

pull out these staples

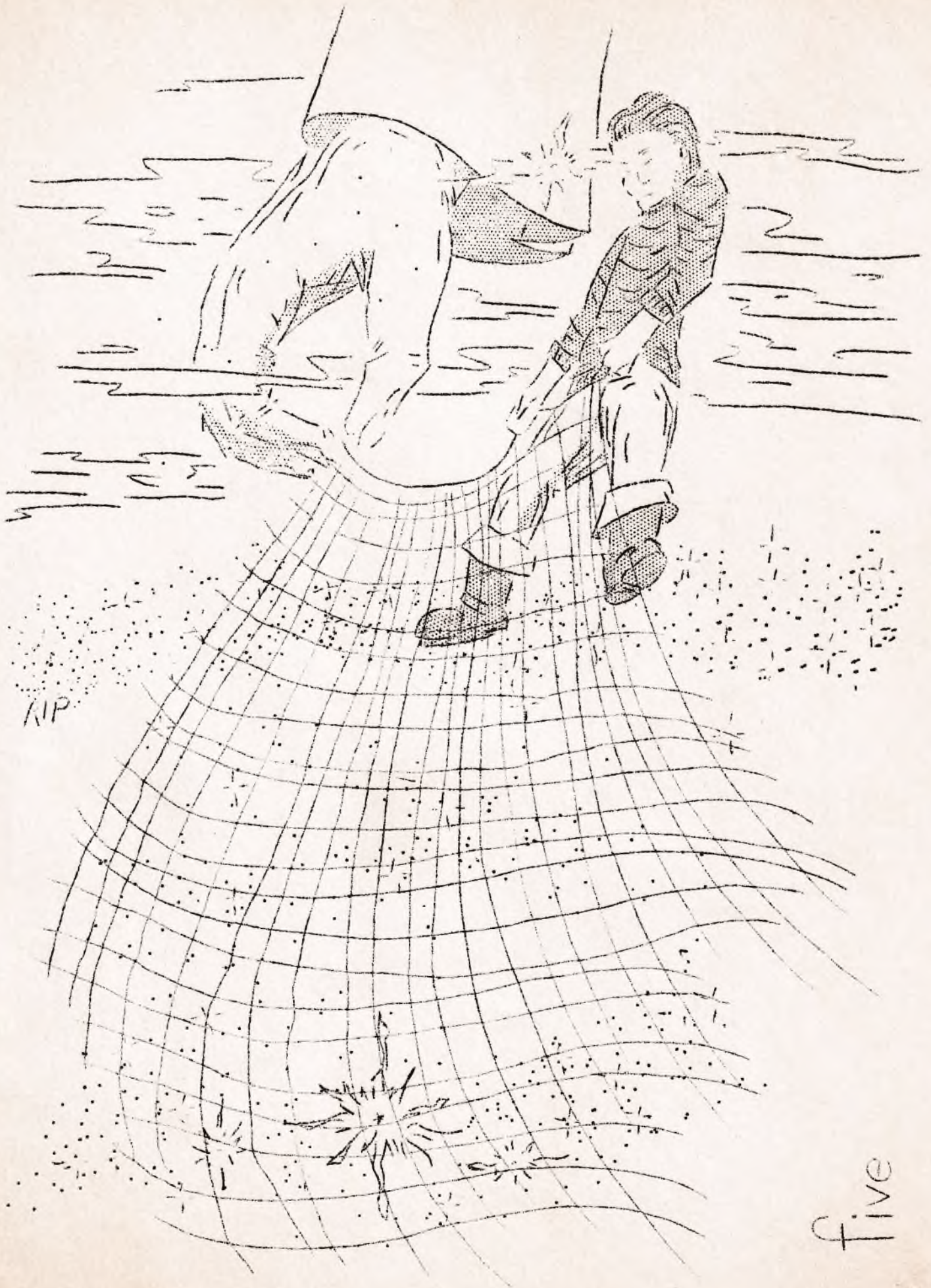
NOT these

then

tare off this sheet

postman: please return to this address if  
destination on back sheet is lost...

this is  
Five  
Rick Norwood  
111 Upperline  
Franklin, La.  
70538



KIP

five

# (S(0)N(4N)XN(4NS

Cover...by Richard Schultz  
Doctor Midnite...story by Rick Norwood, art by Steve Sabo  
Tech Round Robin, conclusion...by ARLewis and L. Court  
Skinner II, this time  
The Magazine of Fantasy and Ferdinand Feghoot  
The Nothing Maching...E.E.Evers  
"Great tracts of wilderness,  
Wherein the beast"...James Toren  
The Live Wires...Jay H arrison  
Perfection...Nathan A. Bucklin  
The Space Whisperers...David A. English  
art by Dan Adkins and Al Kuhfeld  
short-shorts by Joe Jordan and Steve Bull

Doctor Midnite is a copyrighted character of National  
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FIVE [formerly So What] #5, published by  
Frederick Norwood at 111 Upperline; Franklin  
Louisiana, on June 22, 1965. Two Years  
In The Making! A cast of fourteen!

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This issue is divided between s-f and comic book fiction, so there should be something for both types of fan that this goes out to. While science fiction takes up more than half of the issue, the lead feature is a costume hero story and is to my knowledge unique. Never before has a fanzine revived one of the heroes of the "golden age".

It was over a year ago, almost two years in fact, that I wrote to Mort Weisinger, editor of the Superman comics, urging him to revive Doctor Midnite, who first appeared in All-American comics in the forties. Julius Schwartz had already revived such outstanding science-fiction super-heroes as Green Lantern and the Flash, but I wanted Dr. Midnite done not as science fiction but as a human interest story and considered Mort Weisinger the ideal man for the job. Unfortunately for the project, there were already six [now seven] magazines in the Superman "family" and editing them was a full time job, in addition to which Mort Weisinger was writing articles for several nationally known magazines. He had not time for the Dr. Midnite project. I then asked if I could tackle the project as an amateur effort and recieved his permission to do so.

I already knew what Dr. Midnite should be like. First, he should be totally blind. That, after all, was the thing that set him apart. There was to be no power that was really the same thing as sight, such as the original Dr. M had. Next, the handling should be realistic. The well known fact that the blind have remarkably acute senses was the logical basis for his powers. In line with this realism the "villians" should not be aliens or super-beings but should be a part of our society. The kind of evil that crops up in newspaper headlines, not in nightmares. This does not mean that some fantasy stories would not fit into this format. Fritz Leiber, to name just one example, has shown that fantasy and realism can be blended.

What background material was there already? In addition to Dr. Midnite himself, whose chief contribution was the name and costume, there was a blind detective, very famous, whose name escapes me. Certainly detective work would be part of Dr. M's activity, but comic stories demand action. I recalled a story from Amazing, "The Seven Eyes of Capt. Dark" by O.H.Leslie, about a blind adventurer with artificial eyes sensitive to heat, radar, etc. This idea had always intrigued me and still it would make a good basis for a super hero but reluctantly I discarded it as too gimmickey in this case. How could a Doctor of Medicine design such things as artificial electronic eyes? There were, however, two lesser tricks I decided to retain, not in the first story, since they didn't fit into the plot already taking shape, but in future stories if any. One was the old Dr. Midnite's famous blackout bomb. The other I think I'll save for a future story rather than revealing it here.

So the revival of Dr. Midnite progressed. All that remained



was to find an artist. This all took place back in the beginnings of the comic fandom "boom" and the established artists seemed to be busy on projects of their own. I was not about to let Dr. M turn into one of the four or five page hurry-up jobs that were common at that time. Luckily a new young fan, Steve Sabo, had just sent me some samples of his artwork and was willing to tackle the project. I sent him my first draft script and he responded with some rough sketches. Around these drawings the final plot was built, which I sent on for illustration. Steve came back promptly with the thirteen pages of artwork that you see on the following pages. I did not realize that the most time consuming job remained to be done. For over a year now, off and on, I have been going over those sketches in ink, rewriting the dialog, rearranging the pictures and polishing the whole project for publication. Steve didn't understand the limitations of the mimeograph and I'm afraid my efforts at rendering his drawings on stencil have not done them justice.

So, at long last, here is Doctor Midnite. Steve has been very patient at my many delays and I can only hope that my subscribers, many of whom have given me up for lost, have been equilly so. At one point, when the Marvel Comics Group brought out their blind superhero Daredevil, I was almost ready to abandon the whole project, but Daredevil, otherwise a fine character, came up with a "radar sence" and started jumping off of helicopters,

convincing me that my Dr. Midnite was not covering old ground.

Will there be any more Dr. Midnite stories? This is up to comic fandom. If someone wants to get permission from D.C. for another story, I'll be glad to do the script, but the real work, the actual publishing, will probably have to be done by someone else.

THE FUTURE OF THIS FANZINE is in doubt. This is a transition issue between the old, semi-regular So What, which concentrated on fan fiction, and a new series of irregular "special" fanzines. What these will contain I don't know, probably long stories, articles or checklists that would have to be serialized in other fanzines. Whatever lies ahead, the standard magazine-anthology format will be dropped and as a consequence so will subscriptions other than those already on the books. In fact, this gives me a chance to try out a system that has long appealed to me. All too often a subscription fanzine folds as soon as one sends a sub in. Therefore you will never pay for the next issue of this fanzine. If you payed for this issue or are one of the fourteen who contributed to it, you will get the next issue no matter what you do. If not, the only sure way to get the next issue is to send me a quarter in payment for this one. That way if there is no next issue you haven't lost anything. Nextish you can pay for, if you like it, after you get it, and so insure your getting issue after next. Of course, if your name is familiar to me, if you write letters of comment, you may get all of my fanzines, but then again you may not. This leaves only trades, for which I have a simple solution also. All fan editors whose zines I have copies of get my fanzine simply because fan editors are Good People. If they trade, they can send me copies of their zine on whatever basis is customary and I will be grateful. If, like the Gibsons, they don't trade, that is ok, too.

FAN FICTION: ITS CAUSES AND CURES. No, I'm not really down on fan fiction. I don't even think everybody else is down on fan fiction, though I did at one time. I'm not going to publish any more fan written short s-f stories, however, since there is a better place to send them. The N3F story contest offers a much needed chance for encouragement to fan writers and I wholeheartedly endorse it, long may it run. Send your stories to them, not to me. That's where I send mine.

CONTRIBUTERS TO THE TECH ROUND ROBIN, which winds up in this issue, include Jon Ravin, myself, Al Kuhfeld, ARLewis, L.Court Skinner II, Durk Pearson, Bill Sarill and, indirectly, the entire M.I.T. Science Fiction Society, not to mention the Institute itself. Fanzines with the first three chapters are available in limited quantity for a quarter each. A dollar brings you five or six assorted fanzines and apazines until the supply runs out.

COMPLETISTS, don't you dare leave that cover sheet covering up Dick Schultz's beautiful cover. Tear it off, hear.

THIS ISSUE is being run off on the school mimeograph at the University of Southwestern Louisiana [one more semester to go] and will probably be put together in New Orleans with the help of John Guidry and Pat Adkins. It has a circulation of 200 copies and may be run through the Southern Fandom Press Alliance.

ONWARD!



# DOCTOR MIDNITE

YOUNG DOCTOR TOM BENSON HAD HIS EYES ON THE STARS--UNTIL HE BECAME A WAR HERO--AND A WAR CASUALTY! THEN THE STARS WENT OUT! TOM BENSON WAS BLIND, BUT WITH COURAGE AND DETERMINATION HE TURNED HIS AFFLICTION INTO AN ASSET AND BECAME A FIGHTING SYMBOL FOR HOPE AND JUSTICE--DR. MIDNITE!

STEVE SABO

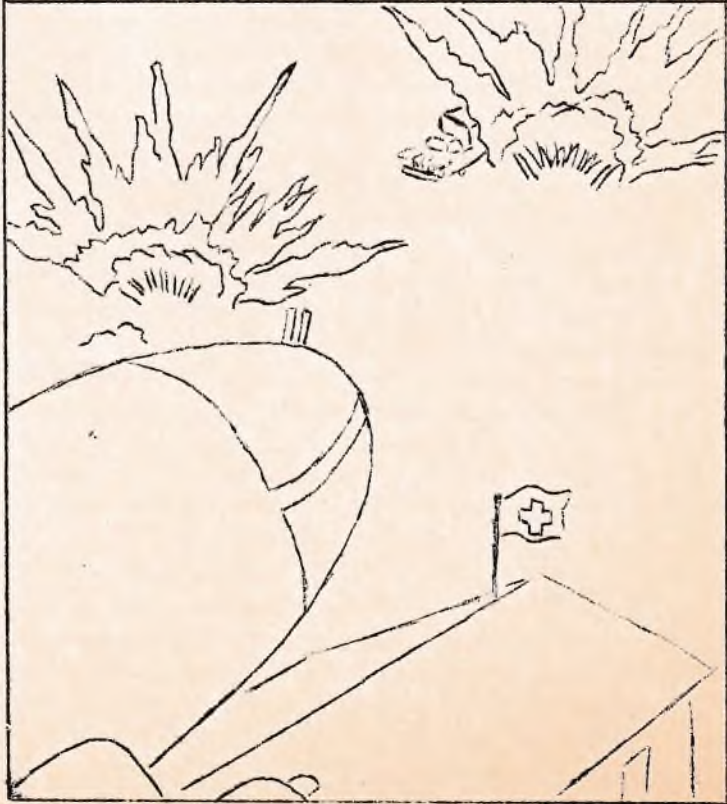
FIELD SURGEON TOM BENSON FIGHTS TO AID THE STRICKEN CIVILIANS WOUNDED IN A MERCILESS AIR ATTACK ON A SMALL VILLAGE BEHIND THE LINES!



YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT AS SOON AS YOUR LEG SETS! TRUCKS ARE RUSHING IN MEDICATION NOW



BUT IN THIS WAR, NO TARGET IS SAFE, AND THERE IS NO MERCY, NO REPRIEVE, FROM ONE BLOODY MOMENT TO THE NEXT! HIGH ABOVE THE RUINED CHAPEL WHERE THE INJURED LIE...



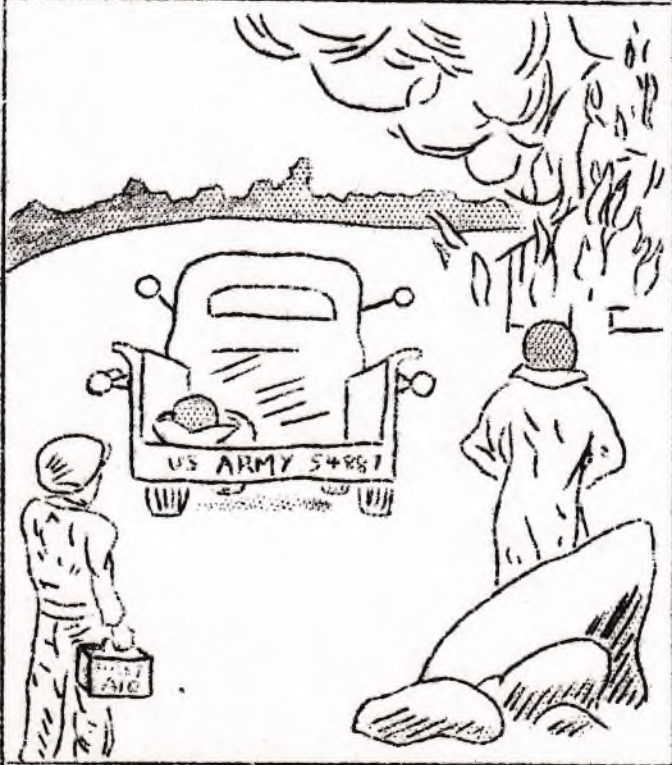


AMID FLAMING WRECKAGE, WOUNDED BY SCHRAPNEL, TOM BENSON STRUGGLES TO DRAG HIS PATIENT TO SAFETY, THOUGH HIS EYES ARE FILLED WITH BLOOD.



SENSING A COOL GAP IN THE SHIFTING WALL OF FIRE, TOM BURSTS INTO THE OPEN AIR, BUT STILL HE CANNOT SEE AND STANDS HELPLESS!

HE HEARS A TRUCK ROAR UP AND FEELS THE WEIGHT OF HIS PATIENT LIFTED FROM HIS SHOULDERS. STILL HE STANDS NUMB FROM SHOCK, AS DARK WAVES OF HEAT POUR OVER HIM!



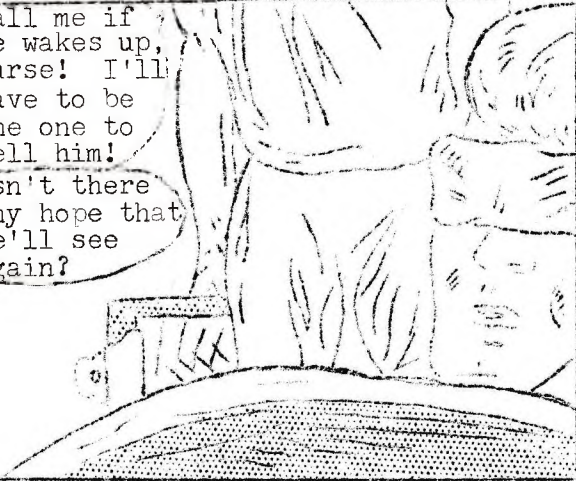
HIS NEXT AWARENESS IS OF CRISP SHEETS, DISTANT, IMPERSONAL VOICES, AND A COOL BANDAGE LAID ACROSS HIS BURNED FACE. SOON HE DRIFTS INTO AN EASY SLEEP OF EXHAUSTION.





Tom wakes to darkness! He hears muffled voices near his bed and strains to catch the words!

Call me if he wakes up, Nurse! I'll have to be the one to tell him! Isn't there any hope that he'll see again?

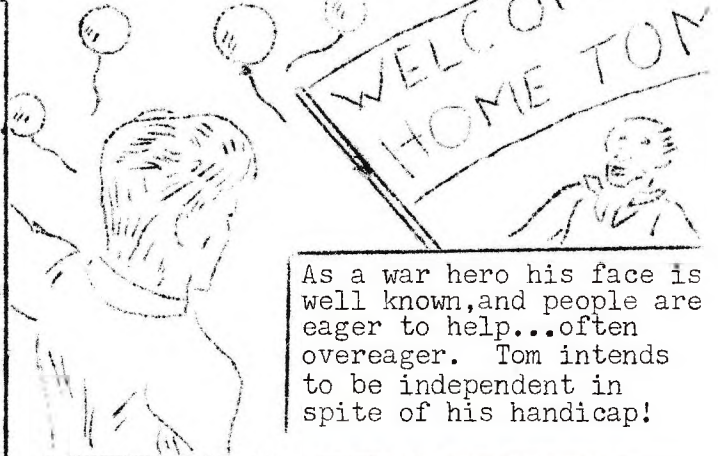
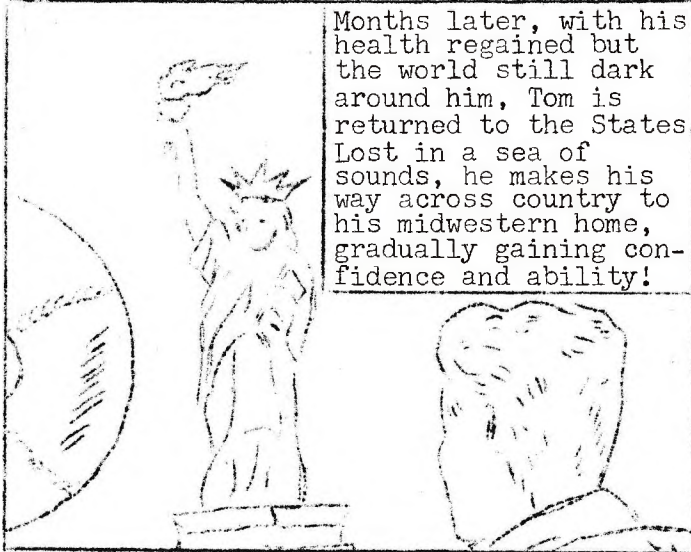


Tom struggles to sit, a yell of alarm caught in his throat! The doctor restrains him!

You couldn't possibly hear us--but--yes, it's true, there was nothing we could do to save your sight!

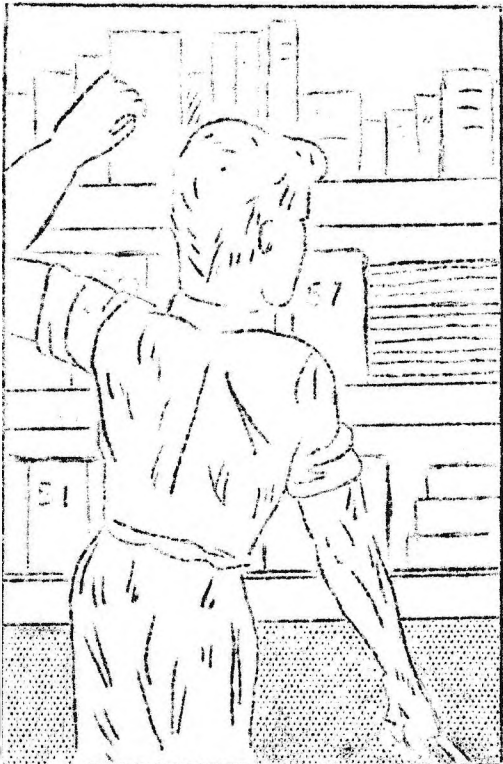


Months later, with his health regained but the world still dark around him, Tom is returned to the States. Lost in a sea of sounds, he makes his way across country to his midwestern home, gradually gaining confidence and ability!

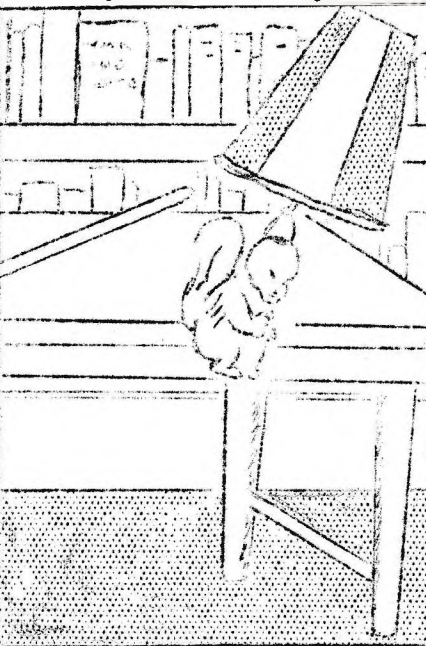


As a war hero his face is well known, and people are eager to help...often overeager. Tom intends to be independent in spite of his handicap!

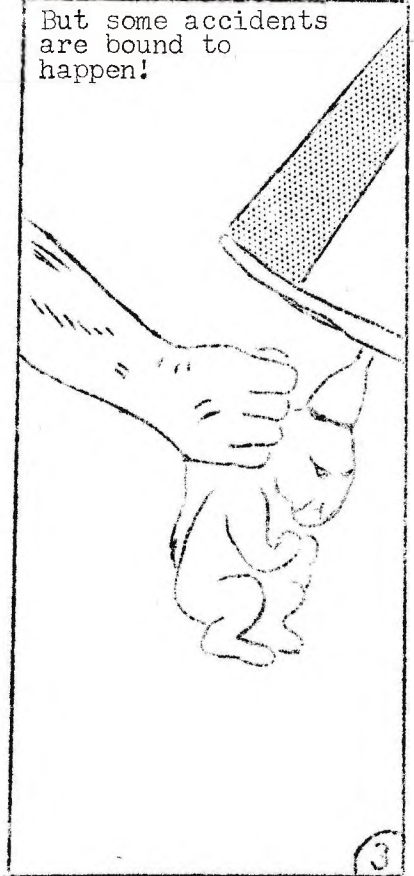
Alone in his large house, Tom wanders from room to room, appar-



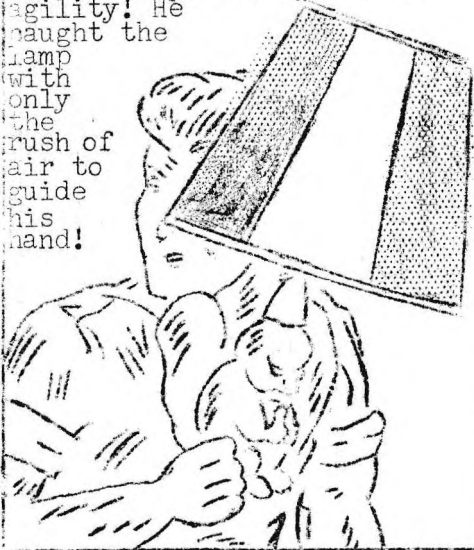
ently aimlessly, but actually memorizing every detail, until he can find his way with uncanny skill!



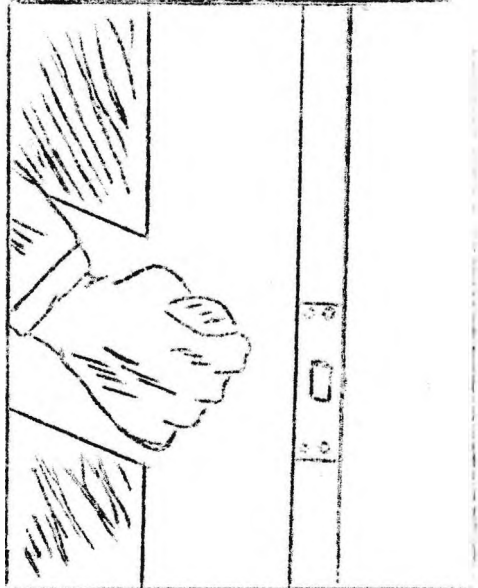
But some accidents are bound to happen!



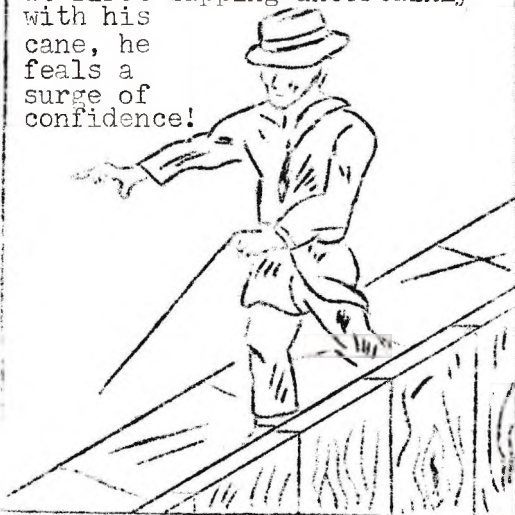
Tom is surprised by his own agility! He caught the lamp with only the rush of air to guide his hand!



Filled with a restless energy, Tom paces the floor. Suddenly, on an impulse, he grabs his coat and hat and leaves the house!



Walking the familiar streets, at first tapping uncertainly with his cane, he feels a surge of confidence!



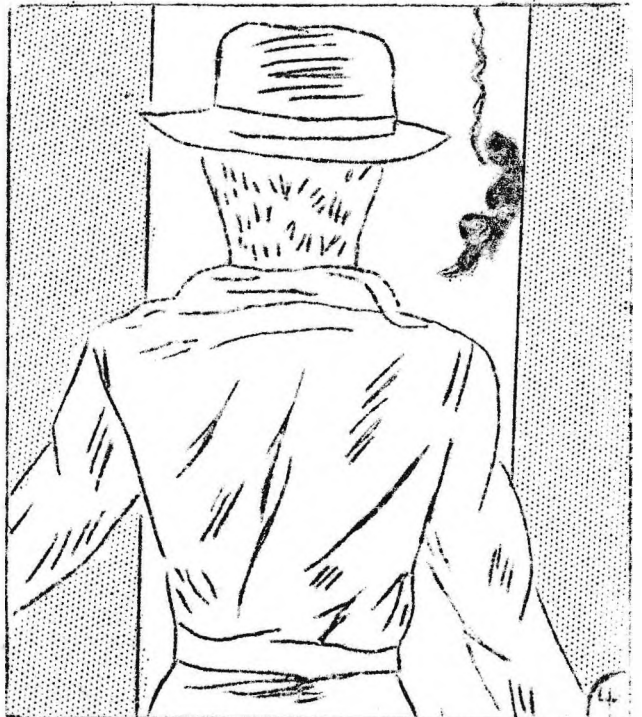
He tosses the cane into the air, catches it, and tucks it under his arm!

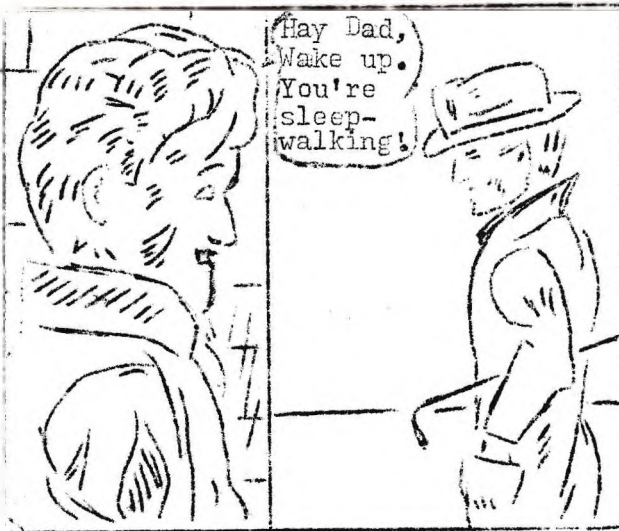


Finding his way by memory and sound alone, Tom encounters no difficulty! His excitement is replaced by calm assurance!

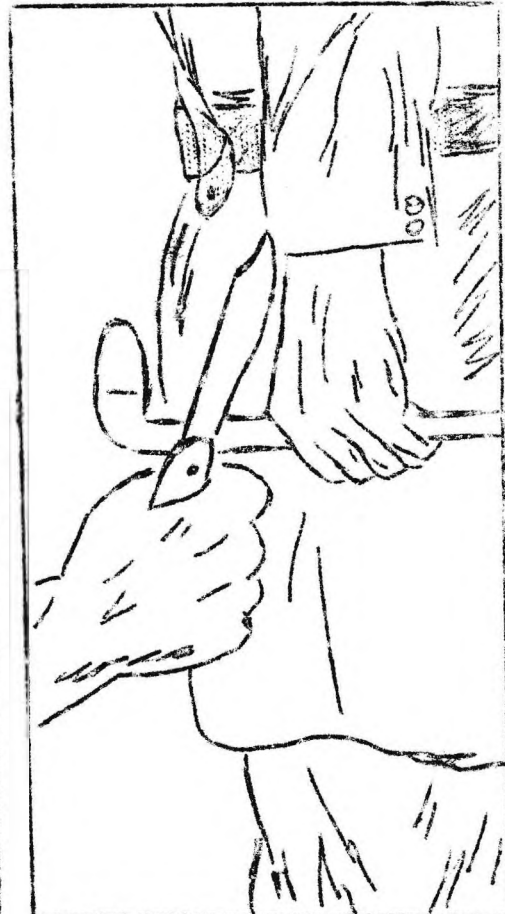


Tom wanders randomly, deep in thought. He chances upon a slum district where a gang of teenagers have gathered in the dusk, heckling passers-by!





Tom's sense of balance is far too keen for him to be tripped so easily. Effortlessly he sidesteps.



The playful insolence of the teenagers changes to quick anger! Tom's ears catch the unmistakable click of a switchblade and fury at the conditions which molded boys like these rises within him!

One boy whips off his jacket and dangles it in front of Tom! The other stands ready with a knife! This is to be a bull-fight... with a human victim!



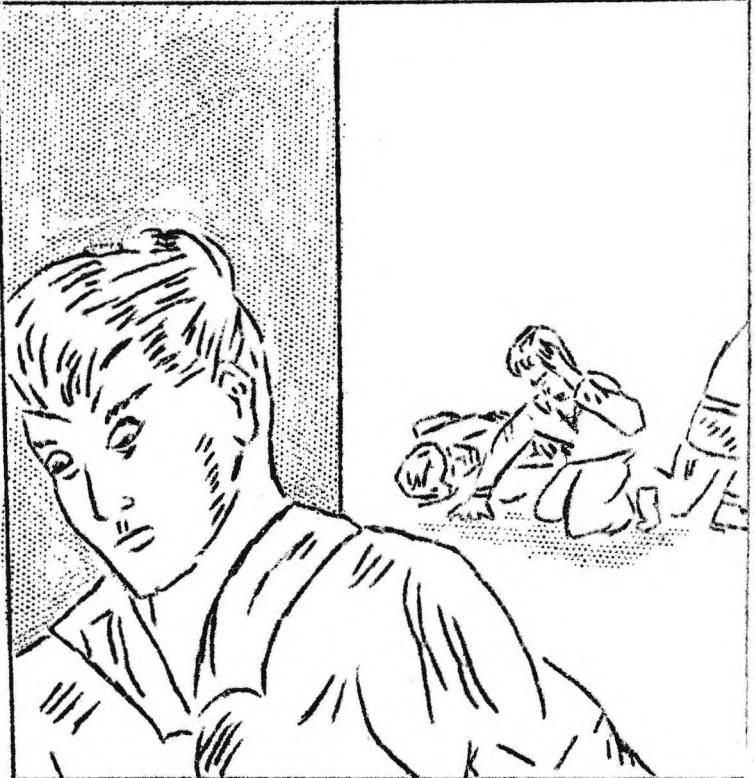
The macabre game of the street gangs can be deadly! Tom no longer hesitates! Judging his target by the breeze of the moving jacket, he stabs out with stiffened fingers!



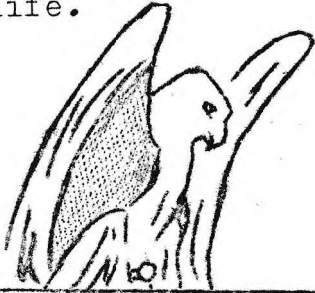
Tom has lost his eyesight, but not his knowledge of judo, learned in the army.



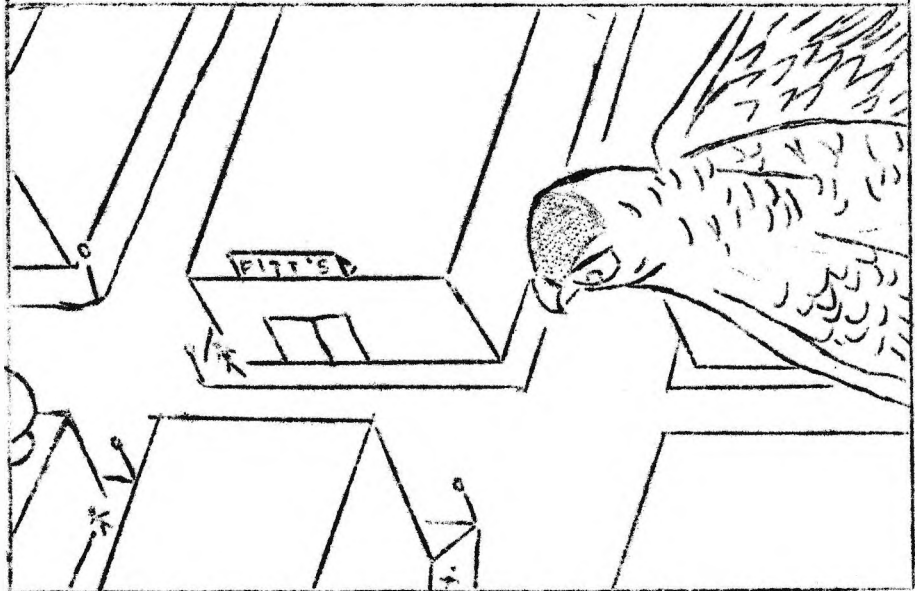
The inexperienced teen-agers, clumsy and noisy, quickly lose their enthusiasm. The police, called by the neighbors, take charge. Tom is too full of excitement to submit to patronizing praise and endless questioning. He slips away into the shadows.



The next few weeks are busy ones for Dr. Tom Benson. He knows that the public will not let a blind man risk his life, but now that he is sure that his other senses are remarkably acute he can never be content to lead a quiet life.



A falcon hangs suspended in the twilight!



Below, voices rise and fall in the dust and darkness of the narrow truck lane which separates the warehouses from the crowded tenements.

Now, Charlie, would I put you on? I tell you the Spicks are laying up pipe, bottle glass, the works! In another week you won't be able to take them!



A sensitive mini-mike strapped to the falcon's claw focuses on the sound and relays it to a listener not far distant.

Since when are you our good buddy all of a sudden?

Look, I'm your friend! You ain't interested, forget it!

Yeah? Then buzz off. Go push your stuff!



What do you think? Do we rumble?

That fink lives in a sewer! I wouldn't trust him for the time of day!

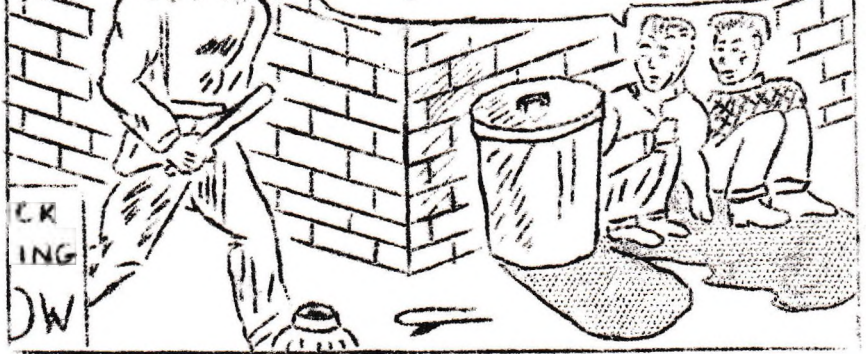
But we got to do something, just in case! Listen! I say we raid 'em. If they got the stuff to lay on, we run! The rest of the gang can wait at the overpass with garbage and rocks to throw! If they ain't got nothin' we clobber a couple and then cut out!



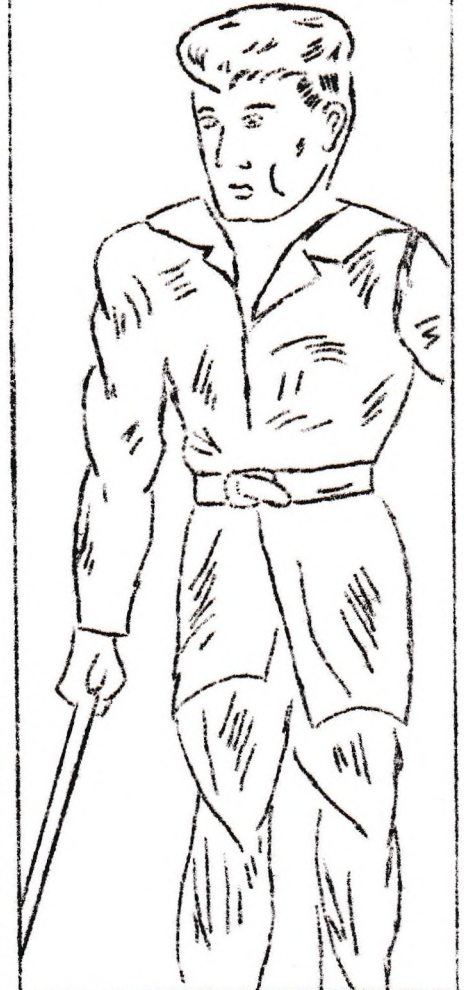
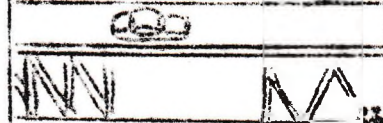
Charlie, leader of the J.D. gang, has an instinctive grasp of strategy for all his lack of education, but in an empty lot a few blocks away, something is happening that will upset all plans, permanently.



Just wait until you hear the shot. Charlie is bound to rumble after what we told him, and the Mexican gang is just as sure to use the gun we planted. As soon as the cop goes to investigate the shot, bring the truck around.



In the empty lot the Mexican boys eagerly examine the loaded pistol.

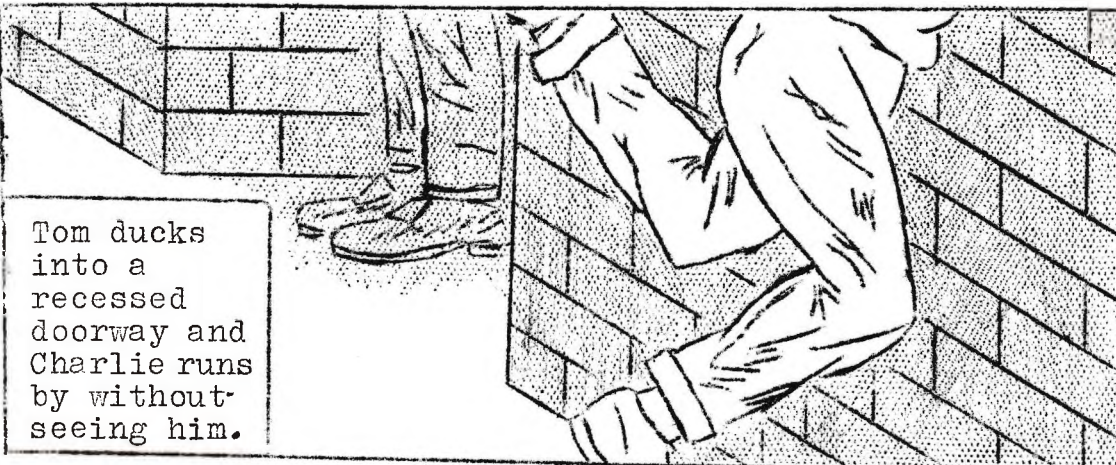


And so the plan to loot the warehouse is put into motion. But thanks to the mini-mike the plan has been overheard, and a purposeful figure strides onto the scene.

As Charlie moves forward into Mexican "turf" the unexpected happens. Tom Benson suddenly steps out of an alley, blocking the way.



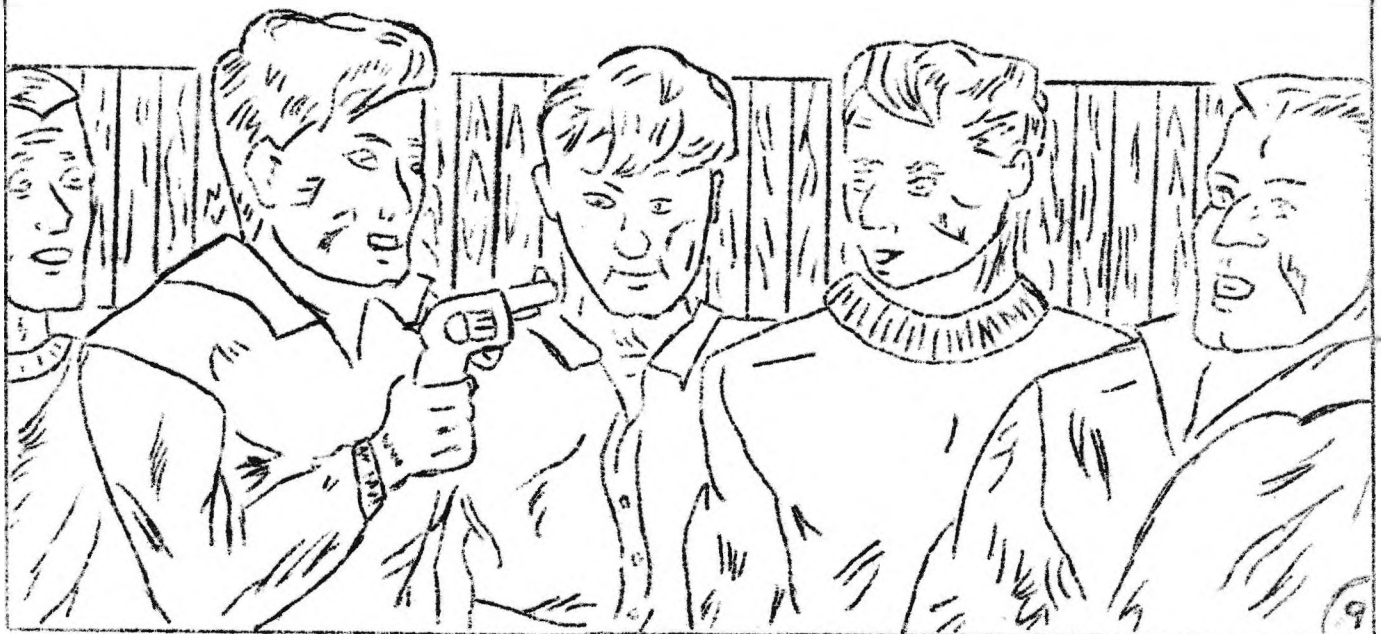
Tom runs in the direction of the warehouse. Forgetting the rumble for the moment, Charlie follows.

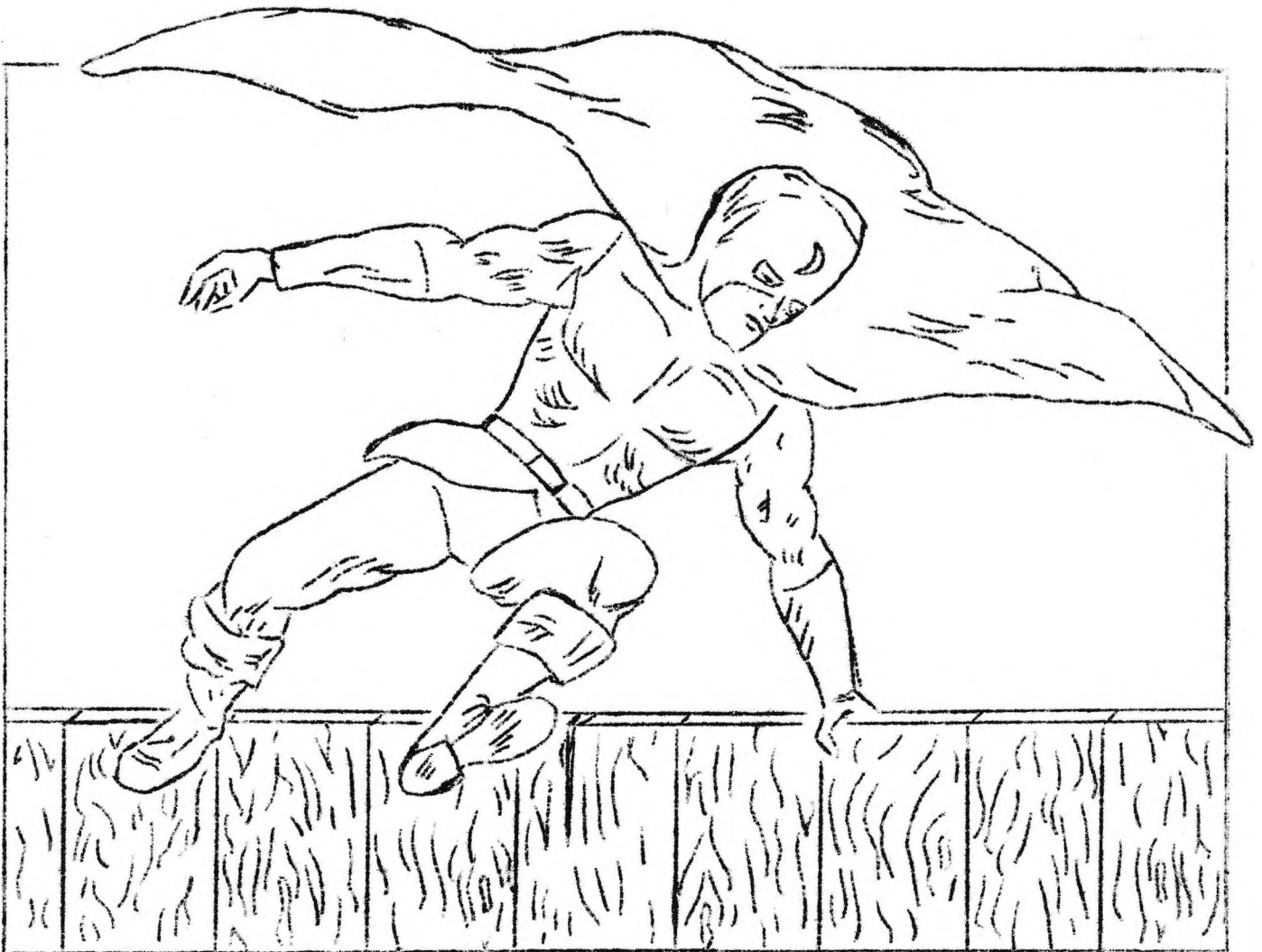


Tom ducks into a recessed doorway and Charlie runs by without seeing him.

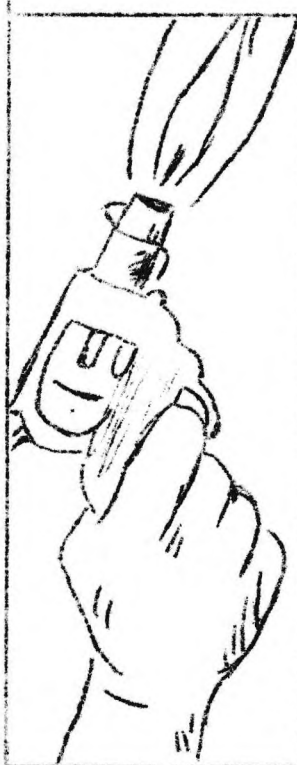
Had someone chanced to pass that way it would not be Tom Benson they saw leaving the shadowy alley a moment later.

Meanwhile, in the vacant lot, the Mexican gang gathers about the three who found the gun.





A scarlet and black clad figure vaults the fence and snatches the gun from the astonished youth. He fires a shot into the air and vanishes as quickly as he came. Although they do not know it, these boys have been the first to see Tom Benson in his new identity, the dynamic Doctor Midnite!



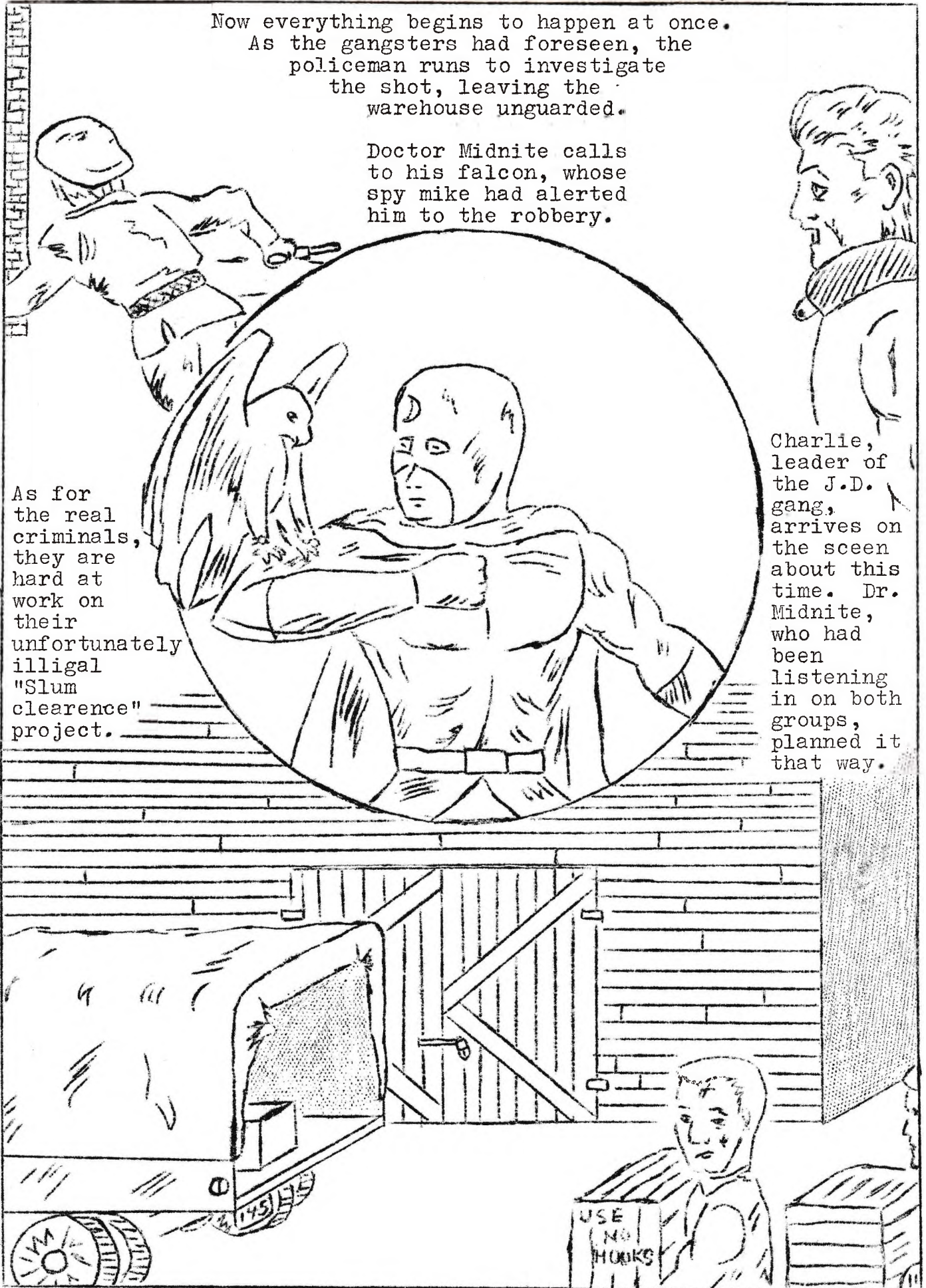


Now everything begins to happen at once.  
As the gangsters had foreseen, the  
policeman runs to investigate  
the shot, leaving the  
warehouse unguarded.

Doctor Midnite calls  
to his falcon, whose  
spy mike had alerted  
him to the robbery.

As for  
the real  
criminals,  
they are  
hard at  
work on  
their  
unfortunately  
illigal  
"Slum  
clearence"  
project.

Charlie,  
leader of  
the J.D.  
gang,  
arrives on  
the scen  
about this  
time. Dr.  
Midnite,  
who had  
been  
listening  
in on both  
groups,  
planned it  
that way.



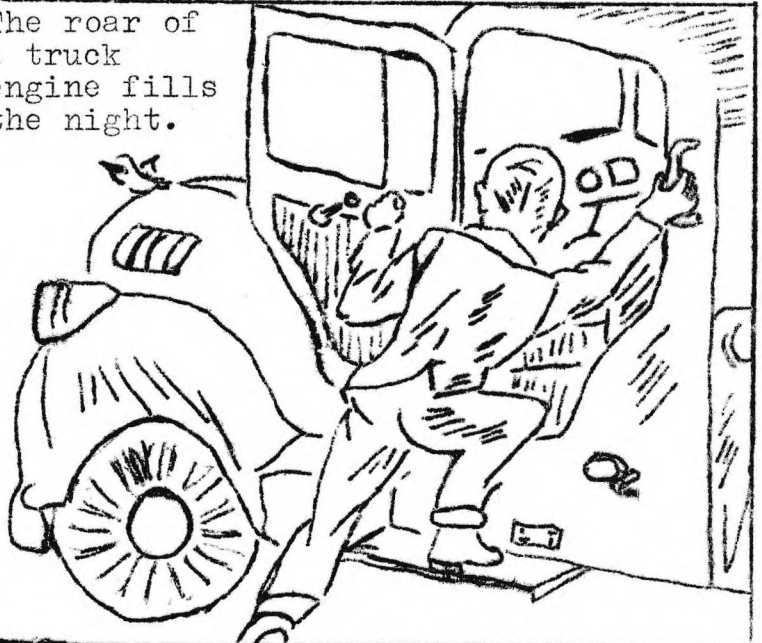
Charlie realizes instantly that the thieves have used him and tackles the nearest.



Doctor Midnite fires another shot into the air, this time from beside the warehouse, so that the police will return and catch the hoods red handed.



The roar of a truck engine fills the night.



The gangster boss isn't sure what is going on, but that blue coated figure running toward him is no friend. Doctor Midnite hears him trying to escape and launches his falcon in the direction of the sound.



With the screeching bird clawing at his face, the gangster loses interest in steering and the truck plows into a wall at low speed.



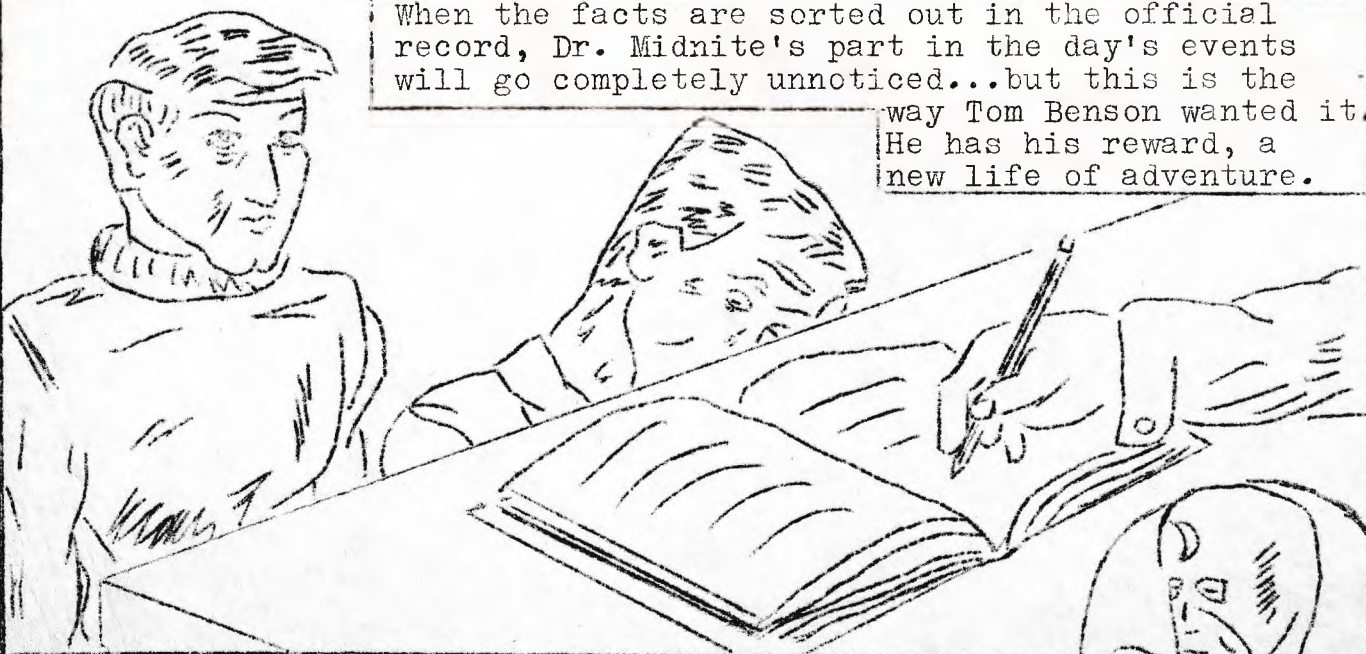
Tumbling from the cab of the truck, he finds himself in the waiting hands of the law. The falcon, its mission accomplished, vanishes into the night.

Charlie unexpectedly finds himself a hero for his part in the capture.



He finds to his surprise that he likes being praised instead of yelled at for a change.

When the facts are sorted out in the official record, Dr. Midnite's part in the day's events will go completely unnoticed...but this is the way Tom Benson wanted it. He has his reward, a new life of adventure.

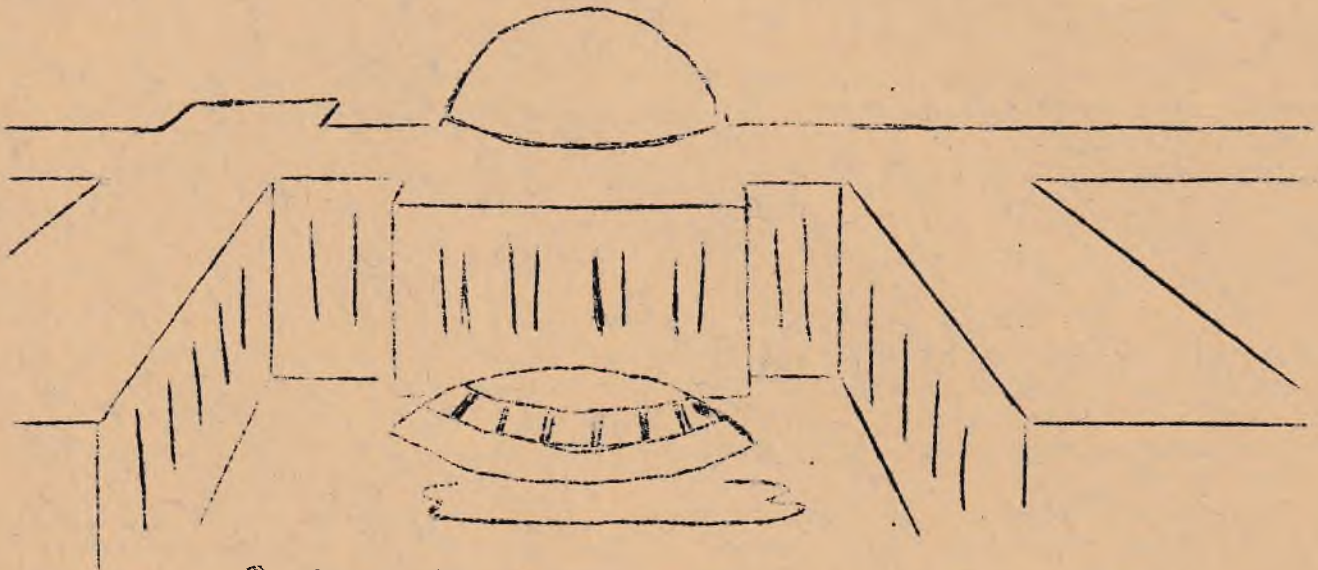


This is the first time Dr. Midnite has made his mysterious influence felt, but it is far from the last!

The End

## THE TECH ROUND ROBIN

Synopsis of chapter one through three: Strange things have been happening at a well known Technical Institute. Student Jack Hafner has seen a flying saucer land in the Great Court, and has been plagued by a man who can walk through walls. When he finally devises a gadget which takes a picture of the flying saucer, the film is stolen. Jack's grades are suffering as a result of the time he spends trying to track down the cause of the mysterious events, and no one will believe his story without evidence. In spite of this, Jack continues to make such a nuisance of himself that the man who can walk through walls finally uses hypnotic techniques to force Jack to forget his investigation. Recurring nightmares finally restore Jack's memory. Now thoroughly angry, Jack sets an ingenious trap, and succeeds in capturing the mysterious stranger. The man tells an unbelievable story, claiming to be a time traveler from the future, after an atonic war. When Jack catches him in a lie, the man begins to give a true explanation. Suddenly the captive's face convulsed, and he slumped in the chair. Jack felt for his pulse and found nothing. "My god," he muttered to himself, "Now I have a dead man in my room. What next?"



## CONCLUSION

### PART ELEVEN -ARLewis

A dead man! Jack's first impulse was to dial 100. He stopped himself just in time. A fellow could get into real trouble that way. It wasn't as if it were a real emergency such as a water fight or spillage of radioactive wastes--just a dead man. Jack decided that he needed help. He put on his jacket and opened the door. Glancing back, he cautioned his recent adversery not to leave, stepped out and locked the door. Luckily, it was a weekend so no one but freshmen and hapless sophomores [plus juniors in 8.09/8.10] would be at classes. He hurried toward Burton House. The Conner Fourth Floor Fanatics [C3F] would surely be sympathetic to him. Although somewhat diminished in glory and eccentricity since their heyday in the early 1960's they were still a potent group of crackpots. Sounds of great activity greeted his ears as he emerged from the stairway door. They came from the sanctun sanctorun--the First Wing Head. He entered.

"Hi, Jack."

"Oh, hello Jeff. What's coming off here?"

"We're planning to break up the next Boston SANE rally."

Jack stared in some bafflement.

"It's really very simple. Ten or twelve of us will be in the crowd with evacuated flasks. At a prearranged time we'll slowly open these so they hiss nicely, or smash them on the ground whilst others of the C3F will yell things like, 'Look out! Radioactive gas! Atomic attack!'"

"Sounds great, Jeff. Could you help me move a corpse from my room this afternoon?"

"I'd like to, Jack, but I have an 8.10 lab report due Monday and I don't dare turn it in late or Woznick will crucify me."

Unable to get help from any of the other people, Jack left for his room.

"Funny," he thought, "Those who believed me were all busy. I wonder why. I guess I'll just dump the body in the Charles tonight. In a few days the river will completely dissolve everything--even that metallic BVD he's wearing."

"Hmnn, there's a note stuck on my door." He took the note down and opened it.

What is the truth? That which is or that which you want to believe? The former, of course. "What I tell you three times is true." Waal, I must be moseyin' along.

-L. Court Skinner IV

"What? Oh, no!" Jack fumbled with the lock and shoved the door open. The cord was securely in place but the man and his box were gone.

"Not again," Jack cried.

## PART TWELVE -L.Court Skinner, II

Jack decided that it was no use going after the man. He couldn't afford the time to plan another method of capturing him since finals were rapidly approaching. He knew he couldn't study well with the matter still unsolved but he also knew that he had to study or he would never graduate. He had wasted too much time on the affair already.

He needed someone he could confide in, someone to share the mystery and suspense of the situation. He knew of no one, however, who would believe such a fantastic story. Time travel, flying saucers and men who walked through walls were subjects to be discussed seriously only in the realm of fiction. He had discovered during his brief encounter with the Science Fiction Society that not even those people believed in the stuff they so avidly read. There was no one.

A week passed. He had tried to push the whole matter to the back of his mind so that he could study. He did not completely succeed but he was able to get caught up in a couple of his courses. He had finished his thesis two weeks ago. He decided that he could afford enough time to take in an LSC movie. He hoped that it would take his mind off of a few of his problems.

He had gone by himself and was walking home alone. It was a nice night out so he decided to walk outside when he got to the end of the corridor at the junction of Buildings Six and Eight. He went out the door at the Dorrance Lab and walked toward the Earth Science Building

Rounding the corner of this edifice he noticed two men standing beside the building. He walked past them and noticed that as soon as he had passed them a little way they turned and started walking in the same direction as he was going. He glanced back once but thought no more about them. Just as he stepped over the curve in front of Walker Memorial he felt his legs collapse under him. He tried to

look back but was too busy falling.

When he opened his eyes he found himself staring into the eyes of a kindly looking old man in a white smock.

"Glad to see you back," the mouth said, "Kind of a nasty snack on the head they gave you, but then I guess they figured that you were a hard headed chap, which indeed you must be.

Jack opened his eyes a bit further and looked around him. He realized that he didn't have the vaguest notion of his location, nor to whom the mouth that had spoken to him belonged. He started to speak.

"Wha..." he began.

"Don't talk now," the man interrupted. There will be plenty of time for that later. I can't answer any of the questions that I know you are going to ask anyway so it's no use asking me. You had best rest a while longer."

Jack was in a kind of stupor as the man left. He had never quite fully awakened and went back to sleep with no trouble. He was awakened next by the chatter of two nurses who had entered the room. One of them looked over at him as he opened his eyes.

"Are you awake," she asked. He wasn't sure but he sat up on the bed.

"I think so," he began but before he could continue she had put a thermometer in his mouth. The other had grabbed his wrist and was taking his pulse rate. The thermometer was finally removed and after they had put whatever information they had gleaned from this little maneuver into the notebook they carried the one who had taken his pulse spoke to him.

"You're Jack Hafner, aren't you?" It was not really a question but he answered it anyway just to get a chance to talk.

"Yes, I am." he said. "Where am I anyway."

"In the hospital." she answered matter-of-factly. "You won't be here long, though; they're coming over to pick you up today. Doc reported you as OK. We'll bring your clothes in a while so you can be getting ready."

They left and returned a little later with his clothes. He put them on and sat on the bed trying to figure out what was going on. He had awakened in this strange room no more than two hours before and now he was going to be transported to some place else, equally strange, no doubt. He wished that they would hurry up and get it over with. He had ceased to worry about his finals. They were beyond all of this. The door opened and a man who was not the doctor came in.

"Hello, Jack," he said cheerily. "I see you are dressed. Shall we depart."

"Where are we going?" Jack asked, getting up off the bed.

"I'll tell you about it on the way."

They left the room and walked together down the hallway towards a sign reading exit.

"Have you any idea where you might be?" the man began.

"Not the slightest," Jack answered truthfully. "I don't think I even know when I am."

"You will discover all of this soon enough. Allow me to introduce myself. I am John Hafner."

Jack considered this and then remembered Court Skinner IV. He wondered if it were more than a coincidence that this man's name was the same as his. His thoughts were interrupted as they stepped out of the building and walked towards a car. Mr. Hafner bade Jack enter and directed the driver to the Time Building. Jack looked around him trying to find something he could identify, something to tell

him where he was. The place seemed familiar but he couldn't pinpoint anything. About ten minutes from the time they entered the car they arrived at what was apparently the Time Building. They got out and Mr. Hafner led Jack into the building and to an office, presumably his own. He told Jack to sit down.

"Well, here we are. I shall keep you in suspense no longer. The date today is July 17, 2031 and you are still in Boston though as you saw on the way over it has changed considerably since you last saw it. You are here because we knew of no other way to make sure that you did no more damage to our project. It is nearly completed and we cannot hold it off any longer. We knew before we started it that this was going to happen, but there was no way to prevent it. Our saucer shaped time machines have been gathering knowledge lost during the last war. Our computers are able to predict that if we are discovered in the past, that war shall in a new alternate future become totally destructive. You threatened to unwittingly cause this disaster, but you yourself were a key figure in history. If all goes as it would have without our interference, you will be responsible for the invention of the time machine."

Jack interrupted him here. He had been listening but he was not sure that he could believe all that was being said.

"If that is the case, why did you bring me here?"

"We did not have to, but we thought that perhaps it would be better if you solved the puzzle of the flying saucer by letting us show you the answer rather than letting you find out for yourself and possibly causing irreparable damage. We also thought you might enjoy a glimpse of the future."

"Seems rather strange to me, but I suppose you know what you are doing."

I hope so. Would you like to see the "time machine" that is so useful to this civilization?"

"I sure would."

The man got up and bade Jack follow him. They went up the elevator to the top floor of the building. Jack's first thought as he stepped out of the elevator was that he was surrounded by a computer. He was.

"The operation of the machine would not be possible without the information supplied by the computer," the man explained.

He led Jack past the computer room and into the next room which appeared more like a hanger than anything else. Here were the flying saucers. The two inspected them closely and Mr. Hafner attempted to explain to Jack the principles behind their operation. Jack was not at all sure he understood about half of what his guide was telling him. Some of it he thought ought to be familiar to him if he had studied instead of chasing flying saucer men.

"How would you like to see your prisoner of a few days ago, Jack? He's still in the hospital. Don't worry, though; you did no permanent damage. The worst effect he could suffer is a good suntan."

"I'm sorry. I suppose I should talk to him and apologize. I'll have to look up his grandfather when I get back."

The two returned to the hospital. Mr. Hafner spoke to one of the nurses as they walked down the corridor towards what was supposedly the room of the ailing Court Skinner IV.

They entered the room. Court Skinner IV was there all right but he was not ailing. In fact he looked better than he had when Jack had seen him even before he had captured him in his room. The room appeared to be an operating room of some kind though Jack did not know what.

"Hello, Jack--er-- Howdy, Jack. Glad tuh see yuh up an' about agin. Hope you're not sore at me anymore."

"No, I'm sorry I burned you so terribly. I'm glad to see they've fixed you up. Do you really talk with that western accent or is that just put on?"

"How'd yuh guess? I'm perty good at it though, ain't I? No, I just learned this to confuse people and because my grandfather was supposed to

have talked this way. I had you fooled there for a while didn't I?"

"Yeah, I guess you did. You and your little box."

"Did you ever figure out what that box was used for?"

"No, I always thought it was to enable you to walk through walls."

"Well, it is responsible for that in a way. But it can do more than that. It can read minds. Would you like to see it work?"

"Yes, very much. Can you show it to me?"

"Just sit here in this chair. John, would you call Miss Morris? We'll let John, er, Jack, here see if he can read her mind."

"OK, Court." He went out the door while Court hooked his box up to Jack in the appropriate places. Miss Morris, who turned out to be the same nurse that Mr. Hafner had spoken to on the way in, came in in a few minutes followed by Mr. Hafner. She, too, sat down in one of the chairs and Court made some connections to her and adjusted his equipment.

"Are you two ready? Think something nice, now." He clicked the switch.

Jack thought of the way the Charles had looked the night he had first seen the flying saucer. He did not know what brought that to his mind. He remembered thinking that the Charles looked almost like real water. He was at peace with the world.

As he crossed Mass. Ave. and walked on toward Burton House he thought once more how nice it would be if Jeanie were here. He would write her a letter when he got back to the dorm. Then maybe he would feel in the mood to work those physics problems. I'll have to get then he thought. Who knows. If I get through the Institute someday I might even invent a time machine.

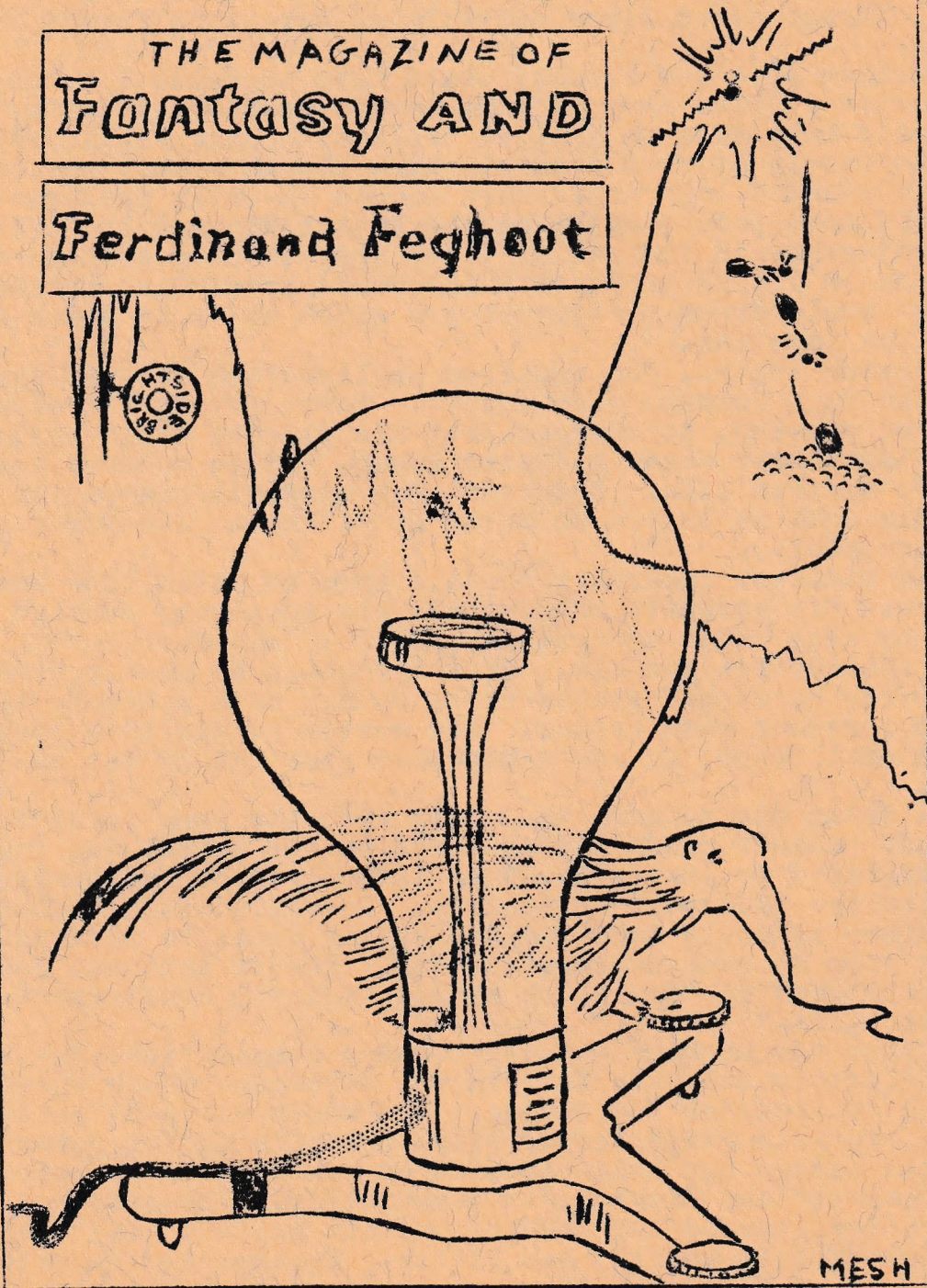




This is the second and final appearance of our flagrant imitation of a certain professional "Magazine." Absent this time are the satyric blurbs in front of the stories, which caused no end of confusion lastish. Absent also is our customary "F'hoot." It wasn't easy to resist. The five short stories are the last that will appear in this fanzine. They are the best remaining in the files. Those left are being belatedly returned. If you haven't gotten yours, I have probably misplaced your address. Write and your material will be promptly returned. The reason for this move is not disillusionment with fan science-fiction, Fan writing is a Good Thing and a way of life. See the editorial for further comment on this.

THE MAGAZINE OF  
**Fantasy AND**

**Ferdinand Feghoot**



MESH

## The Nothing Machine

E.E.Evers

The blocky head jerked forward spattering sweat droplets that had pooled in the single beetled eyebrow across the workbench. Steam steamed briefly on the hot soldering iron, leaving patches of solder crystals. Undoubtedly the eyes held a wild glow, but they lay deep in their Neanderthal caverns, so who could say. Still, the forehead glowed enough to provide eyelight for kilns full of crackpots, though steam pipes contributed more than fervor to the glistening.

In earlier days Joe Grousky would have occupied a bench in an old quarter cobbler shop in some large, nondescript city. Patrons would have seen an ageless troll with huge shoulders and no neck who rarely stirred from his high though menial perch because his stunted legs would have caused re-entry problems. His nights would have passed cajoling the Father Who Art in Hell by etching pentagrams in the cellar floor and uttering cracked-voiced incantations in Polish or Russian [he would never have learned Latin.] He would dream of servicing a witch coven as Black Man, though he was impotent.

Days being latter, Joe repaired small-screen televisions and aging radios on a Chicago side street. Never having attracted the attention of a union, he charged what his clients would pay, as small craftsmen have since gadgetry began, and so endured enough business to sustain life. Endured? His marginal occupation occupied his soul as little as Satan or witches. Joe was a crackpot inventor.

As his medieval incarnation would know no Latin, Joe knew no electronics. His adequate but judiciously temporary repairs took form step by step under the guiding pages of manufacturer's foolproof instruction manuals. When inventing he merely removed whatever parts he deemed nonessential on his mute patients and stuck them together with solder. Few customers dug into their sets to see the small gaps, so Joe's machines grew bit by bit on his workbench.

Joe's dream was to save the world from its long predicted nuclear end. Keener minds saw the problem and either dug into burrows, migrated to Australia, shot themselves or rationalized euphemistically. Joe built a machine. He called it a "nothing machine" since it would make weapons of war equal to nothing, nullifying them in some untheorized way. Theory bothered Joe little. He worked by "feel", or as his medieval counterpart would intone, "the gift."

One night the machine was approaching compleation, due mostly to lack of further holes to fill in the discarded radio chassis that formed the body of the device. Joe shook his head spattering sweat as a repaired radio temporarily appropriated for personal use gave its sudden but long expected announcement. He heard "Attack immanent" and "take cover immediately." He soldered the last connection, turned the machine on, and waited. That nothing happened immediately worried him little. He expected no external manifestations of the great force at work. Soon his moment would come. The world would hail him as savior. He never felt the H-bomb blast that killed him.

-E.E.Evers

"Great tracts of wilderness, Wherein the beast..."

James Toren

Today, the last spaceship blasted off from Earth, leaving a dead dustball of a world, a last large deserted city, and three graves...

It had happened rather quickly in the cosmic sence, this end of the world. Only a million or so years after the birth of a now rather obscure Jewish prophet known as Jesus of Nazereth.

The end was gradual the atmosphere and oceans leaked away and man lost none of his cultural heritage as he migrated to different more hospitable worlds. Until finally there remained only one city in what would have been the middle of the dead sea bottom. Oh! not a city as we know it today but a cube of self enclosed concrete and steel. Here our story takes place a story of modern science and darkest age old evil...

My part of this story begins on a happy note my wife Louise and I were going out on the surface. Would that it had never happened, I'm content to get my view of the desert desolation from one of the plexiglass balconies studded on the outside of the building. But Louise loves it even though it means suiting up, there's not enough air to breathe and the thin atmosphere doesn't keep out the ultra-violet and cosmic rays. We climbed into the land crawler the gigantic surface air-lock opened and admitted us onto the outside. We crept past the hulking unused starship. Designed to take the entire city population to another world. Looked by the way things were going that it would never be used.

We went past the tree. The tree in the plexiglass greenhouse. A stunted tree with no leaves and gnarled limbs but still a tree the last living one growing on the surface of the earth... We were three miles out when we saw the tracks, tracks where none should be. Tracks of someone crawling by, recently. They were already filling up with sand. Tracks never lasted long out here and a man wouldn't have either especially a man with no suit like this one. In fact he should have been dead in thirty seconds suffocated in the thin air and parbroiled by the high ultra-violet rays.

The man was creeping along on hands and knees bare of protection. His clothing was old style incredibly old. That type hadn't been worn in hundreds of thousands of years. The pants were worn out at the knees and as I touched his shoulder the cloth crumbled into dust. He looked up at me. Good lord his eyes if his clothing was old his eyes were infinitely aged black pools black as space with little sparkles of light, what had they seen! I got the impression that he had been crawling out across this Godforsaken dust ball since who knows when. While countries rose and fell and mankind migrated away and he was left behind. I also got the impression of monstrous evil. The eyes seemed to grow bigger dragging me down. I swayed I was just about to pass out when he did instead his head drooped and he fell rolled over and lay still. His clothes disintegrated now he lay on his stomach completely naked. Now that he lay full length I could see how tall he was almost five foot six. A foot and a half over my head and I'm considered tall. I turned him over. He almost looked unhuman low browed only about three inches between eye brows and hairline and more hair than anyone should have it covered his chest arms and legs and even his chin.

"Come on Louise," I said as I grabbed him under the arms and grunted. "I'll never be able to move him all by myself. Help me

move him he sure weighs a lot."

We radioed ahead and help was waiting when we got in. The mayor "Big Bill" Jonson, he got that name because he was the tallest man in the city five foot three. And his wife Alice one of the nurses. Bill carried the man into the dispensary. As I looked at his back I couldn't help thinking how damn self-sufficient he was. It was only because of him that we were all here. He wanted to stay and kept everyone from going. He always said, "Some people should be with the earth in it's final hours." But except for this small insanity he was perfectly normal. After all why stay on this dead world when there are more hospitable ones on other stars for the picking.

"Hey, Dan, break off the reverie." Bill's voice interrupted my thoughts.

"Huh! Damnit, Bill, don't sneak up on me like that," I said.

"What's this all about, Dan?"

"Well, it's like this, Bill..." But I never got to tell him I was interrupted by a scream from the dispensary. As we both charged over Alice screamed again and I could hear a deep guttural voice growling, "Food! Food!" Then Bill was inside and I could hear the sound of his fists thwacking into flesh and the door burst open as he shot out carrying a red bundle. Just before we got the door closed a hand appeared my eyes bulged what a hand hairy and clawed and not human. I slammed against the door with a shout of pain from within the hand withdrew.

I felt sick as I turned the red bundle was Alice horribly torn and clawed with great chunks of flesh missing. Louise came up and I told her to take Bill somewhere and give him something to make him rest. As she led him away there were tears running down his cheeks and his massive shoulders were shaking.

I unlocked the armory and started handing out the stored weapons that had never been used in thousands of generations. But they were still simple to use, loaded and deadly. I picked up an Ati-pistol, it shot pellets with miniature fusion bombs in them, and a proton rifle a long weapon with a minuscule cyclotron in a box on the end. It fired a deadly stream of electrically charged particles. Fortunately man's energies had long ago been channeled towards peaceful means and ends or the Earth might have long ago burst like a rotten apple with a firecracker in its core.

Now down to the computer library to see if I could find out anything about this man.

"Hey Keeper! Hey Keeper!" My shouts echoed down the corridors of the great electronic brain that contained every recorded and written thought, word and story. Where in hell was he. His head popped out from around a corner. "Come here I need some information."

"Alright alright what do you want?"

As I told him his aged face, only old men worked in the computer, wrinkled even more.

"Most unusual but you've come to the right place and the right man. I've been making a study of the supernatural."

My face must have shown that I didn't know what he was talking about.

"Oh! Confused? That's an old word for occult phenomenon things outside of science."

He gave me copies of a couple of computer produced books the computer couldn't store all that mass of media except on mini-micro tape. So if you dialed a book it was printed from off the tape.

"Dracula by B. Stoker," he read aloud, "And The Werewolf of

Paris by G. Endore. I was just reading them it isn't easy. Tapes have kept the language the same but the punctuation is odd I'll get you something you can see."

He pressed some dials. "This is the film section." A dolly crane started its climb towards the roof. The Brain by necessity was enormous in its entirety a mile high, a half mile long, and three hundred yards wide, really monstrous.

"Yes, this man is a wolf man an immortal creature that feeds on human flesh. It's the victim of a rare disease passed on by the bite of another wolf creature.... Ah! here's the film. It's almost prehistoric. Basil Wilkes in The Midnight Werewolf. I was going to show it on the community video in the square next week. So all the people could see it. Here's the good part watch! Watch how the actor assumes the animalistic features."

Yes, there it was the same furry taloned claws the beast fanged snout the pointed ears. A remarkable likeness of the thing I'd glimpsed in the dispensary just before the door closed on it.

"Yes," the keeper said, "there are only two ways to kill it."

"How?"

"Either with a wooden stake or a silver projectile."

Just then the room's Vidi-grid lit up and a face appeared.

"Dan! Dan! The damn thing's out busted the door like cardboard killed a couple of guys and went up the vent shaft. We traced it up to the sixty-fifth floor before he got out."

"My god! My apartment's on that floor and Louise took Bill up there. Get the men let's go be out in a second!"

I was out the door and up the escalator running we were on the fifty-fifth floor when it happened. Still in the lead I'd just made it off the flight when the moving walkways went crazy shooting backwards and forwards jarring the men into a jumbled bonebreaking mass. The creature had found a control box and was scrambling it. Only one thing to do go up the old little used stairways one, two three, four, five flights this pace was killing me my breath was rasping. Eight, nine, ten everything was in a red haze. Ati-pistol in hand I burst onto the floor. The thing had Louise in a corner. I raised the pistol.

"Duck Louise!" was all I could croak out she did and as the thing turned at the sound of my voice I fired. With a whoosh the shell left the pistol barrel and to my astonishment passed right through it and blew out a section of wall. I knew the rifle wouldn't do much good either so when he charged me I hit him with it. The rifle bent but it hardly phased him. The next thing I knew he'd picked me up. As my fingers scrabbled at his face I saw Bill stagger druggedly out of the side room.

"Noooooooooh!" I screamed as I flew through the air. So this is how you feel when you die. I crashed into a table and it saved me it buckled and I ended in a pile of splinters. For a second I was seeing double it seemed as if two Bills were charging two wolfmen. Then I was seeing normally. Bill cursing had the thing around the neck and the force of his charge was driving them back to the plexiglass enclosed balcony. It cracked and burst through and down out of sight in a whistle of escaping air. Just before the pressure equalizing emergency doors closed shutting off all sight.

I could hear the pounding of feet as too late. Help arrived. We pounded down the stairs. I knew what we'd find. That fall would kill Bill but the creature would be alive trying to get in and he'd do it.

We suited up and charged out in a body but froze at the sight that met our eyes. The wolfman was going nowhere he and Bill had

crashed through the dome around the tree and a gnarled tree limb is the same thing as a wooden stake and all that was left of the wolf man was a skeleton that was slowly turning to dust.....

-James Toren



"Did you call for a veeble fetzer?" His voice resembled a rasp more than anything else.

"Yeah, I replied. Are you him?" Stupid question... ungrammatical, too.

Looking around, he asked, "Well, where is it?"

"They, I replied, it's two of them."

There was a new light of respect in his eyes as he looked at me. "You got two." It wasn't a question. It was a statement, as if he were trying to convince himself. "Well, suppose I fix that one first?"

"Uh-uh," I replied, "Fix that one first. The small one." At his questioning look, I explained. "Well, it's the lesser of the two veebles."

-Joe Jordan

## Perfection

Nathan A. Bucklin

Did you ever try to convince anybody against something he really believed in? Like, a principle, or an ideal, for sometimes you can persuade an inventor that there's a flaw in his machine, but you can't tell George Washington [to use an archaic example] that Communism is the only possible form of government for a new country. Especially if Communism hasn't been invented.

Or if the man or woman was right in the first place. Like I was.

This is what I believed in, I and the rest of the Kaljni: Robots are Perfect. This may seem rather crazy, but-

Look. I am Jan Cyrankiewicz, right? Of the Kaljni super-race, right? Oh, inferno! I'll start from the beginning.

I am Jan Cyrankiewicz, of the Kaljni, well, race. In 1967... Buster, whether or not you know all this makes no difference, somebody around here doesn't remember. In 1967... that's better, chum. Keep it up.

In 1967... For pity's sake, quiet down! In 1967... Please quit laughing. In 1967 there was an atomic war. The earth was covered with fallout. The Russians in their shelters were perfectly safe- they thought. Until the first batch of hideous mutants came along. The mutants were also sterile, or else we'd have a three-way clash along the Earth's surface. A few Communist satellites and neutral countries started shelters, and ours were much safer because, being beginners, we were careful. Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Albania and Yugoslavia merged their bases about a hundred years later as we expanded underground and eventually we met with the merged Finnish-Swedish-Latvian-Lithuanian-Estonian bases. Our language changed considerably, and while our language classifies as Indo-European, nobody has any idea what branch. The sentence structure is English, though. By using American records we determined that. This puts us in the Anglo-Frisian branch of the Low German Germanic tribes, although other evidence...

Anyway, we are the Kaljni and we thought we were the only people on Earth when we emerged in the spring of 2654. Our stored seeds of most of the necessary plants that used to cover the Earth and a fantastic zoo we had in suspended animation, repopulated the planet. Even before we emerged, however, we had had a flourishing robot industry and the robot had been developed as far as possible. They are everything to everybody worth anything- that is, the Kaljni. Six hundred years after the first fumbling attempt at negatronic nerves made a round hole in a square peg instead of vice-versa, they were developed to perfection. That is why we always say, Robots are Perfect.

Fifty years ago the expanding Kaljni frontier met the American frontier. We had to base our linguistic re-learning of English on almost forgotten data and then guess at the changes which had taken place and eventually to point at objects with fingers to find the names. Soon there were Kaljni and American intermarriages but the cultures of most families are either one or the other.

They had robots, as good as ours- we admitted it- but they thought there was room for improvement! I never heard so stupid an idea. They had ideas for improvements on everything. When everything is perfect, nothing can be improved. Axiomatic. Reason it out. They couldn't.

Well, there are quite a few half-breeds now, as I said, but we still have different points of view. We have two of everything... except technologies. There are only one and a half of those.



Science knows no prejudices. That proves robots are perfect. When every scientist in the country says so, they can't all be prejudiced, therefore they must all be right.

I am a Kaljni. I am fifty-four, old for a Kaljni, yet in my prime and as strong as many of our professional wrestlers. I am a politician and debatist and the most open-minded person on Earth at the moment. In politics, my re-election to the Senate was this year. My platform was- notice was: "Gentlemen and fellow Kaljni" until somebody pointed out what I was implying. Anyway. "Gentlemen etc., as we are at the climax of one of the most important questions in history, thought it may not seem so at first glance. Do Robots Need Improvement? I say no! Kaljni, are we to let these Americans push us around, these fools who will not be satisfied with anything but who keep hunting the impossible? I think..." And so forth. I could use logic, but fancy words do most of the work. Impressive delivery also helps.

My biggest trouble is the delivery of my opponent, Merren Kallifeather. His is marvelous and he uses voter-level logic which is airtight save for his erroneous fundamental premise. He's supposed to be handsome, though at least sixty by his looks, and is actually forty-two. A fine boy, har har. He disagrees with his elders. What nerve! I'm fifty four. Besides his delivery, his voice is supposed to be good. I've heard it. I never expect to see Mister Kallifeather, not unless somebody re-invents tee-vee, whatever that was. It's a good voice. He could be a popular singer. He thinks robots could be singers- the dope. They don't have good enough voices for that. They don't have imagination, either. So obviously they can't be entertainers or songwriters.

For a long time we've had robot bartenders, though. We gave one express directions to poison Kallifeather the next time he entered that particular bar. The reason we did it was because the calculating robot told us that he would win. He wasn't a teetotaler. We checked that. So it was only a matter of time.

I go to bars myself sometimes. Once I met a really remarkable person at one. He didn't know who I was but he should have been running. He wrecked all my logic, scrapped all my carefully formulated theories. I was still convinced I was right, however.

A waiter came and said in his rusty monotone, "What do you want, my friend."

I improvised. "Uh, whatever my friend is having." I got it.

I felt the effects first. The "friend" was Merren Kallifeather and he happened to be partially immune to this particular poison.

Eventually I confessed what was going on. He gave me a searching look and said, "I don't believe it. You're crazy. No leader as great as I've heard Cyrankiewicz is would use such logic."

I died an hour later. The funeral was a week after that. If you want to talk to me, I'm the third tombstone on the left in Peaceline cemetery, Nova Philadelphia.

Just because a robot poisoned its own commander by mistake doesn't mean that robots aren't perfect. As a matter of fact, Buster, Elsie and everybody else, having you up here proves that you are perfect.

-Nathan A. Bucklin

"It was six years ago to this day," said the old man, "when the ship landed here. It fell from the sky like a stone and when it landed turned the grass brown like dead oak leaves in autumn. After it left the ground all around was covered with inch thick frost and the little puddle of rocks by the tree stump hardened over.

-Steve Bull

## The Live Wires

Jay Harrison

The first thing you'll want to know is who I am and why my opinion of what happened to Harry Richman should carry any weight. Well then, I'm not going to tell you what I think. Just listen to what Harry told me the day before he died and it should be pretty obvious. My name, as if it mattered, is Jim Holliday. Harry and I were both class of '49 at Tech, and we roomed together our last two years. He was in course III [Metallurgy, for those of you who don't know] and was managing to keep a 5.0 cum. As for me, I was in course II [Mechanical Engineering] and had just average grades, so that I lost track of Harry after we graduated. I went out to the west coast to work for a small contract engineering firm, while he stayed on at Tech to do graduate work.

It was only a couple of months ago that I saw an article by him in one of the engineering magazines. What made me sure it was the same Harold Richman was not the PhD after his name but the fact that the article was on ultra-small magnetic domains. Magnetism had always been Harry's great interest. The author was listed as being the assistant director of the research department at Colman Iron and Brass. For those of you who don't know much about Colman, they're one of the old names in the metal business. They started out in the small-lot casting and forging line, but though they are still a small company, they don't do much of that now. Most of their work is in the super-high tolerance, micro-machining and special alloy fields, and their research department has the best minds in the business. It stood to reason that Harry would be one of them.

To make a long story a little shorter, I'll skip the numerous remembrances of things long past with which we greeted each other when I finally managed to get into Colman and to his lab. Things got interesting when he started to tell me about his work, because he was really on to something big. I jokingly poo-pooed this a bit and sure enough under my proddings he finally jumped from his chair and said, "Here, just watch this!" He picked up a test tube from a rack and dumped what looked like a couple of small pieces of wire from it. As I watched, they began to wiggle across the asbestos top of the workbench. "See? They pick up heat energy and use it to orient their molecular structure to produce motion."

"Oh, sure," I said, "They reverse entropy. I suppose you'll be telling me next that you've invented a perpetual motion machine!"

"No, seriously. Negative entropy is one of the distinguishing characteristics of any form of life."

"Life!"

"I said life, and meant life. As far as I can tell, these little things of mine are alive!"

Now I was sure that he was pulling my leg, but he went on.

"They show every indication that I can see of having a primitive kind of intelligence, in that they show definite tropisms. To be exact, since they live on energy, they tend to move toward a source of energy. However, if it becomes sufficiently intense, they will avoid it."

"But...but how did you create them?"

"I was working with an alloy with an extremely fine magnetic domain structure, the finest yet produced, subjecting it to a rapidly oscillating magnetic field. When I reached what was

apparently a resonant point for this grain size, the pieces of wire started to move. To all appearances it is a magnetic phenomenon. They are completely confused by a strong magnetic field and if heated to the Curie point, [the temperature beyond which no magnetic organization can exist], their "life" is destroyed."

"But," I said, "If you've made such a fundamental discovery, why hasn't the scientific world been informed?"

"Because," he replied, "I'm scared. Those things you saw were not the only ones I made. Look here." He showed me a heavy glass retort in which a thing like a slug a foot long squirmed slowly. "This is the largest one I made. It not only shows enough intelligence to traverse a simple maze, it remembers what it has done and can do it again without error the next time! And intelligence seems to be directly related to size! Not only that, they can reproduce!" His voice shook. Then he seemed to calm down again. "To be exact, one of these things can fuse itself to an inert piece, not only of this special alloy, but of any ferromagnetic material, and convert its magnetic domain structure to that of the "living specimen." I shuddered mentally while he paused. Then he continued. "I have taken all the precautions that I can think of to make sure that if they are dangerous, they cannot be recreated. Those specimens that you have seen are the only ones in existence. The others I destroyed in an electric furnace. Although the property can exist in any ferro-magnetic metal, it can be induced only in this particular alloy. I have destroyed all records, except those that exist in my head, of my process, and of the composition of the alloy. There was only a small batch of the alloy made and save for those bits I have shown you all of it in existence is on that spool in the corner, in the inert form I might add. The pieces I destroyed I melted down with other materials, so that its composition could not be determined from analysis. If I decide that it is necessary to destroy the rest, I'll do it in the same way. Then there will be almost no chance of anyone re-creating the set of conditions I used."

"But think of what this could mean to you! International recognition! Maybe even a Nobel Prize!"

Harry laughed nervously and shook his head. "This is serious. I want you to keep my discovery to yourself until I either decide to reveal it or until I'm safely dead and there is no way for it to be re-discovered." On this grim note, except for a few muted social inabilities, our conversation ended.

The next day the local papers carried the story of Harry's death. They called it an accident, but they had to admit that there was something unusual about it. After his last words to me I felt that I should investigate. If you have listened to my account, I think the words of the shop forman, who witnessed the accident, should be self-explanatory.

"It was the first time I'd ever seen anything like it. We had just tapped one of the furnaces when there was Mr. Richman out on the catwalk above the furnace. He was carrying a large spool of wire and it looked from where I was that some of it had some off the spool and was all tangled around him. Just as he went overhead he must have tripped on some of the wire, but I tell you it looked to me more like he jumped. And yet, why would a guy like him, a real brain with a good job and all, commit suicide? I guess we'll never know because he and the spool of wire that he had been carrying fell right in the ladle of molten steel."

-Jay Harrison

## The Space Whisperers

David A. English

"Come," said a Voice.

"Yes, why don't you come with us?" said another.

"No!" shouted Morgan. "Why don't you let me alone?"

"We don't want to hurt you," said the Voices. "We want you to come with us."

"Shut up!" screamed Morgan.

"No. Not until you come," said the Voices.

"Who are you?" asked Morgan.

Silence--and then, again, "Come!" This time more insistent.

Morgan rolled over on his cot and looked out the porthole at the stars. "Go away and let me sleep. Tomorrow is going to be a hard day."

"Come," said the Voices.

Morgan was third assistant director-in-charge of the I.P.D. Star Song. He had signed on as a rocket man seven years ago when the ship started out. In those seven years, he had risen to his present position.

In three more years he would be able to retire with 50,000 Federation dollars. When he started out, he had thought it would be worth ten years on a patrol ship. Now he wondered.

At first he hadn't minded. He had been a little bored, of course, but so had the other 499 men on the ship. That was before the whisperers had come.

It had started that night a week ago when he had heard a slight hissing in his room. He was about to press the emergency alarm button to warn everyone in that section that there was an air leak when he realized it was a voice saying, "Come."

"Who's there?" he had asked.

"Come," said another Voice.

After that his nights had been hours of misery. As soon as he got undressed for the night, the Voices came. One night he had managed to get to sleep in spite of them. He had awakened to find himself walking along one of the passages that ran the length of the mile-long ship.

He had hurried back to his compartment and stayed awake the rest of the night.

He wondered how many of the men on this or any of the other ten great ships that patrolled the galaxy were ever tormented by voices. He asked one of them at meal time.

"Say, do you ever hear Voices at night? Whispering to you and asking you to come?"

The look his table-mates gave him shut him up. Quick. He didn't say any more about it after that. He had to be careful. They were liable to get the idea he was crazy and lock him up in the psycho-ward. He knew he wasn't crazy. He really heard the whisperers.

He had thought of hanging himself one night when they had become more insistent.

"No," they had said, as he was fastening his belt around his neck. "Don't do that. Come."

"No, I'll kill myself first!" he shrieked.

He climbed up on the chair and was going to jump when, "No, I can't do it!" he said. He climbed down and found a book and began to read.

"Come," whispered the Voices, whispering. He couldn't concentrate on the pages. They became blurred until he couldn't

see them at all.

"All right!" screamed Morgan. "I'll come. --Only stop that whispering!"

"Come to the door....open it....now down the hall...."

Morgan did as they told him.

"Now...stop here. Press the button...."

Morgan did; a door opened.

"Step in and close the door...." said the Voices.

Morgan obeyed mechanically. He turned the handle slowly; then suddenly, with a terrific blast of air, the door was wrenched from his hands. The same blast that blew the shattered remains of Morgan out into space.

The airlock closed and slowly resumed normal pressure....

-David.A.English, 1950



The silver man sat silent. Around him the grass flowed away in billowing ripples. The tree shading him sighed short little silver sighs. The man fondled the fuzzy black ball; head cocked to the side he looked at it, puzzled. The ball gave a quick little pep. He dropped it and it rolled down the grassy hill, gathering speed until it swished into the creek at the bottom of the hill. The fuzzy ball gave another shrill pep, jumped up out of the creek and exploded violently, spraying little, shiny ball bearings into the grass, the hill, the tree and the silver man.

-Steve Bull

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