outlined the walls of the crater in which they had fallen. But even this great effort was futile, for after the last bit of light had died from the twisted remains of the spaceship Sirius, and the last echo of the roar had subsided, a tomblike silence ensued and darkness reigned once more.

Dear Shel (cont.)

You might tell some of the fen to be careful of a BEM who calls himself Albert, Shel. He might try to contact one of them and it might not go so well with them as it did with me. You see, he might want to see them shed their shell, to see if it would stand up to my analogy.

See you later (after I've had my next talk with Albert.

Sincerely,

Jim
(A/IC James White)