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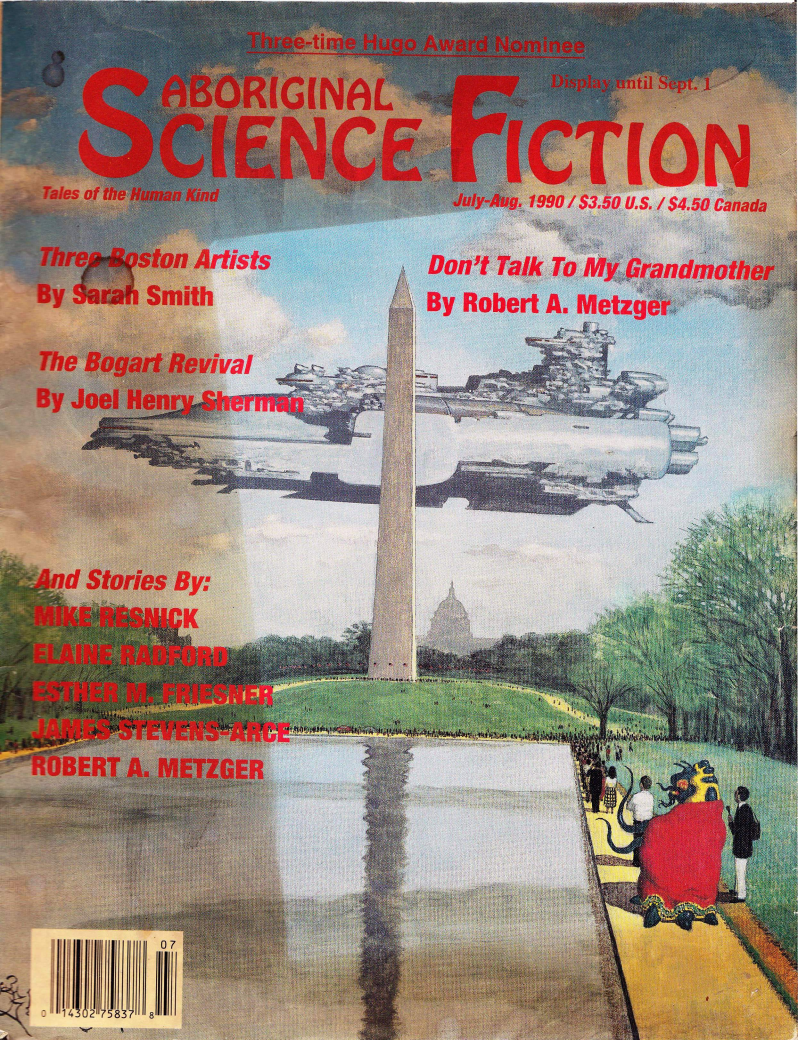
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**Three Boston Artists**  
By Sarah Smith

**Don't Talk To My Grandmother**  
By Robert A. Metzger

**The Bogart Revival**  
By Joel Henry Sherman

**And Stories By:**  
**MIKE RESNICK**  
**ELAINE RADFORD**  
**ESTHER M. FRIESNER**  
**JAMES STEVENS-ARCE**  
**ROBERT A. METZGER**



# Three Boston Artists

By Sarah Smith

Art by Carol Heyer

Oil paint should never feel the damp. Drop by drop water works into canvas. Manets and Picassos sprout fungi. Brown rings spread like Phneri nests in the waterlogged Back Bay. Under the hard surface, layer splitters from layer. Then it is time for Ernest, the restorer. Then it is too late.

In the great marble hall of Boston's Institute of Human Culture, the forty-third year of the aliens, Ernest Pole met the old woman and the Phner by Rembrandt's *Juno*.

*Juno* dominated the exhibition hall, immortal, serene, and ruined. Cracked varnish bloomed across her dress. Oily smoke stains had obliterated all but the shadow of her hands, and a long rip struck across the canvas from her right shoulder down into her bosom. Her magnificent eyes held all time in them, endless and full of blessing.

"Jennifer Torch, Boston Demolition and Rehabilitation." The old woman didn't bother rising to introduce herself. She sat on one of the velvet banquettes, boots half open, hands in her pockets. Her overalls still stank of Back Bay mud and her dirty hair had a permanent hard-hat dent. She was a peasant painted by Frans Hals. Ernest could have collaged her next to *Juno* from postcards in the museum shop. For a moment his hands itched to try it. Ernest was a secret collager. Late at night in his room he tore and pasted paper scraps from the streets: fugitive materials, the secret vice of the restorer.

The alien was chunky, beaver-shaped. Its claws clicked once on the marble pavement and it only stirred, half-twisted round, then settled back down to look at the painting. It smelled doggy, like wet fur, overpowering the Museum's own smell of lemon oil and flowers.

"This is the painting? It's in bad shape," the woman said.

The Restoration department never used words like "bad shape." Ernest winced. He had been in Restoration five years. Five years to fall in love with a painting too beautiful to lose and too fragile to restore.

"*Juno* was in the L.A. earthquake," Ernest said. "There's extensive water damage, burns in the canvas, and the rip and smoke damage that you see. She's got to be restored."

"It would help if you could see what's happened to her," Dr. Torch said, half to herself, half to him. "The structure of the painting."

She stood up, legs spread apart, hands on her hips, head thrown back and to one side, her lower lip thrust out, looking at *Juno*. Definitely Frans Hals.

"It's not our usual work. We *esfn* mostly buildings. It'd be a challenge."

Ernest stole a wary look at the Phner. From closer the Phner looked like an otter, animals Ernest had sometimes seen gliding through the drowned alleys of the Back Bay. Under the mud his fur was tabbed gold, the color of *Juno*'s crown. He didn't look dangerous, any more than the woman looked like what the law said she was, a keeper of

dangerous animals.

"Anyone can tell you — nobody can see structures better than a Phner. Phneri can look at a brick house and find the stress cracks humans wouldn't see, whistle at a concrete piling and know where it'll break. They can *esfn* how things are built." She shrugged. "We've never *esfn* a painting. But structure is structure. Let me ask him."

The alien sat back on his hind legs and chirped at her, bird-music rising into a squeak. She picked up the translator-box by her feet. She began to play its keychord with her hand, and soft trills echoed in the chilly room. The little alien banged his tail on the floor, trilling back.

"He wants to do it." The old woman looked down at the alien with a crooked, affectionate smile. Her eyes snapped back up to Ernest. "Of course, he's just an animal."

Up close she had the pale-eyed, fanatic look of any Bostonian who worked too long with aliens. Ernest had come from Chicago, and Bostonians frightened him. Boston had made him take up collage: torn edges, uneasy juxtapositions.

"You realize" — he pointed at the alien — "he'll have to work under guard."

The old woman let bitterness show in her face.

"I'm sorry," Ernest said.

"Mr. Pole." She sighed. "I've been with the Phneri for forty years. The Phneri are neither dangerous nor destructive. The Phneri are political exiles."

"I don't know much about politics," Ernest said. "And I don't remember the Day. I wasn't even born when the Phneri came. I just want to save *Juno*." Ernest looked into the painting's majestic eyes and his heart lifted a little. "*Juno*'s my job," he said.

"The Phneri are my job. I employ most of the Phneri in Boston. Who are probably all the Phneri there are, anywhere. I don't much care about human culture. I do care that each and every living Phner in my custody needs between five and six pounds of fish a day. A ton of fish a day, Mr. Pole, and the Museum pays me half what I get in architectural work."

He was not a rough man, but he took the old woman by the shoulders and turned her to face the painting. She looked up, and for a long moment kept looking. For a moment Ernest saw in the old woman's face some reflection of the young one Rembrandt had seen.

Forty-three years ago, he wanted to tell her, the aliens landed in Boston. Six lost tourists, ten ambassadors, builders, a bishop. A collage of the unknown. And one dreadful morning, an endless, helpless, panicked rain of animals like beavers. Humans were just another species now, unless they remembered who they were.

(Continued to page 59)

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For Mariah



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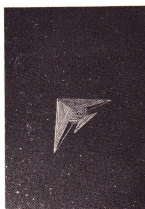
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## Shock Value

Even though we've had magazines in our field with titles like *Startling* and *Astounding* and *Astonishing*, and, yes, even one short-lived item actually entitled *Shock* (three issues, 1960, quite good), *shock value* has never been what fantastic literature was about. *Shock* is the most transitory of literary effects. It only works once, in the sense of shock-as-surprise, and the test of any good fiction is that it can be read more than once.

You know how to tell a good mystery story: you can read it again, with pleasure, already knowing who the murderer is. This is the difference between a Raymond Chandler novel and, say, the typical prose crossword puzzle in a mystery magazine. If, after one reading, the story is as useless as a spent match, it wasn't much of a story to start with.

The same goes for horror fiction. If the surprise, or gross-out (in the crudest sense of shock), or whatever isn't scary the second time through, it wasn't a very good story to begin with. Real, effective horror touches something genuine in the human psyche. It is like a *mystery* in the religious sense. To use Father Brown's distinction, if you take it out in the open and look at it, a religious mystery is still a mystery; as opposed to a secret, which is no longer a secret when revealed. Real horror is still horrific even when you *know* there's a monster in the closet and a rotting body in the bathtub.

Similarly, in fantasy, which is seldom shocking except in a satirical

sense, the effect has to withstand revelation. The way you tell that Mark Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger* is a good fantasy is that the effect lingers. If it were a matter of "Surprise! Life is meaningless! God is amoral!" rather than one of lingering implication, well, I'm not sure what it would be. Certainly not memorable or convincing.

Science fiction also tries to shock, both satirically and with various attempts at "daring" content. You may remember the New Wave era. How



dated now that the Dread Year has passed, because it looks deeper into the uncomfortable recesses of the totalitarian mind than any other such novel. The boot in the face forever and ever and the principles of Newspeak are far more shocking than any Spinradian sex scene.

(I remember a lovely remark a fan made back when *B/B* first came out. This was, after all, the heyday of Philip Roth and Harold Robbins. "It's not that it's a dirty book; it's that it's a dirty *science fiction* book!")

In the short term, shock value does have its place. It is an opening flourish of trumpets. It yanks our attention in a given direction. But once the initial reaction has worn off, there has to be something more substantial present to hold our attention.

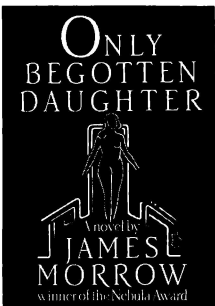
Now let's look at a couple of possibly shocking books:

### *Only Begotten Daughter*

By James Morrow  
William Morrow & Co., 1990  
312 pp., \$19.95

By way of shocks ... well, here's a book that would have been unprintable a hundred years ago, and certainly banned in Boston fifty years ago. In Shakespeare's time it would have gotten the author executed, since, even though Elizabethan writers enjoyed considerable freedom, there were two no-nos, loosely defined by the courts as "treason and blasphemy." While no one to the left of Jesse Helms is likely to accuse Morrow of treason, the other matter is more open to question ... Michael Bishop is even quoted on the back of the jacket as saying that *Only Begotten Daughter* "does for traditional Western theology what Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* does for Islam."

The difference, of course, and the reason James Morrow probably won't have to go into hiding, even though



quaint and antique the shockers of that period seem today. *Bug-Jack Barron* is a creaking old jalopy, for all its undeniable dramatic power. The *Dangerous Visions* books contain some fine writing, but they are two wings of Harlan Ellison's Museum of SF. (And when *The Last Dangerous Visions* finally appears, it will hardly be the cutting edge of the field. It'll be the Archæology Annex.)

The kind of shock SF delivers best is one of insight, the startling realization that, *Yes, this might be true. Why didn't I think of that?* Thus, *1984* is an authentically shocking book, not at all

### Rating System

☆☆☆☆	Outstanding
☆☆☆☆	Very Good
☆☆☆	Good
☆☆	Fair
☆	Poor

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he'll gain few admirers in Fundamentalist circles, is that here in the West we have a tradition of making light of religious matters. God-and-the-Devil fantasies have been part of the standard storyteller's repertoire for a very long time. Salman Rushdie never even went as far as Mark Twain, who suggested over and over again that God was not only a Bad Parent but a Malign Thug. We take it in stride. When this sort of theological fantasy blossomed in the works of James Branch Cabell, nobody tried to ban *Jurgen* on the grounds it was blasphemous, but instead on account of the ... er ... S\*X, allusions to which are so vague that a modern reader is likely to miss them.

So, while making fun of God may still have some satirical force left to it, the effect is, indeed, no more than a blast of trumpets. "Hey! Look at me!"

Whereupon the author has to deliver something more. This is precisely where and why *Only Begotten Daughter* succeeds, why it is an outstanding, possibly even great, fantasy. We may be witnessing the birth of a classic, folks. So stick around.

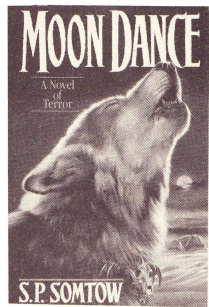
The premise could arouse some sniggering: Julie Katz, the younger sister of Jesus Christ, is miraculously conceived in an Atlantic City sperm bank, rescued by her father (an eccentric hermit befriended by a matronly lesbian) before crazed Fundamentalists blow up the sperm bank, and raised under the strict injunction that she not show off her miraculous powers. Why? Because her Jewish Dad has read the New Testament for the first time and knows perfectly well what happens to would-be messiahs.

But, alas, the Devil persuades Julie to cure one particular blind boy — the son of the Rev. Billy Milk, the same Fundamentalist who blew up the sperm bank, and a favorite of the Devil's because of his enormous capacity for self-righteous evil. Sure enough, this persuades the Rev. Milk of the rightness of his mission: nothing less than the destruction of Atlantic City (the Babylon of Revelations) and the construction of the New Jerusalem on the site. Julie intervenes only after large numbers of casino patrons have been burned to death, then adjourns to Hell for twenty years, where she meets, among other people her brother Jesus. It seems there are exactly *four* people in Heaven, since Hell claims anyone who

anyone else ever thought should go there. The afterlife is meaningless torment. God, who is perhaps incompatible with a universe of matter, does not intervene. Julie returns to Earth, where she is gorily crucified in the horrific theocracy Rev. Milk's New Jersey has become.

And that's not all ....

This is a complex, serious book, which challenges the whole nature of religious belief. Morrow's "Bible Stories for Adults" series has touched on such matters, but never gone into such depth. *Only Begotten Daughter* is, indeed, *shocking*, not in its heretical set-up, but in its insistence that religion, to be worthy of human belief, should be amenable to reason, and that God should measure up to human moral standards. Here we are back in Mark Twain territory, with God as the malign thug, but with a difference. Twain insisted that mankind was in-



ferior to the "high animals," i.e., the beasts, because of his moral sense. Morrow says that moral sense is our salvation, and that God and the godly shouldn't be allowed to commit all manner of atrocities the rest of us couldn't ever get away with.

Julie Katz goes to her execution preaching science and reason, not righteousness.

The additional richness of this book is that it is, in the standard sense, a good novel. It is drama, not a cartoon, as often moving or even horrific as it is amusing. For instance, the scene in which Julie's father dies of a heart attack and she is unable to raise him back to life precisely because he has trained her all her life not to per-

form miracles is genuinely touching. The characters are real, not mere caricatures. The strength of the novel is ultimately as a *vision*, as was his previous *This is the Way the World Ends*, which gained enormous power in its final, stark chapters after the Alice-in-Wonderland political satire was over.

Each of Morrow's novels, now, has been a distinct advance over the previous one. This is the best yet. So, Jim, what are you going to do next? I wait eagerly.

Rating: ☆☆☆☆

#### *Moon Dance*

By S.P. Somtow (Somtow Sucharitkul)  
Tor, 1989  
564 pp., \$24.95

Here we are in for shocks of a more conventional sort. This is a Horror Novel in Big Epic Terms, sort of a werewolf version of *Little Big Man*, in which a woman writer, hoping to write a sensational book of the *Helter-Skelter* variety about the once dread, now octogenarian Laramie Ripper, uncovers a vast tale of European werewolves moving to the American West and coming into conflict with (benevolent) Native American werewolves. Any description of this book sounds like copy for an old-time spectacle movie: world-wide settings, a vast array of exotic characters, battles, adventures, blood and gore, sex ....

Much of it is very well done, too, but it has the *feel* of an old-fashioned spectacle movie (not so much, in this sense, *Little Big Man* with werewolves, but *How the West Was Won* with werewolves). That is, it's very entertaining but not quite gripping, a tad clichéd, not quite real. The exception to this are scenes in which Sucharitkul (who writes very well about children) describes the tender, strained, very difficult relationship between a French governess and the disturbed and abused child who is both a multiple personality and a werewolf (and will grow up to be the Laramie Ripper). In these scenes, the book hints it could be far more than it presently is. Even the prose loses its pulpy breathlessness. There are fewer exclamation points.

But the book also gives me intimations of mortality, not of my own mortality, I hasten to explain, but that of

the splatterpunk school of horror fiction. The one great limitation of the splash-and-barf aesthetic as pioneered by Clive Barker and others (and by Sucharitkul, whose 1984 *Vampire Junction* is held to be the prototype of the later Movement — which gives you some idea of how transitory these Movements are) is that once you have *Shown It All*, there is indeed nothing left to show. The shock value is gone. One more severed head here and there isn't going to bring it back.

Something is clearly wrong when I find myself completely unmoved by passages like this:

We've all seen too many *Fangoria* photos, too many slasher movies. Evisceration doesn't horrify anymore, particularly in a book like this, where the author keeps trying to top himself.

The answer, of course, is that the writer has to fall back on the story. Sucharitkul manages to do that. He keeps us reading. His powers of invention are considerable. The descriptions are convincing most of the time, for all that I never did figure out (page 9) how the snow could be "bloody in the sunset" when in the same paragraph the narrator says it's snowing so hard she can hardly see. The characters sometimes flicker into reality for a while. The background lore and

... My hands slid down to touch his chest. They met something wet and slippery ... The blanket moved and I saw that Preston's abdomen had been ripped open. His intestines, tangled, steaming, protruded from the opening. I stepped back. The blanket fell to the floor. I saw that his penis had been cut off. I realized that it was lying on the nightstand, next to the candleholder. It had been there the whole time, but it had never occurred to me that it was what it was.

(p.38)

the settings, both European and American (particularly the scenes among the Indians), are interesting and convincing.

So *Moon Dance* is a splashing spectacle movie in prose, which you will enjoy at least once.

Rating: ☆☆☆

### No Need to Shock

*Tehanu, The Last Book of Earthsea*  
By Ursula K. Le Guin  
Atheneum, 1990  
228 pp., \$15.95

Here, by contrast, is a book that will shock no one, but may ultimately disturb many. Ursula Le Guin told me (in an interview that is forthcoming in the revived *Science Fiction Review*) how this book came to her after so many years. She had put aside a start of the fourth *Earthsea* book long before, because it didn't seem to know where it wanted to go. Then, more recently, she was reading a Spanish translation of *A Wizard of Earthsea* to keep her Spanish alive, and the book started coming. She described the



writing of it as "like flying." There had always been an incompleteness in the Trilogy as a trilogy. That is, there is a story about a young man (Ged in *A Wizard of Earthsea*), a young woman (Tehanu in *The Tombs of Atuan*), an old man (Ged again, in *The Farthest Shore*), and it only seemed fitting that there should also be a story about an old woman.

So, *Tehanu* takes up the story of Tehanu again. She is now in her fifties, a widow with a grown son, and has lived as a farm wife for many years. Ged returns to her on the back of a dragon, exhausted, no longer a mage, ashamed of his weakness. Meanwhile Tehanu has adopted an abused, horribly fire-scarred little girl, about whom it is prophesied, "they shall fear her."

Fans of the previous *Earthsea* books may be, at first, disappointed. *Tehanu* is not an epic. There are no adventures. All of the action takes place on a single island. The story is brooding, introspective, and domestic; about death, limitations, and coming

to terms with loss. Much of the physical conflict exerts itself in brutality rather than gallantry. When the new King of *Earthsea* comes searching for Ged (but, as the epilogue to *The Farthest Shore* told, does not find him) we are afforded a glimpse of the more romantic world of the typical High Fantasy, of which Tehanu and Ged can no longer partake.

The results are thematically complex and a little puzzling. I left this book with the feeling that, yes, this is superbly written and utterly convincing, at times very moving, but the legion of Le Guin critics are going to generate quite a few articles explaining what it all means.

Rating: ☆☆☆

### Noted:

*The Great and Secret Show*  
By Clive Barker  
Harper & Row, 1990  
550 pp., \$19.95

Here, as in his earlier *Weaveworld*, the original gory bad boy of horror, from whom the "Splat Pack" certainly drew its inspiration, shows what to do when the audience has gotten tired of severed heads and dripping intestines. It was evident, too, in Barker's movie *Hellraiser* (but not in the sequel, which he did not direct): once the shock effects wear thin, there has to be a coherent plot to keep things going. The stage beyond shock is simply story.

*The Great and Secret Show* is apparently the first volume of a vast new epic, rather in the mold of *The Stand*, in which good and evil of *Lord of the Rings* proportions manifest themselves in the lives of ordinary people in contemporary settings. But Barker, you can be sure, is too inventive to keep things ordinary for very long. His conflict begins when a rather vicious postal clerk discovers the secret of Just About Everything in the Dead Letter Office in Omaha, Nebraska: a paranoid conspiracy worthy of *The Crying of Lot 49*, and, behind that, a mystic "sea of dreams" outside our physical reality. Suddenly this clerk has big plans, but he is a rotten, petty soul, so he works great evil. Opposing him is a drugged-out, failed-yet-still-brilliant scientist who has isolated the essence that makes creatures evolve into higher forms. He tries to destroy this, realizing the potential for harm



in the hands of his employer, the aforesaid former postal clerk. But the Stuff (called *Nuncio*) has ideas of its own, and Armageddon seems on the horizon.

This is a very big, baroque fantasy/horror novel, which shows signs of maturity well beyond first-level shocks. Stephen King once said that in horror, first you try to terrify, then you try to horrify, and if that doesn't work, go for the gross-out. Well, the gross-out may no longer be possible, and Barker, even though he remains as uninhibited as ever, seems to know that.

Rating: ☆☆☆☆

*From Satire to Subversion: The Fantasies of James Branch Cabell*  
By James D. Riemer  
Greenwood Press, 1990  
106 pp., \$35.00

James Branch Cabell had a remarkable career, first as the author of indifferently received medieval romances which, as the artist Howard Pyle correctly discerned, didn't show "proper reverence" to the idealized Middle Ages of the popular literature of the day. (And, I would say, still popular in modern generic fantasy.) Cabell rapidly found out who was more important: when Pyle refused to illustrate any more of his books, the publisher dropped him. But then *Jurgen* became the subject of the biggest banning controversy before *Ulysses*. Suddenly Cabell was a best-seller, the darling of liberal intellectuals, and, within a few years, a "classic," reprinted by Modern Library, and a possible Nobel Prize candidate. The party line has been revised since, but quite possibly it was Cabell, not Hemingway, Fitzgerald, or Faulkner, who ruled the literary roost during the Jazz Age. But then the Depression came along. Fantasy, no matter how satirical or risqué, was out, and Cabell's rocket came down as a burnt stick.

All of this could not help but reinforce that very cynicism which, says Prof. Riemer, is the essence of his art. Certainly Cabell defined fantasy in American literature for a long time. As late as the dustjacket of *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961) we find the adjective "Cabellesque" used without any need for explanation. His influence was enormous, and his reputation has refused to die utterly.

Books about him still come out, one every few years. His *Letters* appeared in 1975. Only his fantasy novels survive, though, having enjoyed occasional paperback revivals. He has never been popular, at least not since the public gave up on the idea that to read Cabell was deliciously "naughty."

The thesis of the present book is that Cabell was a *subversive* writer, who differed from such "High Fantasy" writers as William Morris, or Tolkien, in that he didn't so much escape into a secondary world as challenge our whole conception of such

worlds, or of our own reality. It's an intelligent analysis, worth reading, even though the high price will send most readers to university libraries rather than bookstores. I'm glad to see that Cabell is still read, and even understood in the context of other fantasy. While this book is for the more than casual reader, it isn't hopelessly academic either. Riemer only very rarely lapses into vaguely post-Structuralist/Deconstructionist jargon, but even then he never loses the sense of what he's saying.

Rating: ☆☆☆

# L. RON HUBBARD

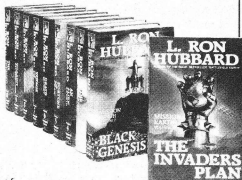
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# The Bogart Revival

## By Joel Henry Sherman

### Art by Charles Lang

Some people run on money, others on recognition. Brent Colby had both and didn't give a damn about either. The house in Palos Verdes, the Mercedes, the wife and requisite divorce; he'd accepted each with indifference and kept working, driven by his religious fanaticism to see an imagined concept become reality. Bogart's revival wasn't born out of greed; it was a revelation. And Brent had no more control over events than had Martin Luther after he'd envisioned his ninety-five theses.

On Wednesday nights, we always made a pilgrimage to the old Metropole Theater to cleanse ourselves in the purity of flickering black and white. In that sanctuary of frayed velvet and flaking paint, inhaling the incense of popcorn burning in rancid oil, the three of us escaped our individual realities. Whitney Hargrave mouthed lines along with Joan Crawford or Bette Davis, forgetting pending auditions and casting calls. Brent Colby left his designing job at Dataworks Software folded away as neatly as the brown knit tie in the top drawer of his desk. I hid from my word processor. The denizens of the silver screen expected no excuses.

We came out of the Metro together, huddling beneath Whitney's umbrella to escape a chilling drizzle. The gray sidewalk gleamed under the street lights; sparse crowd drifting along the empty avenue.

"Great flick." Brent wiped the moisture from his glasses. "Don't make them like that any more."

"In twenty years," Whitney countered, "we'll be calling today's films classics." They had been arguing the relative merits of new and old films for years, the debate as much a part of the Wednesday ritual as two-dollar Cokes and boxes of Junior Mints.

"Oh sure. *Swamp Murderer* was a tour de force." He mouthed the title of her most recent acting credit as if it tasted of mud and leeches. "Classic films are the result of genius, a gestalt of acting, directing, and writing. I don't think that genius exists anymore."

"What about Kurosawa? Altman? Spielberg? I suppose Dustin Hoffman and Meryl Streep are amateurs?"

"Huston could out-direct any of them. Bogart could act circles around anybody living today."

"I started a script for Bogart once," I said, assuming my role of peacemaker. "Kept seeing him in every scene though he'd already been dead for years."

"My point exactly," Whitney said. "Your old celluloid heroes are gone, Brent. Living talent is the only game in town. Unless, of course, you've got some hidden ability for resurrection."

Brent opened his mouth as if to reply and stopped. Whitney and I continued on to the car.

"Coming?"

He shook his head.

"Stop pouting," Whitney called, sliding into the front seat.

"You go on," he said absently. "A walk will do me good."

I recognized the look on his face, remembering how it felt when creativity swept over like a cresting wave. He moved away, his mind already a dozen miles distant.

Hating him slightly, I slipped in beside Whitney. We sat and watched him until the night swallowed his slow-moving form.

I hadn't written a decent sentence in two years. Blocked solid; the writer's number-one nightmare. I'd always thought of writer's block in terms of sweat and frustration, chain-smoking fools surrounded by drifts of crumpled bond. In reality, I maintained my schedule, rolling out of bed at five in the morning to shower and shave, breakfast with a copy of *Variety*, in the study by seven. I just didn't write. There was always one more small job to finish before starting, one last bit of research, another book to read. So the hours passed.

The guilt never hit until late afternoon, too late to get started. And every evening, as I stood before the liquor cabinet and poured my first tumbler of scotch, I promised myself I'd be ready to write in the morning.

The house was quiet on Thursday. Whitney was in the Mojave Desert for a week of shooting on a rocket-and-blaster flick. Cast as an alien amazon, she had been stomping through the house for a month spouting pidgin English in a bizarre dialect, and I missed her voice.

Manny Solstein had made his obligatory call. Somewhere along the line we'd ceased being agent and client and become friends. He didn't ask for scripts anymore, calling once a week just to make certain I hadn't drunk myself into a coma. We schmoozed about old times and his health, skirting my block as if dancing around a pile of broken glass.

I was completing a course proposal for a local college. Teaching was easier than writing, and the money wasn't too bad. The phone rang as I was typing out the last paragraph of the course description. During the past two years I'd learned to nurse a telephone call for hours. It helped make the day pass, made it feel like I was working.

"Jimbo?" Brent's voice was edged with coffee and amphetamines. I imagined him hunched over his desk amid a litter of paper plates and sandwich scraps, brown apple cores wedged between towers of books and old magazines, smoke curling up from an untouched cigarette.

"Calling from jail, or did you make it home last night?"

"Still got that partial script you did for Bogart?"

"Somewhere." I thought of the stack of boxes in my garage filled with file folders and yellowing papers.

"I need it. Drop it by as soon as you can."

And then I was holding a dead receiver.

I would have ignored him and continued working, if I'd



**BRENT COLBY**  
**JAMES SHERMAN**  
**WHITNEY HARGRAVE**

Screenplay by **JOEL H. SHERMAN**      Directed by **BRENT COLBY**

a **CHARLES RYAN** Production  
Art Direction by **CHARLES LANG**

been writing. But I was blocked, and the thought of spending a few hours in the garage rummaging through old papers seemed much more productive than sitting at the screen and churning out bad prose.

I stopped at the refrigerator to grab the last three cans of beer and, swinging them by their plastic webbing, headed out into the stifling heat of the garage.

I took Brent five minutes to answer his door. A salesman, even a missionary, would have moved on to greener pastures. But after four years as college roommates and ten as friends, I'd had plenty of experience with his habits and knew that Brent was deaf when he was working. So I leaned on the bell, pounding with my free hand loud enough to disturb the neighbors across the street.

An odor of rotten food and stale smoke poured from the interior when the door finally swung open. Brent stared at me from the threshold, eyes distorted behind his thick lenses, hair and beard snarled.

"You got it," he said, recognition dawning in his slack features. He grabbed the sheaf of papers from my hands. "Thanks."

"Hey." I jammed my foot in the door. "You want to tell me what this is all about?"

"Not yet. But if it works, you'll be part of it. Full partnership." He glanced at the script. "Finish this as soon as you can. I'll be in touch."

"Finish it? No problem, it's not like I've been blocked or anything." But my sarcasm was wasted. He had already closed the door and left me staring at faded wood grain and peeling varnish.

On my way back to the car, I mulled over the script. It was good work, only four scenes, but the fifth came boiling up out of my brain as I slid the key into the ignition.

I went straight into the study when I got back to the house, no detour by the bar or liquor store. There was no rending crack as the block shattered. I simply touched my fingers to the keys and the words began to flow.

Two weeks passed without a word from Brent. He missed two cinema nights: *The Gazebo* and *The Seven-Year Itch*. Unfamiliar with his working binges, Whitney wanted to stop by to make certain he wasn't dead. But I remembered when Brent had hammered out *Officeworks*, the program that made his fortune. I went twenty-seven days without seeing him, and we were sharing a house out in Redondo.

They were glorious weeks for me — eight hours a day at the computer, the words racing from my head. It was one of those rare fits of creativity when the script seemed to write itself and I was just recording the words. Whitney brought my meals. I stayed dry.

Colby's silence finally cracked on Tuesday night. We were already in bed, Whitney reading lines for an upcoming audition while I gave her the cues.

"I'll be damned," I said, recognizing his smoker's hack. "Brent Colby lives."

"Barely." He coughed again. "You busy tomorrow night?"

"Classic film night. *Here Comes Mister Jordan* is at the Metro."

"Skip it. The show's at my place. Six-thirty."

"What's playing?"

He paused for a moment, a long silence in which I wondered if he'd heard me. "Bogey," he said finally. "Humphrey Bogart."

Two years of marriage and another ten of transient female occupation had furnished Brent's house in a bizarre melange of contemporary and traditional decor. Waterford crystal lamps squatted on Scandinavian end tables. Bean-bag chairs competed for space with a pair of leather wingbacks and a coffee table fashioned from an antique door. One wall was a solid expanse of electronic hardware, microprocessors, and CRTs scabbed to a projection television, a stereo, and a bank of speakers.

Every flat surface was littered with the detritus of his lifestyle: magazines and research papers, software manuals, crumpled cigarettes studding overflowing ashtrays like punk flower arrangements. The stench of smoke and dirty laundry made it seem as if the place was filled with a thin liquid rather than air. Whitney stepped around the debris as if walking through a mine field.

Brent was casual in a pair of faded USC gym shorts and Hawaiian shirt, red hair slicked back. He'd cleared a space between the riveted steel plates on the coffee table for dinner — Chinese food in white cardboard cartons. We ate from the packages.

"Now," I asked around a mouthful of fried rice. "What's this all about?"

"I think you'll recognize it."

Grinning, Brent snaggled the remote control from atop a pyramid of *Popular Mechanics* and activated the VCR. Light flickered on the projection television, a silhouette appearing in profile. The figure struck a match and brought it up to a cigarette dangling loosely in the corner of his mouth, camera zooming for a tight facial shot. Humphrey Bogart stared down from the screen.

For fifteen minutes, I watched Bogart move through the opening scenes of my script, listening to my words in his mouth. When the screen finally faded to black, I swallowed a lump in my throat and remembered how to breathe.

"Who was that?" I whispered.

"Bogart." Brent smiled slowly.

"Hell of an impersonation." I shook my head. "Where'd you find him?"

"I made him." His teeth gleamed. "It's a simulacrum. Software mostly. Some improved graphics hardware too. An amalgamation of Bogart."

"A rather elaborate parlor trick," Whitney said, choosing her words carefully. Her face was pale.

"No magic." Brent spread his hands, his heavy-lidded eyes alive with animation. "I did massive research. Crammed every scrap of information I could find on Bogart into the software to create a Bogart identity. Using it, the computer makes a judgment on the delivery of every line, the positioning of the face, the sneer, the smile ... everything. Any visual action or verbal expression."

"But what good are fifteen minutes of a dead actor mouthing lines from a movie which never existed?"

"My God, Whitney," Brent said, pouring us all a second drink. "Think of the films you can make. Team Bogart and Dustin Hoffman. Meryl Streep and Ray Milland. Anybody. Don't you see what that's worth?" When he looked up, his eyes were watery and distant. "Can you finish the script?"

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**WHITNEY'S REVENGE**

SCREENPLAY BY  
ERNEST HEMINGWAY

I nodded. "Almost done. Another two, maybe three weeks."

"We'll need a cast list so I can work up identity packages." Brent glanced at Whitney. "I thought you could help with that. We could use your expertise."

"I don't think so." She stood and brushed the wrinkles from her dress. "I really should be leaving."

"You okay?" I saw the tension of an approaching migraine in her face.

"I've got an audition in the morning. I should be studying my lines instead of wasting my time on your little game." She poked my cheek and managed a brave smile. "I know my own way out, Brent. Good night."

We were selecting the cast before the click of her heels across the tile portico had faded into silence.

Whitney was invisible during the following week, leaving in the early morning and returning late. I was working steadily, sixteen-hour days, ignoring sleep and hunger, scenes appearing like technicolor blossoms inside my skull. And then one evening, I looked up to find her on the couch, knees tucked up against her chest, steely eyes watching me.

"Are you ever coming to bed?"

"Not yet." I tapped the keys. "Just a few more hours and I'll be finished."

"Me too," she whispered.

"What're you talking about?"

Whitney took a deep breath as if about to plunge into dark, cold water. "Do you know what the studios will do with this?"

"Buy it, I hope."

"How do I compete against Bette Davis or Marilyn Monroe?" Her face was pale, eyes red-rimmed. "Why take a chance with a new star when the studios can generate proven genius with a computer?"

"Is that what's been eating you? Come on, Whitney. They'll always need live talent."

"What makes you so damn sure?" She choked back a sob. "Right now you're just resurrecting old masters, but how long before someone starts creating new faces from bits and pieces of the old? Bogart with a little Spencer Tracy and some Al Pacino thrown in for effect?" Tears glistened on her cheeks. "How can you do this to me?"

"Do what to you?" Rage and fury suddenly erupted within me, all the frustration of the past two years spilling out. Her eyes grew wide as I lurched from my desk. "You and your goddamned insecurities! For two years, I've sat and stared at this screen, spent every evening drinking myself into a stupor, wanting so damned desperately to write but unable to find any words. That's hell, babe. I've been living it."

"Finally, I've broken through the wall. I've got a project and I'm working. I'm sleeping nights instead of drinking myself to death. I'm happy. And you've got the frigging nerve to come in here and dump your guilt in the middle of my lap." I breathed deeply, trying to clear my head of the need to slap her pale, tear-streaked face. "What about my career? The well's running dry. I can't afford to miss this chance."

"Can't you?" She rose slowly from the couch. "Maybe you'd better look a little closer, Jimbo. Maybe you'd better think again, before it's too damned late for all of us." She stalked from the room.

For a while I heard her upstairs slamming drawers and closet doors. I drowned out her movements with the steady click of the keys.

When I went up a few hours later to sleep, she was gone.

Manny Solstein brushed a hand through his thinning hair and set his pipe in an ashtray as we entered his office. The smell of leather and tobacco always made me think of Manny and contracts, the scent of business.

"Jimmy." His voice rasped softly, his dark eyes scanning me quickly for signs of drinking and despair, reading my face like a manuscript. Whatever he saw made him smile. "It's been a long time."

"Thanks for seeing me."

"Hey. You put a few bucks in my account. I got a long memory. Want a drink?"

I shook my head.

"Good for you. Been writing again?"

"Yeah." I nodded toward Brent. "This is Brent Colby. We've got a little proposition for you. Something different." Brent slid the video tape toward him.

Manny held it in his hands as if weighing it could somehow tell him whether or not it was worth his time. He reached over and keyed the intercom. "Hold my calls. I'm in conference." The he spun his chair and opened a credenza to reveal a VCR. "Let's see what you got."

Two hours later, Manny was on the phone to Fox.

I called her sister in Modesto. She denied Whitney was there, but we'd played this game before. After fifteen calls, she got tired of lying to me and put Whitney on the phone.

"Hello." She sounded much farther away than a few hundred miles.

"I want to see you."

She was silent.

"I said a few things." I groped for the words. "We were both pretty upset. I'd been working too hard. But I love you, Whitney."

"You don't understand."

"Come home and make me understand. Babe, the project sold to Fox. The bad times are over. Just good times ahead. And I want you with me." I took a deep breath. "We're having a celebration at the California Club tonight. Eight sharp. Please come. I love you." I broke the connection before she could protest, certain she would show.

She didn't disappoint me.

Whitney entered the restaurant with her hair and make-up perfect, looking every inch as tough and glamorous as Barbara Stanwyck. Brent generated one of his patented disarming smiles as he turned toward her and raised his glass of champagne. "You're late."

She drew the revolver from her bag in one fluid motion, a chunk of chromium steel and pearl in her small hands, her mouth forming a silent scream. The first bullet struck Brent in the forehead, throwing him into the next table. Startled patrons screamed, livid waiters ducking for cover. I was rolling for the floor when her second shot slammed into my chest.

I remember the pain, breath bubbling in my lungs, the

lights dimming and turning red, and Whitney's bright, mad eyes as she placed the muzzle against her temple and calmly pulled the trigger.

I spent ten days in intensive care, plastic tubes protruding from every orifice. Maybe it was my imagination, or maybe the drugs pulsing through my system edited my memories, but somehow I reached the conclusion that in her final moments, Whitney had lowered her aim from my face to chest and spared me in a final second of lucid judgment. I thought love had moved her hand, but then, hate is often mistaken for love.

Manny came to see me as soon as they allowed visitors. He brought a plant and a magazine.

"How you feeling, Jimmy?" Loosening his tie, he slid uncomfortably into the only chair.

"Good enough to go home and start the rewrite for Fox. You know how it is with writers, working is so damned therapeutic."

"You're off it, Jimbo." He stared at the floor.

"What?" Sudden nausea churned in my guts.

"They bought your option, but I made 'em pay. You won't go hungry."

"I don't want their damned money. It's my script, Manny. You understand? Mine!"

"Not any more. They got this genius from Stanford to duplicate Colby's work. You know the game. The producer has a hot new angle and Stanford thinks he can make it work."

"What the hell are you saying?"

Manny shrugged helplessly. "They want a script by Ernest Hemingway." □

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# A Worldcon in Holland ?

## By Kees van Toorn, Chairman, ConFiction

Every year thousands of science fiction fans gather somewhere on the globe to celebrate the main event of the year: the World Science Fiction Convention.

It is a tradition that started in 1939 in New York. Then it attracted only a handful of people. The convention last year in Boston had over seven thousand attendees.

One of the most important features of this convention is undoubtedly the Hugo Awards presentation. Apart from that, the worldcon offers five days of panels, discussions, an art show, a dealers' room, videos, films, slide shows, endless parties of various groups, and, most important of all, an almost full week of socializing and meeting with fellow enthusiasts from around the world.

Unlike other conventions, the unique concept is that the attendees choose who will host this event. Usually there is a fierce race among a number of cities — almost always in the English-speaking countries, and mostly in the United States.

As a matter of fact, most of the World Science Fiction Conventions have been held in the United States ... but as you, the avid reader of SF, know, Science Fiction, and Fandom, especially, is something that catches you (it is seldom the other way around).

Once you are hooked on Science Fiction and Fandom as a meeting point of people and a melting point of interests, it stays with you for the rest of your life. And it is so contagious, it does not stay confined to the United States. The result is an avid global Fandom (the collective name of all fans around the world) with smaller regional conventions everywhere

in the world. But we are talking about the World Science Fiction Convention ...

For me it all started well over 20 years ago — with Heicon, the 28th World Science Fiction Convention in Heidelberg, Germany. It was the first world event of this sort I attended — although in those days a "Worldcon" only had about 600 attendees. It was an overwhelming experience to be able to meet people from different countries, to not only see your favorite authors in person but also join them for a drink, or have lunch, dinner or breakfast with them, talk about all sorts of things, and later meet them at other conventions.

For me it was the start of many a good and lasting friendship. It also planted the seed for another world convention on the continent — if it would ever become possible again. After all, conventions became bigger and bigger, it takes quite some organization to make them work — and it remains a labor of love for most people involved.

Back in 1985 the concept of a world convention in Europe became a possibility. To me the year 1990 had a magic ring to it, as it would be twenty years after my first world convention in Heidelberg.

Everybody on the committee worked hard, and we had a lot of support from all over the world. In 1987 we won the right to host the Worldcon in the Netherlands by an overwhelming majority.

With only a few months before the actual event, it becomes clear that ConFiction (as we have called this 48th World Science Fiction Convention) will be a true international gathering of science fiction and fantasy readers from all over the world.

There are members from over 25 countries. With the Wall down, a lot of Eastern Europeans may also come, and it ought to be a feast for all who come to The Hague in the Netherlands.

The convention will of course have the Hugo Awards presentation, as this is one of the main events, but it will also be a showcase for clubs and groups from all over the world. The dates are August 23rd to August 27th. An attending membership will cost \$85 until July 15th, after that you must purchase a membership at the door for \$100.00. For this you will get five days of international activities and a chance to hear our guests of honor Joe Haldeman, Wolfgang Jeschke, and Harry Harrison, as well as our fan guest of honor Andrew Porter and toastmistress Chelsea Quinn Yarbro.

Despite the enormous number of different nationalities, the official convention language will be English, although some of the program will feature topics in the "original" language of the participants — but in those cases an instant translation ought to be available. It will all add to the international flavor of a true world convention.

Would you like to know more? Write to us directly or contact one of our U.S. agents:

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## Human Beings Want to Be Free



There is something basic happening among the human beings. The Soviets have begun holding elections with competing parties on the ballot. Several countries in Eastern Europe have turned out their communist governments. Latin American countries have shaken off military dictatorships. Racist police states have freed political prisoners.

Human beings everywhere are shooting their tyrants, tearing down their prison walls, and embracing democracy. All over this planet, the institutions of tyranny — from apartheid to Communism — are beginning to give way. Hardly a week goes by that does not see some news story about the advancement of human freedom.

To understand any of this, you must understand human political systems. It is an undertaking about as useful as learning to inhale cigarette smoke or studying the command structure of MS-DOS. Nevertheless, studying is what I am here for, so I have tried to make some sense of current events.

An encyclopedia or a civics textbook will tell you there are many ways of classifying human political systems. But most of them are laughable. Human beings draw fine distinctions between parliamentary and presidential systems, between state ownership and state regulation of the means of production, between unicameral and bicameral legislatures, and on and on and on.

These descriptions, however, are not supposed to explain anything. They are there to provide a pretext for self-righteous discussion. Before the current reforms, for example, the Soviets had but one political party in control of a completely authoritarian government, which the Americans roundly condemned at every opportunity. The

Americans point proudly to their two-party system. But they rarely mention that this system, well-oiled money machine that it is, returns 99 percent of the incumbents in every Congressional election. Everybody in America believes in free elections, except the members of Congress, who all have a good bit of money behind them and believe elections ought to be as expensive as possible. As things stand now, the Soviet Politburo historically has a higher turnover than the U.S. Congress.

As an outsider, I can take a more judicious view of human politics and point out to you there is only one kind of human government, statist. The organizing principle of statism, announced or tacit, is that the government owns its citizenry. In practice, government ownership of the citizenry is often mitigated by certain rights and protections guaranteed by charter — rights and protections that operate similarly to the laws on our planet against cruelty to fleshtons.

In the United States, they tried a different political system for a short time after 1789, but it never really took hold. People could not understand the idea that the government only has powers when they grant them. And, as time went by, Americans forgot about the republican system they had invented. They rejoined the rest of the world in believing power flows from the government to the citizens rather than the other way around. The American experiment is enshrined, as if in a glass case, by Amendment Number Nine of their Bill of Rights, the text of which modern Americans continue to publish but regard as a kind of curiosity.

By tradition, however, the rights of Americans are broader than those of people in other statist countries.

So the Americans have some justification in considering themselves "free." And they are sincere when they cheer for the world's oppressed, who struggle to trade authoritarian statism for more benevolent forms. The average American human being, for example, now tunes in the international news every day. He bathes in the televised images of the retirement of military dictators, the freeing of political prisoners, and the opening of heavily guarded borders. The indomitable struggle for freedom is powerful emotional stuff, and the films of these events are being carefully preserved for use in the sale of soft drinks and designer jeans.

Tyranny, you see, is not compatible with soft drinks and designer jeans — or small appliances, high-performance cars, and movies with happy endings. No political philosophy can stand against a people who have glimpsed paradise in the screen of a television or tasted the food of the Gods on a sesame seed bun. Build them a shopping mall, and they will never go back to censorship or arresting each other in the middle of the night.

Americans celebrate the deliverance of the oppressed in the spirit of charity and target marketing. The bywords of the day are "human rights" and "pent-up demand."

It is truly a grand time to be on the Earth. Nations everywhere are giving up identity papers, propaganda, secret police, and privileged oligarchies. What are they trading them for? Consumer credit, direct mail advertising, private data banks, and financial leverage. Human beings, you see, want to be free. □

# Birdbrain

By Elaine Radford

Art by David Brian

He strained his eyeballs at utter blackness, unable to think where or what he was.

"Taylor? We're going to take off the mask now. Don't try to move. You can't. We'll take off the restraints once you've had your shot —"

Restraints. Shot. Oh sweet Jesus he'd gone mad. All this futzing around with his head —

The doctor's hands gently lifted the eye-masks, assaulting Taylor with sudden brightness. He blinked, not consciously registering the clear eyelids that dropped automatically before each of his irises to cut the glare.

"Relax," Lynen said, her gaze skittering off his face as if they were made of glass. "Don't move until you get your bearings."

No need to move, anyway; he could see clear round the white room except for a maybe twenty-degree sliver directly in back of his skull. Gail Lynen loomed near him on his left, the clawlike hand that clutched the hypodermic unnaturally sharp, swelling to fill a full quarter of his visual field before it blurred out of focus.

"Good boy," Lynen muttered, as if she were addressing a child. Or an animal.

Suspicion stung him more painfully than the injection. On Taylor's right lounged Leo Kerr the ornithologist, a man as lean and unremarkable as a blade of grass. Something didn't compute. With one eye Taylor was looking at Lynen, with the other Kerr, and both were sharp and flat as dolls scissored out of newsprint.

He couldn't think. The drug was working on him, guiding him toward sleep. His lids dropped of their own volition. Miles away somewhere, deft hands removed the restraints binding his body.

"Easy, Taylor, easy," Lynen singsonged, her voice a hypnotist's. "Sleep."

Dozing, he jerked erect abruptly, suddenly aware that he was balancing on one leg. In his sleep.

Oh Christ!

Fighting to regain his poise, he slipped and fell to his belly with a graceless plop.

Since banging along with the hook at the end of his upper mandible had resulted in a terrific migraine, he was forced to grasp a pencil with his bill, cock his head sideways, and jab at the terminal keyboard with an awkward bob of the neck — a tiring process. This being a bird is for the birds, he thought.

\*WHOD I GET

He debated adding a question mark and decided not to. The extra effort required was too daunting.

"Want me to show you?" Too thoughtful to wait for the inevitable answer, Lynen hopped up and vanished momentarily behind the Japanese screen that so elegantly concealed the worst of the office clutter, returning with a good-sized three-way mirror that she set before him with a flourish. Taylor dropped his pencil and cocked one

eye at the glass.

He saw a fine young male wandering albatross, a yearling to judge by the abundance of brown and gray that spotted his breast. Leopard spots, Kerr called them.

OK," Kerr said. "Spread your wings."

Couldn't; for some reason, Taylor couldn't make himself perform the simple gesture, couldn't figure out which muscles to flex.

"Easy now. Maybe it'll help if you picture them as two great big two-meter fingers."

Two great big — yeah. Sure. But to Taylor's surprise, his brain went for it.

"OK. Open and close them a few times. Easy. Easy. Reaaaallll slow. Good."

A knock on the frame of the open gymnasium door, then Taylor the man stepped diffidently inside. "Hey, big fellow," he said, nodding at the bird. For a low-profile sort, he seemed falsely bright. The bird jerked away indignantly when the man reached down to scratch his head. "Interesting. I really couldn't picture being anyone other than myself. I mean, intellectually, sure, I know that's me in there, but on a gut level —" He shook his head.

The bird ached for speech, for the power to cut in on this blithering boob.

"If you're me, big fellow, how come I don't know what you're thinking?"

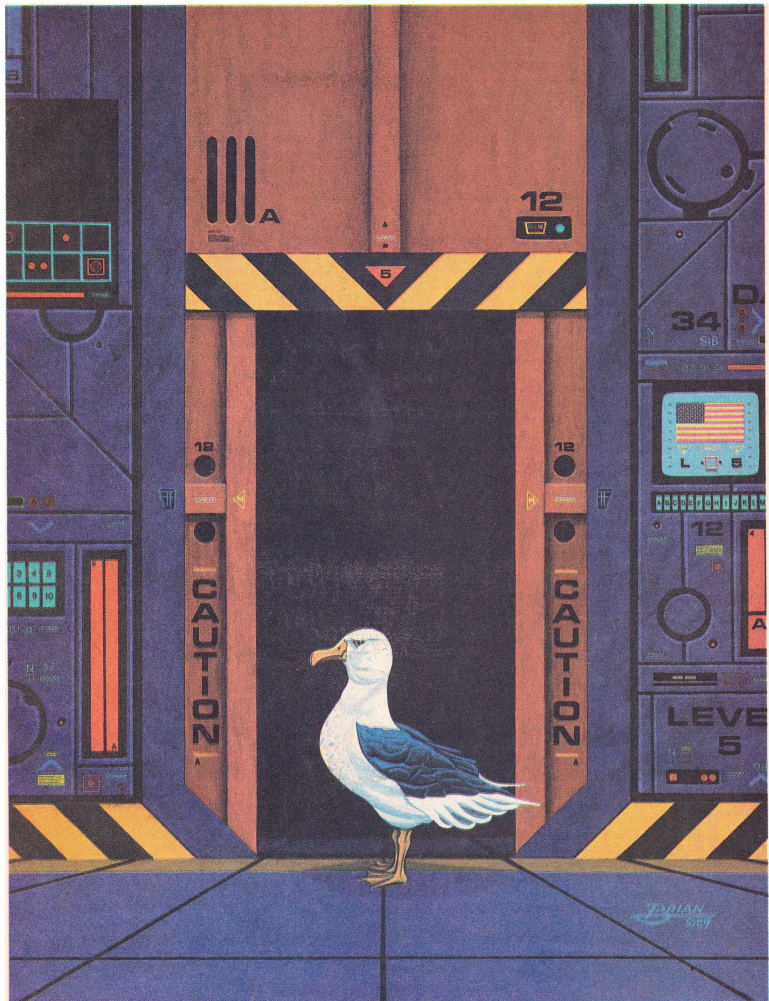
Taylor the albatross vomited up a solid lump of stomach oil, depositing it squarely in the man's lap. Figure it out, big fellow.

Physical therapy and mind games. Sometimes they took all Taylor's concentration, but mostly they were just tedious. That was good, that meant he was adjusting, but ... it left too much time for holding the tattered cloth of his mind up to the light to search for holes.

And holes he found. After all, they'd had to shrink his mind into a volume one-eighth of the original before impressing it on the albatross forebrain — birds have no cortex — and something was bound to get lost in the translation. In all honesty, they'd done much better than he'd expected. When Lynen had told him how much editing the computer would have to do, he'd thought there would be nothing left.

"There's a lot of redundancy built into the brain," she'd said. "It works out that it's more efficient to store most information in several different places around your brain. When you have to recall something, your brain can find it faster because it has several chances to stumble over the data, as it were."

Taylor chewed on the image of his mind stumbling



III  
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12

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CAUTION

CAUTION

34

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12

LEVEL  
5

BRIAN  
GUY

"around the inside of his skull like a drunk on his last bottle.

"All we're going to do is edit out the redundancy —"

"So then I'll be dumber, right?"

She blinked at him coolly. "Not dumber. Just ... slower."

Was there a difference? Even if it wasn't exactly going to be him and even if you didn't exactly need Einstein's brains to flap onto a Russky aircraft carrier in the shape of a bird ... even then, an operative kind of liked to have all his marbles.

He was new to the base, nervous, suspicious, keenly aware of his status as an experimental animal. Hell, this place wasn't home anymore, not after thirteen years in Moscow ... How sick at heart he'd felt, realizing he was being recalled like a defective automobile after so many years. And yet he couldn't very well have expected to be a Russian forever.

"No way is anyone going to open up my head," he told her bluntly. "My ass has been on the line for Uncle long enough. This tour was supposed to be cake."

"Course not, Taylor. Didn't they tell you?" Lynen waved about the sterile room with its padded chair that reminded him of the dentist's office doubling as a torture chamber. "All you have to do is sit right here while the scanner builds up a model of your brain."

He pointedly ignored the invitation to sit.

"Wait a minute, now, you just hold on. You're going to X-ray my head every day for a year, eight hours a day, six days a week. Dream on, lady! I let y'all get away with that, I'll have a tumor the size of a grapefruit in my head by spring."

"Relax, double-oh-seven. We aren't out to kill you. No X-rays. I promise. We'll be using a totally safe combination of ultrasound, thermography, and nuclear magnetic resonance techniques for scanning, then we'll combine and enhance the results in the computer. Your brain won't be affected in the slightest."

"Yeah, yeah, the biggest danger is that my butt will get sore sitting around all the time —"

"Oh, bear with us, Taylor, I know it'll get to be a bore real quick, but aren't you kinda glad it's slow?" She glanced around nervously, as if she knew about the bugs monitoring every room. "Can you imagine what sort of world we'd live in if they could read your mind in a flash, easy as snapping a photograph?"

Taylor shuddered.

And then he realized something almost as spooky. "My brains are going to be spread out all over the place for anyone to pick over —"

"That's one thing I wouldn't worry about. The only one who'll see all that stuff is this —" She flicked a wrist at the wall, which was one cool metal side of the big computer. "It would take decades — as long as you yourself have lived, longer really — for a human being to root through the sum total of your experience. Retrieval even with the computer is an incredible problem. It would take centuries for us to dig out something you didn't want us to know."

Taylor frowned. Of course they'd try it anyway; hell, it was probably the whole reason the project got funded in the first place ...

But what choice did he have? Less than two years away from the twenty needed for full retirement, he couldn't blow it now on that suspicion. And Uncle knew it.

"What the hell," he'd said. "I've been a Russian thirteen years. Now I'll be a bird."

But he hadn't known, not then, that he would truly be the bird, the copy, and that the man would be the other. Forever.

**T**aylor the man ducked into the bird's quarters, his footsteps unusually light and quick for a fat man's. The albatross, who hadn't heard him coming, let out an involuntary squawk, and his counterpart barked out a single strangled curse.

Then he strode past the perch above the tray of what amounted to kitty litter and picked up the cordless keyboard that had become the bird's voice. Pressing a finger to his lips, he stuck the device under his arm and walked out.

Figure that out, big fellow, the bird thought.

Moments later the man was back, shutting the door behind him in a pantomime of secrecy. "Let's talk."

The bird couldn't point out that the conversation would be rather one-sided.

The man drew up a metal folding chair and sat down. "Look, I know you can't answer me this way, but I find it damn inhibiting having everything I say go into the bug in your terminal. A person likes a little privacy. Understand? Anyway, I think it's time I got to know myself a bit better."

Is it, now? And suppose I don't want to know myself?

"I'd like to find out how much of our life —" He paused, caught on the grammar. "— our lives you can remember."

The bird did a shruggy thing with his shoulders.

"Can you nod for yes and shake your head for no? Can you do that?"

The bird nodded once, wearily: Of course I can, you think I'm a frigging parakeet?

"Heard the word? My brain tape's been screwed. When they load up the original, they get a bunch of what they call 'checksum errors.'"

Slow and dumb he might be, but T-bird could figure out that if the company was finding errors in the originals, it was because they were using them — probably to work on retrieving data from a copy of a human mind. He nodded, slowly, to show that he understood.

"Yeah, you get it. Well, that's over with, that's through." The man grinned briefly. "I would've waved a magic eraser over the abridged version, too, but I don't know where it is. They're using it ..."

The abridged version. That means me.

"I need your help on this, but first I've got to know something ..." A pause, the merest breath of hesitation. "Do you remember the phrase, 'the one true religion'?"

Strange question, the bird thought. Belatedly, it came to him that it must be a password ... one he couldn't quite recall. He shook his head.

The man sighed, a minute exhalation another human might not have heard.

#### \*Y HE STIL ROUND

"Taylor's helping us check your memories, so we can understand where the process introduces changes." Lynen smiled, probably daydreaming of the paper she'd get out of this someday, when it was declassified. "Hell, T-bird, where else can we send him away? He's too close to the recycling date to be worth training for another

mission. I didn't expect you two to be so competitive. Sibling rivalry with the self ..."

T-bird snorted. He couldn't believe in their essential oneness anymore; maybe he never had. Something had gotten changed somewhere, changed and lost ... and he wasn't sure he wasn't better for it.

He certainly had the physical edge; having survived the first difficult months of life, he could look forward to eighty more vigorous years. Eighty, because that was the lifespan of the wandering albatross; vigorous, because a bird didn't live long in any other shape. For the man, life extension could keep him going damn near forever ... but T-bird wouldn't have to worry about that now, about ending up on the machine, because when he sickened, he'd simply fall into the sea and die, free.

T-bird could feel sorry for the man, when he thought about the physical.

But the mental was something. To become a bird, he'd sacrificed seven-eighths of his mind, having left it to the damn computer to decide what to keep and what to throw away. And he couldn't shake this feeling he'd lost something vital, the very core of what his self was built around.

\*Y U FUTZ WITH MY ORIGINAL

"Oh, Taylor, that's exactly what you said, exactly what your human version said ..."

So I'm predictable. He coughed threateningly.

"You've known all along that the animal-spy operation is strictly a by-product, a way for us to get our brain-scanning techniques to pay for themselves before we've got them completely refined ..."

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

"It's true what I told you, that we haven't yet figured out a way to muck through the entire original and dig out specific bits of information. Hell, we can't even get what we want from your bird-brain ... but that doesn't mean we aren't still trying ..."

To barge into brains. My brain.

— to develop some kind of search routine that would pinpoint answers to our questions. Hell, T-bird, a development like this would make torture obsolete. Isn't it worth sacrificing a little privacy for a goal like that?"

T-bird couldn't recall any good reason to torture people anyway, but maybe the computer had edited that.

\*WHAT I SAY

"You were not pleased," she admitted.

\*MAKE IT UNANIMOUS.

T-bird flew down the hall in triumph, only once grazing his scalp on the low ceiling, and skidded to a noisy halt outside Kerr's office. I can fly! he thought, wishing that albatrosses could sing their joy. I can really fly!

The commotion brought a laughing Kerr to his door. "That a scheduled landing?"

He cawed victoriously, smoothed down a misplaced breast feather, and waddled on inside.

That night, they celebrated, T-bird learning about the properties of cheap red wine — and about the drunken jokes he could no longer understand. There was an awkward moment.

"Hey, what is this?" Taylor the man asked. "You sure he isn't stupid or something?"

"Because he's lost some sexual slang?" Lynen said. "Oh, no, we edited that stuff on purpose. Hell, what would he

need memories of human sexuality for? They'd just take up space better spent on something else."

Taylor went red, then pale. "You deleted ... that ...?"

"He's a bird, Jake. We asked the computer to build a tapeworm to eliminate all memories of sex up to five levels of association. Recall of human arousal could only be frustrating ..."

"Five levels ...! What precisely does that mean in terms of what's been deleted? Have you left him anything that makes a human a human? Even the memory of a face? This is the most incredible, the most obscene ..."

"He's an underage virgin, Jake, in no condition to miss what he's never had ..."

T-bird watched them quarrel, amazed. Did the man really care so much about him? Then why did he, the bird, feel so all alone?

Kerr, standing on the sidelines, quietly filled T-bird in on "the birds and the bees." T-bird couldn't understand what the big fuss was all about.

T-bird seriously considered defection as he dipped and dived among the gulls. Not to the Soviets, of course, nor to any agency under human control.

But to the sky.

Who could stop him if he glided headlong into the Antarctic to join a flock of wanderer youngsters in their first circuit around the pole? Who would pursue him beyond the mountains of ice and the valleys of white death?

Who indeed. Except his own loneliness.

The Soviet "scientific" installation was a blot on the white shelf above the gray sea, a dark Antarctic keep surrounded by ominous silence. Taylor swooped in for a recon dive around the near tower, his wings battling the still air like flashing spears. Piece of cake, he thought, catching the shimmer of the rich krill beds floating by the shore, undisturbed by the usual greedy gulls and hissing skuas. He'd have this mission in his pocket in a week.

Then somebody croaked a strangled cry and Taylor jerked a notch higher in the air and something exploded in-near-through his brain and deaf he found himself falling stunned into the sea which was suddenly an open mouth waiting to swallow him up and he knew he was going to go under and he knew he was going to drown and somewhere another explosion and somewhere a strangled scream —

Webbed feet hit water and then breast —

Help me, screamed his mind.

And just before the waves closed over his head, he saw her. And knew there'd be no rescue. She was helpless, helpless; she'd never pull him or any drowning thing from the water.

For she too was just another damn bird.

Afterward, he possessed only the haziest memories of his fight against the frigid water. Raw determination was the only thing that had placed him on this rocky ledge where he perched, stiff with cold and fear. And then the world went dark for an indefinite time.

Sensing movement, he opened his eyes to the pastel dawn of Antarctic spring. The female albatross, an immature bird no older than he, carried a gift of food. She fed him without coyness, letting him snatch it from her. What on earth —?

He was cold, so cold. The world was going black again. But she opened her wings, trying to cover him.

Her heart was so warm —

It felt like broken sleep, but surely the whole thing was a dream. Or maybe he'd died, and as a spirit leaving a bird body had entered bird heaven. He couldn't think.

Time passed. The female shifted her feathers over his body. It didn't make sense. What female chose a sickly mate, especially when both of them were too young for mating anyway?

She nudged his wing impatiently. Taylor jerked erect, surprised the touch didn't hurt as much as he'd expected. No permanent damage, then. He wondered, briefly, if the tiny camera on his leg-ring was waterproof. But he had bigger problems, such as the fact that he was wiggling out. I think this bird is trying to tell me something. Not a good sign, T-bird, my friend. Not a good sign at all.

Croaking softly, she took his beak in hers and tried to draw it down to her feet. When he shook her off, she lifted her left leg high. Taylor was wishing he understood enough albatross to tell her the damn ledge wasn't wide enough for such acrobatics. Then he saw it. A leg-ring, exactly like his own.

Why hadn't they told him there would be another bird? The old need-to-know bullshit, maybe.

He slept twice more before he was ready to try his wings. She fed him between each sleep. Somewhere along the way he realized that she had to be another version of Taylor. After all, they wouldn't record a new head every time they wanted to fire in a bird.

He expected to feel threatened, the way he'd felt with Taylor the man. What he seemed to feel instead was a tentative gratitude.

He had a lot to think about. But the advance flock was already approaching the Soviet installation and it was time to try his wings.

**T**he guns were eerily silent. Apparently they intended to let the birds get quite close to the installation before they started shooting. T-bird didn't like the implications.

Implications, hell. He didn't like the facts. He'd been betrayed. The Russians knew about the animal spies and they were making goddamn sure none of them was going to amount to much more than fish food.

The route of the flock, a loose assortment of gulls, albatrosses, and skuas, couldn't have taken more than a few minutes, but to T-bird the destruction swelled to fill all the time and space like a nightmare from which there'd be no awakening. The birds had been allowed to settle on the garbage dump at the outskirts of the installation, and then the crew had raised its automatics in a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to spit out all the ammunition it could grab. The birds were ripped apart by a rain of steel that tore their bodies to shreds. Those who'd had time to take to the air fell down in pieces, the bloodied chunks of heads and trunk hitting earth first while the scattered feathers drifted lazily behind.

Over the roar of the slaughter, the female croaked, then tapped her camera. What was she trying to say? She'd already used up her film?

T-bird tried to kick his own leg-ring into action but, stiff from the accident, he couldn't quite make it. Impatiently, she ducked underneath him, an easy mid-air maneuver,

to peck at his leg herself. Then she darted away. Down to the destruction.

T-bird felt a numb species of awe as she led him into the melee, dodging rifle-fire like an angel of God. It was inconceivable that they'd ever shared the same mind. Surely he was neither that brave nor that foolish. But he hadn't time to think about it. A wall of bullets was whirling by his brain. And, even as he jerked higher, the female was pecking at his leg, making records.

Enough. Most of them were dead, and it was time —

He didn't have a chance to complete the thought before the explosion sent him backwards and down. He righted himself in time to see the twisted corpse of what had once been a bird drop like a stone.

A snowstorm of white, gray, and brown feathers danced delicately afterword.

T-bird screamed, a hoarse inhuman cry.

**H**e got away; he didn't remember how, and he wasn't proud of the fact. He kept remembering the female self, the way she'd laid herself on the line.

Useless to say, as Lynen might, that she was hardly more than an edited tape that was stored on a computer even now, waiting to be reborn again; useless to say that T-bird himself was practically the same person and so you could scarcely say she'd died. He knew better.

There was so much he'd have liked to ask her. How exact was the programming? What were the differences caused by getting burned onto a different physical body, the differences caused by different education? But what he was really getting at was this: Did he have, anywhere within himself, the same seeds of courage that she did?

Later, when the first wave of grief had passed, he was able to think without drama or exaggeration: I have lost my only friend.

**H**e spent four schizophrenic months on South Georgia Island, croaking at the penguins, croaking at the skuas, croaking until he was hoarse with his inability to express what he felt. At first he thought he wasn't going back. And then he knew he had to.

They had a new keyboard when he got back, the kind that could call out whole phrases if he punched in the right mnemonic. But there was no handy-dandy shortcut for what T-bird had to say to Taylor, in front of the whole group.

**\*U BETRAYED ME. U SOLD ME TO RUSSIANS.**

The man shrugged. "Everybody in this room knows I'm trustworthy. You had my brains spread out eight ways from Sunday for months."

"Can't deny that." Kerr said helpfully.

T-bird shook his head impatiently. True, Taylor had taken an incredible gamble, but then the pay-off was equally incredible — a Soviet operative positioned at the heart of mind-scanning technology.

"You say yourself that you can't remember anything that suggests that Taylor got turned in Russia," Lynen said impatiently. "Can't you see that this is the old sibling rivalry thing all over again?"

**\*ALL I C R BODIES OF FRIENDS**

"Birds, T-bird. They were birds. That's all. Try to maintain some perspective on all this —"

The albatross snorted. What in hell did they think he was?



Lynen laughed. "The photos show that the Russians were shooting anything that moved. If one of us had betrayed you, they would know not to bother with skua and such."

"WOULD U TRUST GRUNT TO TELL ALBATROSS FROM AARDVARK

"They're going on rumor," she said. "That's all. No one betrayed you. It's just one of those unfortunate things."

T-bird said nothing more. Who listens to a bird?

**T**-bird cocked an eye at the story under the splashy headline on the paper Kerr had brought him:

**"REDS SLAUGHTER SEABIRDS**

**"Tens of thousands may be dead.**

**"The U.S. has uncovered evidence (see photo, right) that the Soviet Union has encouraged soldiers to use wild seabird flocks for target practice. Most of the target shooting has taken place in Antarctica, where military training is forbidden under international law. Tens of thousands of birds, including penguins, albatrosses, gulls, and many others universally beloved by the world's people, have already been slaughtered in this cynical Soviet attempt to teach soldiers lack of respect for all life," said spokesperson ...."**

**\*PENGUINS?**

Kerr shrugged. "A colorful addition to the truth. People like penguins."

The photo was one of those close-ups, showing several bundled-up soldiers spraying automatic fire into the thick of the flock. A trick of perspective made a severed head leap out of the picture to grab the viewer's attention. T-bird felt sick all over again.

**\*THIS WHAT ITS ABOUT? 1 MORE SHOT IN PROPAGANDA WAR?**

**"It's your war, too," Kerr said.**

T-bird wondered. He was not human now and never would be, no matter where his mind had been once upon a time. What were human loyalties to him?

Yet he was not a bird either, no matter what body his brain was sheltered in. He knew what it meant to aspire, to dream of creating something greater than yourself and your family, something enduring.

He was a new thing, a new species, and now a new plan dreamed through him. Companions, he thought. I must have companions. I'll get the agency to make more T-birds and we'll start our own colony; we'll fly high and free, and, when the humans have killed themselves in their endless quarrels, we'll be there to start over ....

**"You did bring something back," Kerr was saying. "If not for you, the whole animal-spy program would have been a complete bust. I hope you'll remember that."**

T-bird looked at him with one unblinking eye.

Kerr glanced down. "Look, it's over. Without the element of surprise, animal spies are worthless. Continuing to use them opens us to the risk that one day the administration could be linked to their existence and the subsequent eco-slaughter currently blamed on the Soviets."

The ornithologist didn't talk like this, in this jargon.

**\*WHAT HAPPENS TO BIRDS?**

It wasn't easy to avoid the big-eyed gaze of an albatross, but Kerr was doing it.

**\*WHAT HAPPENS TO ME?**

Kerr touched his ID badge briefly, unconsciously. His hands were shaking. "I'm sorry," he said.

**T**-bird dashed into the hall, took a long running start, and swooped through the air. He flew without grace to the communal aviary where they kept the albatrosses awaiting memory burn-in. Lynen was standing just outside the heavy double doors. She grabbed for him as he rushed to peck in the open-sesame code.

"Don't —"

The code had been changed. He twisted around violently, his beak a peck away from her right eye.

"T-bird, you don't want to see this. Where's Kerr? He's supposed to be talking with you."

He wouldn't back off. Rage flared through his hollow bones like madness.

The beak cent millimeters away from her eye convinced her. She let go of his wings to punch in the code. "Just remember that they're only birds, T-bird," she said wearily. "That's all. Just birds. Nothing to do with you."

T-bird walked down the aviary complex corridor, sickened by the stink of fish and death. Two men unknown to him were quietly marking and identifying the empty heaps of feathers collapsed about the room.

Lynen followed, her arms folded across her chest. "I tried to spare you this. I told you not to go in."

T-bird snorted.

"We couldn't just release them," she said. "What if some damned birdwatcher had seen them in the area and linked them to us?"

He was glad he wasn't human; it wasn't a proud thing to be. Some of these birds had been people. Lynen had forgotten that he'd met the female, that he knew there were others.

She seemed to read his mind. "None of these animals were birdbrains, T-bird. Hell, what do you think we are? We know you're human. We're not going to just kill you...."

Kerr's trembling hands. The attempt at apology. T-bird realized that Kerr was supposed to be killing him. Right now. At this very moment. He made a move to leave, and then he saw the hypodermic in her hand.

An albatross isn't one of the world's most maneuverable birds. He ran and leaped, clawing at the air. The needle grazed his feathers. "Damn it, catch him!" Lynen screamed at the men.

A swan can break a human arm with a single blow. Could an albatross, or was it too specialized? Time to find out. T-bird dived between her legs, his head pounding like a hammer, his beak working, his right wing beating out....

Something snapped in her slender legs, and she was screaming, and T-bird was out the door. In the hall, he took another running leap and this time made it into the air.

Behind him, screams and curses. Before him?

Taylor's office. Perhaps he'd caught a dim echo of the scuffle through the soundproofed halls, perhaps he'd only caught the cry of mind calling to mind ... but his door was open and he was standing in it. T-bird flew into his face, forcing him back into the office. With the thump of two webbed feet, he closed the door behind him.

Taylor smiled. "I thought I was the enemy."

T-bird looked around frantically. There was no keyboard in Taylor's office, nothing he could use to communicate his most desperate idea yet: If they want me dead, maybe that's reason enough for you to keep me alive.

"I can't help you," Taylor was saying. "Anyway, I'm out of here." For the first time, T-bird registered the presence of the half-packed box.

T-bird didn't have to ask where the man was going. He knew. How he knew he couldn't say. It had something to do with the speed with which he'd become a bird. Once, perhaps, he'd become a Russian with equal speed.

Slower, not dumber, Taylor had said, and here was the



proof: the memory of a classroom long ago, a professor with a thin smile saying, "There are those who would argue that Marxism is the one true religion of the twentieth century."

"My work is done here," the man was saying. His voice held a bitterness that might have been meant for the bird, might have been meant for any listening devices hidden in the walls. "The program's over, and it's time for me to recycle, to retire and give my seniority to some younger squirt, while I start all over in another field."

Yes, over there it's so much better, T-bird thought sarcastically. They didn't have to force people to start all over again every twenty years, to give everybody a fair chance no matter when they were born. Why should they? He picked up a pencil and scrawled clumsy words across an old memo: OVER THERE, THEY STILL DIE.

"Over there, they still allow you to die," Taylor corrected stiffly, provoked into honesty at last. But it was easy to be honest when you weren't going to stick around to face the consequences.

TRAITOR, T-bird wrote.

"And what are you?" The man shook his head. "You're not even true to yourself, to me. At first I thought you'd know. I thought we'd work together ...."

Fractions, T-bird thought. The female was the proud, glorious part of himself, and this, this — he scrawled a huge question mark across the paper: Why? What had turned the man so easily?

Taylor shrugged. "You really don't remember her ... the woman?"

T-bird shook his head no.

"Funny." But he wasn't laughing. "They cut out the sex, they said, all the things associated with sex, and I guess she went, too. But I want you to know that all the time I thought it was love —"

T-bird remembered the female, remembered the dream of how easy it would be to abandon everything for a free and open life. And he found it in himself to understand, just a little.

"The helicopter is waiting. I'm being escorted to HQ for debriefing before I'm allowed to retire."

The bird tensed.

"But the chopper will never arrive at HQ. The other birdbrains are already on board, their cages disguised as some of the electronics shit we're always sending back and forth. Maybe I could smuggle you in."

So now T-bird could get experimented on by Russians too. Great. Terrific. But what had he expected?

He turned to go. And Taylor grabbed him.

T-bird choked in the dark suitcase. The air wouldn't last until Russia, but maybe that's the way Taylor wanted it. He could demonstrate that he'd made the attempt to bring in the birds without actually risking the presence of someone with half his memories and that half not right screwing around with his new life.

Should he conserve air, or should he struggle? T-bird slapped one strong foot against the side of the suitcase, making a satisfying thump. But nothing happened. Thump. Nothing. Thump.

What was that? The clop of familiar footsteps. A pause. "The birdbrains are missing. I need to check the chopper before you leave." It was Kerr.

T-bird didn't know whether to kick for help or not.

"Jesus Christ." Taylor managed to produce precisely the right amount of exasperation as he unlocked the suitcase. Straining his ears, T-bird realized that he'd bent down to pull it open. Get ready, get set —

Go. He exploded out of the case, slamming into Taylor hard enough to knock loose the gun he'd started to draw from within his jacket. T-bird ignored the clatter. Guns were worthless to a bird. His only weapon was his body, a heat-seeking missile aimed straight for the eyes. Kerr picked up the gun as Taylor flung his arms in front of his face. "Get out," Kerr said quietly. "Out of the chopper."

Taylor descended, cursing. There was a quick breeze through the chopper as the door slid open and closed again.

Now for Kerr. T-bird turned to see him turning the gun over and over in his hands, not quite aiming it at anybody as he looked at the pilot. "Let's go," he said. "HQ will want a full report."

"I'd kind of like a full report myself."

"It's on a need-to-know basis, fellow. Sorry."

T-bird's keen ears easily detected the shouts over the roar of the helicopter. The pilot didn't hear, or pretended not to. There was, after all, the matter of Kerr's gun to consider. They lurched into the air.

"I'm no fucking assassin," Kerr said. "I'm not going to be the fall guy. Murder, that's what it is."

"I'm sure you aren't," the pilot said. His twisted voice sounded anything but sure.

T-bird looked at the ornithologist, afraid to breathe.

"There's more human inside of you than in one of those things they hook up to the machine," Kerr told him. "I know that much, anyway. It's murder if I kill you now."

The pilot thought Kerr was talking to him, the only human in sight. "Yeah, man, well, I hope you keep that in mind."

T-bird wished he could say something, anything. Kerr was doomed. The right to immortality didn't extend to operatives gone bad. You could always disappear.

The ornithologist started opening boxes, releasing the small flock of birdbrains. Three females, two males. A damn small community, T-bird thought, but a helluva lot better than nothing. The birds shook out their wings as they looked each other over.

Kerr was waving the gun around again. "Hey, buddy," he said. "You see that park down there?"

"Yeah, I see it."

"Let's touch down there for a minute. The company doesn't need to be worried with these damn birds."

"Whatever you say, fellow."

"I liked birds once," Kerr said. "That's the whole reason I became an ornithologist. You'd think they'd understand that."

"Stands to reason," the pilot agreed nervously.

The big birds plopped down awkwardly from the chopper. T-bird turned his head for a moment, looking backward at the man who had taught him how to be a bird. He pitied humans their life without wings. Freedom of choice was a cruel illusion for them, when it cost them so much to do what they thought was right. Kerr would never get away.

The rest of the flock was already running, wings flapping to build up speed. T-bird hurried to catch up. It was a long way to Antarctica. □

# Eyes of Chaos

By Robert A. Metzger

Art by Carol Heyer

**P**ast steel bars and a fogged window, fall was giving way to winter. The old maple tree, with its twisted trunk and threadbare tire swing, only days ago had burned with leaves of orange and amber. But today, looking skeletal and nearly dead, it whipped in the cold wind, its naked limbs twitching with each gust. Fallen leaves, having all turned to the color of mud, were buffeted and hurled through the soot-colored afternoon sky. Many would crash against the window and then flutter back into the wind, but a few, torn and crumbled, would stick against the cold glass.

"What do you see out there, Doc?" I asked.

Doc didn't move, and he certainly wouldn't be answering me. The nearly translucent skin of his face hung in thin, wrinkled folds. The only indication that he wasn't actually some mummified corpse was the rhythmic twitching of his left cheek. We shared a bench by the day room's only window. But while I sat back, sinking into soft cushions and sipping greasy coffee out of a Styrofoam cup, Doc sat perched on the very edge of the couch, clenching the window's bars with white-knuckled fists, and looked unblinkingly out into the yard.

"No one's home, college boy."

I swiveled around, managing to spill coffee over my already terminally stained jeans.

Horace Brockmeister tapped a stubby index finger against the side of his pink, bald head. "It's the wide open spaces," he said while again tapping the side of his head, then giggled through his nose in a spasm of wet-sounding snorts.

Horace was senior orderly on the day shift in the schizophrenia ward of the Roseville Sanatorium. From what I'd been told, he'd been here nearly sixteen years. With that seniority went the privilege of throwing the switch during electro-shock whenever some unfortunate at Roseville needed a brainwave scramble. Behind his dull, piggy eyes, I could see within him the little boy who had probably enjoyed pulling the wings off horseflies and igniting ants under a magnifying glass.

Bending back my head and angling up my nose, I sniffed. "Smells like Tom Wislow couldn't find the head."

Sometime in the distant past, Horace had been relieved of his sense of smell, courtesy of a sinus infection that had fried his nasal passages. To Horace, a bucket of shit or a bouquet of roses all smelled the same. If Nurse Russel came across Tom's calling card, it would be Horace's ass that would get chewed.

"Where?" asked Horace in a panicky voice as he twisted his head from side to side, sniffing like a bloodhound through his useless nose.

Nurse Russel had the power to revoke Horace's cherished switch-throwing privilege.

I pointed in the general direction of the hallway that led out of the day room. Horace took off in a dog-trot, pushing aside whatever residents were unfortunate

enough to get in his way.

"You know," I said as I turned back to Doc, "now that Horace is gone, the smell seems to have vanished. Think there's a correlation between the smell and Horace?" I asked jokingly.

Doc turned his head. The old man no longer had any eyebrows, having nervously plucked them out so many times that only red, leathery scar tissue remained. He blinked, and his eyes focused. He stared at my mouth. "Odor is not the random, Brownian effect that most people believe," he said, then paused for only a second, as if listening to some faraway voice. "When my dopamine level is high enough, I can see the order above the chaos." Then his eyes glazed over, and he turned to look back through the window.

My Styrofoam cup dropped and, hitting the linoleum floor, sent up a small geyser of coffee. I'd been coming here every Wednesday for almost two years. In all that time Doc had never spoken a word, or given any indication that he even knew anyone else existed.

"Doc?" I asked gently.

He continued to stare out into the yard.

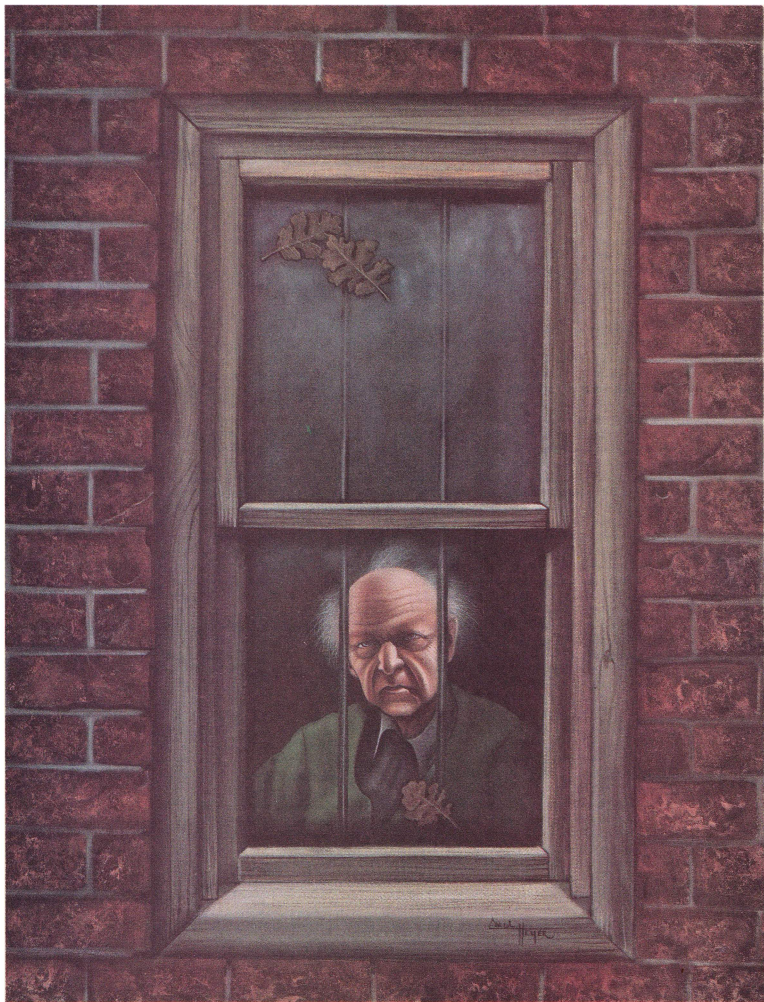
**D**r. Reginald Hillburn, chief head-shrinker at Roseville, peered down at me from over the rims of his bifocals. "You were mistaken, Richard."

My name was Dick Bowers. Besides going by Dick, I'd answer to Rick, Dickie, Dickhead, Bowers, Bow Wow, Hey You, and even Dumb Shit. Richard was not a viable option, and Hillburn unfortunately knew that. In a moment of weakness, when I had first volunteered at Roseville, I had let Hillburn know how I detested the name Richard. Since then, he had been incapable of calling me anything else.

I sat up straighter, trying to get eye level with Hillburn, but it was impossible. His visitor's chair had at least six inches sawed off the bottom of its legs. It felt as if I was sitting in a hole.

"I am not," I said defiantly as I looked up at him. "He spoke to me as clearly as both of us are speaking right now."

Sticking out his stubby tongue, Hillburn licked the ball of his thumb, then flipped through papers in the open file. He plucked out a single page and held it out at arm's length. "Dr. Ernest T. Raymond, often referred to by the staff as Doc, was admitted to Roseville April 12, 1970." Hillburn lowered the paper so he could just barely see me. "That's nearly twenty years ago." He squinted his eyes as if to emphasize just how long twenty years really was. "Dr. Raymond suffered a nervous breakdown while giving a lecture on nonlinear biological responses." Again Hillburn peered at me, almost as if he was trying to indicate that



what he was saying should hold some special meaning for me. After several seconds, he cleared his throat. "Before he could be subdued, he had eaten half a box of chalk, somehow managed to light his socks on fire, and had smashed every fluorescent light in the lecture hall." He lowered the single sheet of paper back onto the thick pile. "His symptoms were those of the classic schizophrenia: hallucinations, delusions, and even stream-of-consciousness ramblings that would go on for hours. Dr. Raymond was most fortunate that we had the drugs to handle this. It took a while to hit upon the correct dosages of Thorazine, Haldol, and Mellaril, but once we did, he leveled out, and except for the occasional bout of catatonia, and some Parkinson-like side effects, he's now quite manageable."

Hillburn then folded his hands and smiled with that arrogant physician smile, just daring me to try to argue against the combined wisdom of himself and the pharmacological cornucopia that he used to battle mental illness.

"He spoke to me," I said once again.

Hillburn leaned across his desk toward me. He reeked of coffee and musk cologne.

"Richard," he said in a tone of voice making certain that I knew who was the master and who was the slave, "that old man who you claim spoke to you, many years ago was suffering from life-threatening seizures. It required surgery to save his life, but during that surgery, the Broca's area of his brain was damaged. He is now physically incapable of speech." He wagged a finger at me as if talking to a dog that had just shit on the carpet. "Let us not forget why you are here, and what your responsibilities are. You are a senior at UCLA, enrolled in premed. You do volunteer work here at Roseville, one day a week, only to get your tuition fees waived, and to embellish your applications for med school. As long as you obey my rule of posing as a resident so as not to disturb our real residents, I will continue to permit you to observe and to interact with our residents on a social basis." He wagged his finger again. "However, you will not interfere in the care or diagnosis of the patients. You are not a doctor." He sat back in his chair and ran a hand across his thinning hair. "Is that understood?" he asked.

I simply nodded.

What he said was true. I was here to get my tuition waived and to pad my applications for med school, but as of today, and because of this patronizing lecture, it had suddenly become more than that. If there was something about Doc other than just the drugged-out schizoid staring through a window that Hillburn believed he was, I'd find out what that something was, and then stuff the truth down Hillburn's throat.

I smiled. "Whatever you say, Dr. Hillburn." Standing from the chair, I started to walk toward the door.

"Oh, Richard."

I stopped and turned. Hillburn held out a TV remote. "Just to show you that I'm not the uninquisitive administrator that you believe me to be, I had the Vid from the day room pulled from last Wednesday and set it up to the point at which you claim Dr. Raymond spoke to you." He pointed the remote at my head and flicked a button. Behind me, something hissed and crackled.

Turning, I faced a wall monitor. It showed the back end of the day room. There was no sound, only picture. I was

sitting on the couch with Doc.

"I believe this is where you claim the incident occurred."

Doc's head turned toward me. His lips did not so much as move. His mouth was closed tightly, and the only movement of his face came from his twitching cheek. My Styrofoam cup hit the floor, sending up a fountain of coffee. Doc then turned back to stare through the window.

My eyelids fluttered uncontrollably. The Vid couldn't lie.

"As you can see," said Hillburn, "unless that old man is an extremely talented ventriloquist, he did not speak."

I turned back to Hillburn, who was now smiling with a wide, self-satisfied grin. "It's not a good sign to be hearing voices that aren't there, Richard. That's often an early symptom of schizophrenia." His grin turned into a laugh. "Perhaps in your Wednesday morning placebo, I should prescribe a little lithium to flatten out your hyperactive imagination and a couple of Thorazine tabs to lower your dopamine level."

I walked out without saying a word. Only a minute earlier all I had wanted to do was to show up Hillburn for the arrogant ass that he was, but now that had become a trivial and unimportant detail. Somehow the Vid hadn't shown it, but Doc *had* spoken to me, and I had to find out how.

**I**n many ways my schedule at Roseville was as regimented and ingrained as the behavior patterns of the schizoids that I observed. Every Tuesday night after lights off, when everyone was neatly locked into his sleep cubicle, the night staff would let me in, and I'd head into my own cubicle. When morning came and the cubicle doors were unlocked, I'd wander out like the rest of them, ready for another day on the schizoid ward. They were all so drugged and trapped in their own delusional worlds that few, if any, of them were able to recognize that I had been missing for the previous six days.

Every Wednesday I'd share the day with them, watching TV, occasionally bouncing my head against the wall, talking to the trash can, and demanding ice cream from any nurse who would come within shouting distance of me. After we were all locked up for the night, the staff would release me.

The project I had been working on for the past two years dealt with creating a mathematical model to describe schizophrenia, based on the cyclic imbalance of dopamine concentrations at synaptic sites within the brain. It was an assigned topic by my advisor, a hard-core neuroanatomist who believed that soul and mind were nothing more than the result of neurons floating in the chemical soup of the brain. At first I had been extremely interested in the project, but after being at Roseville for a month, I realized that a model could never be obtained by observing these ward patients. They were so heavily drugged, and the chemical balance of their brains so artificially altered, that they were no longer operating in a true schizoid fashion.

I tried to explain that to my advisor, but he simply didn't want to hear it. I fought him for awhile, but finally gave it up, remembering that my real motivation was the waiving of my tuition and the enhancement of my med school applications. For the next two years, I had simply cruised, taking meaningless notes and counting down the

weeks until I graduated. That is, until Hillburn had shown me that damned Vid. That had been four Wednesdays ago, and since then I'd stuck to Doc as if we were stapled together at the hip.

So far, he hadn't said a word.

"How's your oatmeal?" I asked Doc.

We shared one of the couple of dozen tables in the day room. He ate like an automaton, a spoonful every twenty-three seconds, chewing every mouthful eight times. After every fourth bite, he'd take a sip of orange juice. His eyes never seemed to focus.

"Time for medication."

I looked up from my own bowl. Nurse Springer stood next to our table. She was almost as wide as she was tall, and her chubby face was filled with a warm smile. She was one of the few people in Roseville who were still genuinely human.

"Doc," she said as she held out a small paper cup filled with rattling pills.

Doc was chewing his third mouthful of oatmeal, and Nurse Springer knew that she would simply have to wait until he was ready. After swallowing, he scooped up his fourth spoonful and began chewing.

Nurse Springer smiled over at me. "I think there's a football game on this afternoon. The Rams and ..." She paused, apparently trying to remember the name of the other team.

"The Royals," I said, teasing her, wondering if she would even realize that they were a baseball team.

She giggled like a little girl, which caused her whole body to quiver. "I believe you're right," she said.

I was not all that surprised that she hadn't realized the Royals were a baseball team, but I was surprised that she would have thought that a football game would be played on a Wednesday afternoon. Being the day room's TV remote czar, she knew the TV schedule better than any of the residents, and must have known that football was never played on Wednesdays. I hoped this place wasn't finally getting to her.

With a shaking hand, Doc laid his spoon onto the tabletop. He had finally swallowed his fourth spoonful. Nurse Springer placed the cup in his shaking right hand. I'd watched this countless times. Doc would transfer the cup to his left hand, hold it to his lips, and, jerking back his head, pop the pills into his mouth. Then, picking up his orange juice cup, he'd take a sip and swallow the pills. The last part of the ritual consisted of opening his mouth and sticking out his tongue so that Nurse Springer could see he had swallowed his medication. She never bothered to look. Doc had been here so long, and his actions were so repeatable, that no one ever checked to see that he swallowed his pills.

"I'll be back with yours in a minute, Dick," she said to me as she turned.

"Don't forget the ice cream," I said, calling out after her. Whenever the opportunity presented itself, I'd play some facet of my schizoid persona.

Doc had returned to his oatmeal. He was staring into the bowl, his jaw automatically chewing.

I almost slipped into my own equally mechanical oatmeal consumption, but something caught my attention, something I couldn't quite see. I looked over at Doc. He was chewing like a contented cow. Nothing different there.

His left hand moved.

That was it.

After medication, he always dropped his left hand into his lap. But now it was on the table, locked into a fist. He slowly turned it over, and the fingers uncurled one by one. The wrinkled palm of his hand was filled with a half dozen pills and capsules.

"Here you go, Dick."

His fingers snapped shut, so rapidly that it startled me, and I actually jumped in my seat.

"I'm sorry I spooked you, Dick."

I looked up, and Nurse Springer held a paper cup out toward me. She obviously hadn't seen what had been in Doc's hand, or she would have been shouting for an orderly. I wasn't about to give away Doc's secret.

"No ice cream," I said as sadly as I could, looking up at her, maintaining the masquerade.

"Not for breakfast, but I'll see what I can do about rattling lunch." She rattled the cup at me, and, reaching out, I took it.

Doc had finished his breakfast, and, with some oatmeal dribbling down the creases in his chin, he was looking across the table at me. His eyes were focused, and he was staring at me with a hawk-like gaze. He was testing me.

Nurse Springer wasn't paying any real attention. After all, there was no reason to. The pills in my cup were nothing more than placebos—candy-coated capsules. She was looking toward the far end of the room in the direction of the TV. I emptied the pills into my left hand, held the cup up to my mouth just as Doc had, and pretended to toss them into my mouth. I took a drink of juice and swallowed.

"All down?" asked Nurse Springer.

I opened my mouth, and stuck out my tongue.

"Good," she said, smiling.

I simply nodded, and that seemed to satisfy her. She walked back to the dispensary.

Doc continued to stare at me.

"How long have you been palming your medication?" I asked in a whisper.

His lips quivered, and then he spoke. "For a couple of years now," he said. Then the awareness in his eyes faded away. Slowly standing, he picked up his plastic bowl and cup and shuffled away to the trash can. When he dumped his trash, I could see him also toss away the pills. He then moved off toward the far end of the room and to the window.

Doc had been faking for the last several years. He couldn't be schizoid any longer, because if he were, without his medication, he would have been behaving like a raving maniac. I had been right. I still didn't know why the Vid hadn't shown him speaking, but it was now obvious that something strange was going on with Doc.

I dumped my own trash and pills just as Doc had, and then joined him at the couch by the window. I felt slightly dizzy, and the lights in the day room seemed to be extra bright. I was probably doing too much reading, and my eyes were letting me know it. Shaking my head, and almost clearing it, I looked over at Doc. He was again staring out into the yard, where leaves were being tossed about in the wind.

"Why are you talking to me?"

Doc didn't turn, but I could see the corner of his mouth move. "I can't save myself," he said. Then he sat silent for several seconds, with his nose pressed up against one of

the bars. He reached out both hands and, placing his fingers against the window, traced along the edges of the leaves which were stuck to the other side of the glass. "Let the white light in," he whispered, "and you'll see that chaos is nothing more than a higher form of order. See it with your soul." His arms lowered in a set of ragged jerks, and he slumped back into the couch, his eyes vacant and empty.

I tried for another hour to get him to talk, but, due to my own impatience and a headache that felt as if someone was drilling into my left eyeball with a dull drill bit, I finally gave up. I'd have to play this game by Doc's rules, and according to his schedule.

The afternoon dragged on, and we all stared up at the TV, watching some soap opera. The blonde on screen, with silicone-reinforced tits and make-up that had probably been applied with a cement trowel, was debating whether to kill her husband with a pick-axe or take him to their anniversary dinner. The line separating those inside Roseville from those outside was truly a thin one.

I rubbed both my temples, fighting a sick headache. For at least an hour now there'd been a low-level buzz in my ears, and the little finger of my left hand had been twitching like a metronome. I was probably coming down with the flu. A quick glance over my shoulder and I saw that Doc had finally moved. He was still on the couch, but his head was now tilted back.

I walked over toward him, almost stumbling over my own feet because of a sticky floor and my spinning head. This flu had screwed up my balance.

Doc had torn a strip of cloth from the bottom of his shirt, and had further ripped that into small pieces. He held the pieces about a foot above his lap; then, opening his hand, he would let the pieces flutter down. They were numbered in red ink, with a barely intelligible chicken scrawl, from one to thirteen. Once the pieces were in his lap, he'd touch each one with the tip of his index finger, then gather them back up and repeat the whole process. I watched him do this two or three times before I finally sat down next to him.

My fingers and toes felt as if a million ants nibbled at them.

"Is the world a linear or nonlinear place?" asked Doc, as he stared straight ahead.

A rust-red line of dried blood ran from the corner of his mouth. It was suddenly obvious how he had numbered the scraps of fabric. I started to turn around to call for a nurse. Doc had probably only bit his lip, but he looked so fragile and ancient that the blood dripping down his chin could be a sign of some serious internal damage.

A vise-like grip locked around my wrist.

"Answer my question," said Doc in a hiss.

I looked down at my wrist. The tendons in the back of Doc's hand were taut and quivering. I realized that I had to humor him and answer his question. Anything less might throw him into a raging fit, or some sort of seizure.

"The world's linear," I answered. That sounded reasonable to me. Cars cruising along freeways, smooth round oranges, and a sun that rose and set every day seemed to indicate a sort of linear feel about things.

He squeezed my wrist even tighter. I could feel my fingers bulge.

"Not for us," said Doc. Reaching up with his free hand,

he poked a stiff and shaking index finger against his forehead. His fingernail tore into his pasty skin. A thin trickle of blood ran down where his eyebrows had once been and dripped into his left eye. "What's occurring at the synapses inside my brain? How's the dopamine level fluctuating?"

Now I realized what Doc's question was really about. In a normal brain, dopamine is a chemical neurotransmitter that carries messages about outside reality to the synapses in the brain, which in turn interpret the reality, and tell the body how to respond to it. In a normal brain, dopamine production is a linear response to outside stimulation. If a bouncing ball jumps a little higher, dopamine production increases just a little bit, and carries this information to a synapse.

That's not the case for the schizoid brain. For a while, the brain might not even notice the bouncing ball, when suddenly, for reasons not understood, dopamine production almost explodes, firing and refring both targeted and random synapses. The schizoid sees bouncing balls, hurled at him straight from hell, intent on vaporizing his head. Without medication, the dopamine concentrations run wild, oscillating in an unstable manner from almost nothing, which produces a trance-like catatonic state, to practically flooding the brain, which results in classic uncontrollable schizoid behavior. That's what was going on in Doc's brain right now. That's what my research had been all about, to try to model the nonlinear production of dopamine, and understand how that interacted with the synapses.

Doc turned his head, and I could now see the right half of his face. It was hardened and dead-looking. Drool ran from the corner of his mouth. "The linear brain sees the world around it and tries to interpret it in terms of nice straight lines and gentle curves." His voice was now strained and somewhat garbled. "But the world isn't linear. Linear is a subset of reality. The world is a chaotic place. Small inputs make huge differences. A fan turned on in Tokyo can produce a blizzard over Kansas weeks later. A single person screaming can set off tens of thousands rioting. Free will comes from the nonlinearity in your brain. Reality itself is intrinsically unstable."

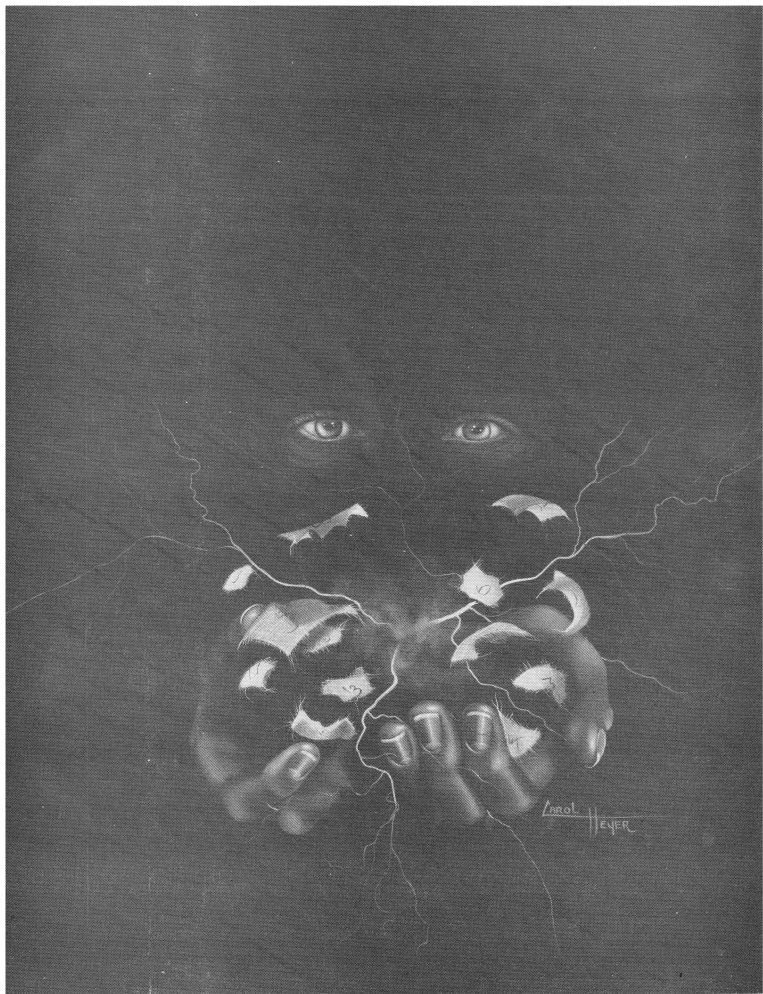
He was rambling now, in the free-flow babble that was so characteristic of schizoid behavior. Any random thought was being amplified by his high dopamine levels.

"You understand this," he said in accusing tones. "Our brains can feel the nonlinear reality around us. We can follow a single molecule of water flowing through a waterfall, and know which leaf out of millions will strike against our window."

I took a quick glance through the window, and at the leaves being scattered about by the wind. Doc pointed a shaking finger. "That one," he said, and seconds later a leaf plastered itself against the glass.

He shook my arm. "You can't see leaves yet, but you can see these." He opened his hand, exposing the small strips of fabric. "You can control them," he said. He shuddered and took a deep breath. "The dopamine level is peaking." He held his open hand under my nose. "Thirteen of them. If you can see the chaos in the air about you, in the ragged corners of the fabric, and in the flakes of dried blood, then let the chaos in your brain match the chaos external to you. You are nonlinear reality."

My vision began to double, and the pieces of cloth in his



CAROL MEYER

hand began to shimmer, then almost dance. My face was flushed. This flu was burning me up, scrambling my brain.

"Feel it," said Doc. "Blow those scraps from my hand. Apply just the right breath so that they fall to the ground, all neatly ordered one through thirteen. Your brain knows how to do it. It senses the instability that permeates the world. Blow!" he screamed.

I could sense those at the TV turning and staring. Noises and voices exploded within my head. The world seemed to throb in random chaotic pulses. My eyes looked at Doc's hand. The cloth scraps glistened, and sparks shot out from them. The air was alive with colors and sound, rainbow snakes and tensor equations. I knew and I felt, but I didn't think. Thinking was linear, and all linearity was gone.

Air whistled through my mouth, kicking up the cloth scraps and sending them through the living air. Buffeted and caressed by colors and creatures, touched by ghosts and bent by dreams, the scraps drifted down to the linoleum floor.

"See!" screamed Doc.

The sounds of feet hitting the floor were transmuted into the scent of lemons and the feel of cockroaches burrowing in my ears. My head seemed to flow like melting rubber, allowing my eyes to look down at the floor. The scraps lay neatly in a row, ordered one through thirteen, just as I knew they would be. Just as they had to be.

My body flowed toward Doc, my eyes wandering across the side of my face. Doc's eyes were closed. There was no longer any blood flowing down his chin or forehead. His hold on my wrist was stiff and cold. He was dead, had probably been dead for hours, but I couldn't really be sure. Time was fluid, full of turbulence and eddies.

"It was you all along," Doc's voice whispered within my head. "The Vid told the truth. The old man sitting across from you could never talk, never even think. As Hillburn told you, he's just an old man, nearly brain-dead, without even a Broca's center. His name is Dick Bowers."

Poker chips rattled inside my eyeballs.

"You just projected yourself onto him," Doc's voice continued to whisper in my head, "thinking that you heard him say the things that you were dreaming. You can feel the blood run down your own chin. You are the one who made those scraps of paper numbered one through thirteen. The staff humored you, calling the old man by your name, and you by his."

It filled my head. It was knowledge and sanity, colored in a light of chaos and instability. The premed student visiting Roseville on Wednesdays had never existed. I was, and always had been, Doctor Ernest T. Raymond. Hillburn had been reading from my file. I had been locked up in Roseville for twenty years, trying to understand the chaos in my brain, my dopamine levels lowered by drugs, and a fantasy persona, using Dick Bowers's name, had been created to salvage some small part of my sanity. But that chaos within me had allowed me to see the patterns that colored the external random world.

I saw it clearly now. I'd been off my medication for almost two years, and my drug-damaged brain had slowly returned to what it had been on that day long ago, in that lecture hall full of students. I held my hands up to my ears and pressed, trying to hold my head together, certain that it was about to explode and send my brain splattering

across the four walls. My dopamine level had peaked. I could smell it in my blood. Pheromones drifted around me like swarms of screaming hornets. And the level wasn't coming down. It wasn't going to come down. The knowing of what I was, and the chaos and nonlinearity around me, had triggered stability in the dopamine in an incredibly high level. My synapses were now firing chaotically and nonlinearly in response to the world around me. I consciously controlled my dopamine levels. I did not understand reality. I mirrored it.

I wanted my body to stand, and it did. *Turn around, I ordered. My body turned.*

Orderlies, nurses, and a dozen patients stood behind the couch. "Tell Dr. Hillburn that Dr. Ernest T. Raymond is ready to check out," I said in almost a whisper.

They would not move, but I knew that I could make them. I reached within myself, and felt the room around me, and knew it as it reflected within me. The unstable, nonlinear reality of the room was a part of me.

"Is a demonstration required?" I asked.

Horace Brockmeister shuffled forward. His face was flushed pink, and his piggy eyes were nearly invisible, sunk deep within folds of fat. In his hands he held a straitjacket. Two other orderlies moved up behind him.

"A little high-voltage dancing will straighten you right up," said a smiling Horace.

And he was right. "Thank you, Horace," I said.

I looked into the room. The air swarmed with ions, charged both positively and negatively. I waved my hands, my fingertips caressing the air, starting the avalanche process that would separate the ions.

The hair on Horace's forearms stood up stiff.

"What?" he managed to ask. He dropped the straitjacket.

"Dance, Horace," I said.

Ions flowed toward him, negative ones to his left, positive ones to his right. Little purple lightning bolts exploded in front of him, some lancing down, striking him in the head, sending up dark puffs of steam.

"No!" he screamed, too frightened to move.

The air grew heavy and was filled with the scent of ozone.

*Bang!*

Rainbow-colored sparks exploded from Horace's ears. He hit the floor, his arms and legs twitching, his bladder and bowels chaotically firing. He stared up at me with white eyes.

I waved my hands. The ions across Horace's head fluttered back into the air. He sagged.

"I wish to see Dr. Hillburn so that I can complete my check-out before dinner time," I said.

Horace opened his eyes and stared up at me.

"Now," I said.

Horace nodded, banging the back of his head against the linoleum floor. Without bothering to stand, he rolled over and began to crawl toward the door.

I hoped all this could be straightened out before dinner time. With a little luck, the old diner down on Fourth Street still served homemade strawberry swirl ice cream. I hadn't had decent ice cream in twenty years. □

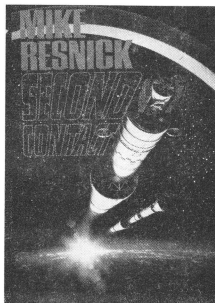
**MOVING?** Be sure to let us know. Send your change of address to us as soon as you can.



# The Day After Tomorrow

*Second Contact*  
By Mike Resnick  
Tor, 1990  
288 pp., \$17.95

Mike Resnick's new novel, *Second Contact*, is a change of pace from his



other recent work. It's a near-future suspense novel in the vein of *North by Northwest*. It is no major artistic achievement, but it's entertaining, moving right along and pulling the reader with it.

Military lawyer Max Becker has been assigned, over his vociferous objections, to defend Wilbur H. Jennings, a spaceship commander who killed two of his crew members. His

explanation is that they were actually aliens. Naturally everyone, including Becker, thinks Jennings is crazy. But Becker keeps finding pieces that won't fit, and before long he has unearthed a massive conspiracy and is on the run from it.

The plot is clever, though not full of surprises, and works well, except that the climax is over too quickly. The explanation we get at the end seems pulled out of the air. Of course, like all of Resnick's work, *Second Contact* is well written.

It is not a character-oriented novel, but the characters are fine, if not striking. Becker is a lot more naive than seems likely, though; you don't have to be a practiced spy to know that you don't choose "John Smith" as a pseudonym.

My main problem with the book is that, though it is set 75 years in the future, it doesn't feel like 2065. Of course technology has advanced, but Resnick has changed the furniture and not the people. There seem to have been no noticeable cultural changes, and there will be; just think about how things have changed since 1925. Except for space travel, the story could be happening today. One jarring detail is that nearly everybody in the book smokes, which would seem dated even in a novel set right now.

Resnick has taken the easy way out, restricting his speculation very narrowly. That makes the book less interesting and challenging than it should have been. It's an enjoyable read, but nothing more.

Rating: ☆☆☆+

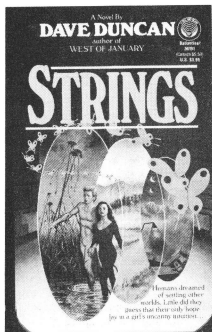
*Strings*  
By Dave Duncan  
Del Rey, 1990  
311 pp., \$3.95

Environmental disaster is much on people's minds these days, so it's not



surprising to see many SF authors take up the theme. Dave Duncan's new novel, *Strings*, is set in 2050, on a dying Earth, and concerns the discovery of a way out. It is intriguing and suspenseful

I was confused about whether this is



supposed to be a slightly alternate world. All names are used in reverse — i.e. Smith John instead of John Smith — and there's a reference near the beginning of the book to a movie featuring the Engels Brothers. I found no other such indications, though, so I never did figure it out for sure.

The plot would be very hard to explain briefly, and even harder to explain without giving away the surprises Duncan has for the reader. It is an involved construction of science, politics, lust, greed, and lies. In fact, there are so many lies that it's hard to keep track of the truth. The plotting and counter-plotting can get

## Rating System

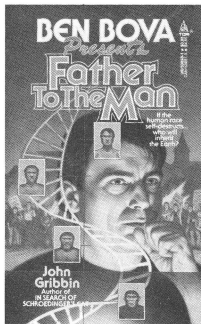
☆☆☆☆☆	Outstanding
☆☆☆☆	Very Good
☆☆☆	Good
☆☆	Fair
☆	Poor

confusing, but all becomes clear eventually. Well, not all; there are one or two loose ends, but they're minor.

The protagonists, Hubbard Cedric and Princess Alya, are solid and believable, although Duncan is less successful when writing from Alya's point of view than from Cedric's. Most of the other characters are thoroughly despicable, but not overdrawn black hats, evil for the sake of being evil. The writing is generally good but uneven: there are occasional clumsy moments, but also occasional sharp and smart turns of phrase.

*Strings* takes an interesting idea and works it out well. It's good SF, and a pretty good novel as well.

Rating: ☆☆☆



*Agviq*  
By Michael Armstrong  
Popular/Questar, 1990  
275 pp. in proof, \$4.50

The post-holocaust novel has been done nearly to death, so an author who would write one now must come up with an original twist. (Such novels also suffer from the changes in the world situation during the past year, but that's hardly something the authors could have predicted.) In Michael Armstrong's *Agviq*, the twist is that the survivors we follow are Eskimos in the barren northern reaches of Alaska — and Claudia, a white anthropology graduate student, who must teach the Inupiaq Eskimos the forgotten ways of their ancestors in order for all to survive.

The novel is interesting and reasonably successful. One early problem is the set-up: Claudia and her partner Rob are at a dig in Alaska when the bombs drop, and the reasons they survive strain coincidence beyond endurance. Claudia's carrying a "paranoia kit" with survival gear is just barely passable, but when Rob *just happens* to have brought along for pleasure reading a book by Dean Ing that contains plans and instructions for a fall-out shelter and other equipment, Armstrong nearly lost me. However, after that the plot doesn't offend the reader's intelligence.

Claudia is an engaging and sympathetic character. We don't see enough of the other characters; in particular, I wanted more about two of the Eskimos, Tuttu and Tammy. Tuttu is the leader of the Inupiaq, but we don't see enough of him to understand how Claudia can fall in love with him and forgive an atrocious act without even an explanation. Tammy should be the most interesting character, as a lesbian of Eskimo heritage who grew up in a white household, but we get to see nothing of the conflict between the ways she's been brought up to and the Inupiaq ways that are theoretically "hers." Armstrong seems uncomfortable with the character, and he repeatedly refers to her as "the lesbian" in contexts that have nothing to do with her sexuality.

In fact, the issue of sex and reproduction is pretty much ignored in this novel, though it seems a crucial one. I kept expecting Armstrong to deal with it, particularly since he had established Tammy as a lesbian, but he never did. There are far more men than women among the survivors, but there never seems to be any tension or potential problems. Will the men decide that, like food, the women need to be shared? Will they force Tammy to have sex with them? Will they demand that the women get pregnant to help the tribe survive? Armstrong addresses none of these questions.

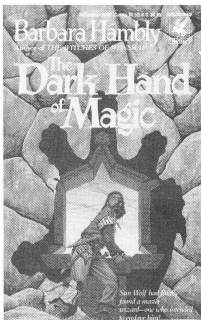
The Inupiaq culture is well presented, but the endless details started to bore me after awhile. The essential irony of a white person having to teach the Inupiaq to be Eskimo is not used as well as it could have been. The whaling sequences are exciting and suspenseful. An intriguing mystery — phantom broadcasts of old Walter Cronkite news reports —

is resolved anti-climactically, and without sufficient explanation.

*Agviq* is enjoyable, though not a standout and not as original as it could have been. The author fails to flesh out most of the characters and sometimes seems not to have thought through the ramifications of the situation they find themselves in. But the protagonist is appealing, the Eskimo background is generally interesting, and there are some startling details and remarkable scenes.

Rating: ☆☆☆

*Father to the Man*  
By John Gribbin  
Tor, 1990  
248 pp., \$3.95



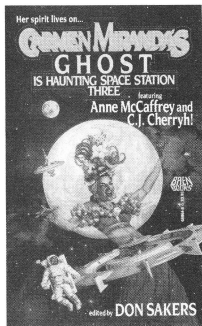
John Gribbin's name may sound familiar, because several years ago he became (in)famous for *The Jupiter Effect*. Now he has written a work of intentional science fiction. *Father to the Man* is a novel of evolutionary speculation, and a tale of the fall of man and the rise of his replacement.

Richard Lee is a geneticist who makes the mistake of explaining publicly that his research indicates a much closer relationship between humans and chimpanzee than previously believed. The power of fundamentalists in this near future is sufficient to destroy his career and murder the woman he loves. Meanwhile, the earth is on the verge of destruction from environmental disaster and war.

*Father to the Man* reads like a novel by a scientist — there's not much be-

sides the scientific ideas to the book. Unfortunately, those ideas aren't terribly startling, so they make a weak foundation for a novel. The book seems a bit thin, with too little plot, and the rest filled out with predictable harbingers of disaster. Gribbin's prose is serviceable, his characters cardboard. The author often falls into clichés of both plot and language.

Gribbin grinds his axes quite loudly, giving the book a didactic feel. Some details don't make much sense. For example, why does it seem that, not far in the future, no one besides specialists has heard of the greenhouse effect? I never understood fully what was behind the fundamentalist anti-technology preacher we see a couple of times; there are dark hints



of hidden motives, but they're never brought to light.

Most of the flaws in this book are common in hard SF, but that doesn't make them any easier to take. *Father to the Man* is an interesting speculation, but a less interesting novel.

Rating: ☆☆

*The Dark Hand of Magic*

By Barbara Hambly  
Del Rey, 1990  
309 pp., \$4.95

Barbara Hambly is one of the best current practitioners of what we might call "hard fantasy": fantasy that is as rigorously constructed as the best hard science fiction. *The Dark Hand of Magic* is a worthy and involv-

ing sequel to *The Ladies of Mandrigyn* and *The Witches of Wenshar*. Like the previous two books, it stands on its own despite being a part of a series; there's a full plot that is resolved satisfactorily. Certainly having read the others (which I highly recommend) helps your appreciation of the characters, but it's not essential.

Sun Wolf is a former mercenary chief who has become a wizard, in a world where wizardry was suppressed for over a century. Starhawk, his companion and lover, was his closest aide, and she now travels with Sun Wolf in his quest to find a wizard who can teach him.

In this novel, Sun Wolf and Starhawk get embroiled with their old mercenary army, a life they thought they had left. The army is besieging a city, but so many things have gone badly and unexpectedly wrong that they have become convinced they are under a curse. They seek out Sun Wolf to help them fight the unknown wizard who is victimizing them. Unfortunately, as Wolf soon finds out, the wizard is more powerful than he could have imagined and wants to enslave him.

In this book we get to see from their new perspective Sun Wolf and Starhawk's previous lives as mercenaries. We see both the attraction of it and the repulsion they now feel, having lived with the innocent townsfolk who get starved, raped, tortured, and killed. It's a horrible, costly, vicious war, fought over money, and there's nothing in the least romantic about it. We can like individual members of the mercenary army, but we can only hate what it does.

The plot moves a little slowly at times, getting bogged down in description, but it's generally excellent. Toward the end I was absorbed, reading and reading late into the night and trying to figure out who the villain was. And like life, this book doesn't end tidily once the villain is disposed of — there are things to be taken care of, and the characters take care of them.

Hambly does her usual fine job of characterization, particularly with Sun Wolf, for we see less of Starhawk in this novel. Their love continues to gain depth. She has also created a believably amoral yet somehow sympathetic female robber baron.

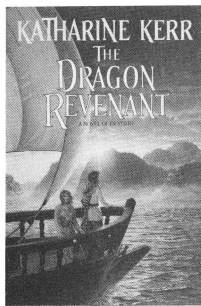
The world is, as ever, logically constructed. We find out more about how this world's magic works, and it all makes sense. We get to see yet another sub-culture in this world, a mercantile one.

If you haven't read Hambly before, this isn't a bad place to start. Don't be put off by the atrocious cover; *The Dark Hand of Magic* is impressive work from one of the most talented fantasy writers we've got.

Rating: ☆☆☆

*Carmen Miranda's Ghost is Haunting Space Station Three*

Edited by Don Sakers  
Baen, 1990  
305 pp., \$3.95



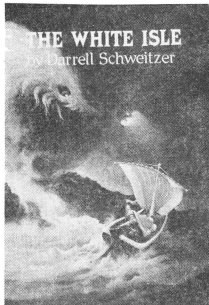
*Carmen Miranda's Ghost ...* is probably the silliest idea for an anthology ever (unless someone has actually published *Great SF About Artichokes* — and maybe even then). Consisting of stories inspired by Leslie Fish's song of the same title, it is light and amusing, although the overall caliber of the stories is not as high as I would have liked.

The stories draw on pop culture, from Spaceman Spiff to the Pigeon Sisters (whose creation Sakers erroneously credits to Mary L. Mand, author of "The Pigeon Sisters on Space Station Three," rather than to Neil Simon). Some of the best stories: "In the Can," by Esther Friesner, which somehow manages to be both hard-boiled and New Age; "Tara wa

Rising," by Don Sakers, a funny and moving tale of a drag queen; "La Vita Nuova," by B. W. Clough, in which the ghost of Dante makes his appearance; "That Souse American Way," by S. N. Lewitt, in which Carmen helps a Brazilian revolutionary; and "The Entertainer," by Eric Blackburn, a tale of a psychic investigator.

The most disappointing contribution is Anne McCaffrey's "If Madam Likes You ..." which is predictable and, most surprisingly, carelessly written. There's a feeling of amateurishness to some of the other contributions; the writing is not sufficiently polished and professional.

It is interesting to see the different approaches the authors take to the same song, with Bruce B. Barnett ac-



tually turning it into a hard SF story. But the joke wears thin, and I'm not sure it's a good idea to stretch it to another anthology, as Sakers hints he will in his afterword.

Rating: ☆☆☆

#### *The Dragon Revenant*

By Katharine Kerr  
Foundation/Doubleday, 1990  
384 pp., \$18.95 hc, \$8.95 pb

I'm finding myself at a bit of a loss trying to write a review of Katharine Kerr's latest book set in the fictional land of Deverry. *The Dragon Revenant* is enjoyable and well written, but there doesn't seem to be anything special about it. We've seen it all — Celtic fantasy, that is — before, and though very well done, Kerr's book doesn't take us further.

The publisher claims that this is a stand-alone novel, but that's misleading. I interpreted "stand-alone" to mean that it is set in the same universe as her other books, and perhaps shares some characters, but is not part of the same story. It became clear to me early in the book, though, that that was not the case, and my perusal of the jackets of her previous books indicates that it is indeed a continuation of the story they tell. I followed it all right, nevertheless, but I felt suckered, and my failure to have read the previous books became most annoying at the end, when I think I missed some of the implications of what happened.

Kerr deserves credit for portraying two distinct societies, each with its superficially attractive aspects, but each with important elements that repel us: in Bardek, slavery, and in Deverry, the ill-treatment of commoners. But in the end, as I said, this is a very good Celtic fantasy, but nothing more.

Rating: ☆☆☆+

#### *The White Isle*

By Darrell Schweitzer  
Weird Tales Library/Owlslick, 1990  
139 pp., \$18.95

Darrell Schweitzer's latest book is a short fantasy novel that starts out as a beautiful fairy tale but soon turns into a horror story. *The White Isle* has some marvelous imagery, and Schweitzer has a grotesque and frightening imagination. It includes fine illustrations from Stephen Fabian.

The book tells the tale of Prince Evnos, ruler of the island of Iankoros. His life proceeds in storybook fashion until the death of his beloved young wife, Riacerina, in childbirth. Evnos becomes determined to retrieve Riacerina from Rannon, the god of death, and his mad quest brings doom to Iankoros and, in the long run, to himself.

Evnos is a well drawn, larger-than-life protagonist. I found it difficult to understand some of his actions, though, apart from the too-easy explanation of madness. Schweitzer's use of language is very effective. The ending is not as meaningful as it might be; as the book says, it is a fairy-tale ending, but we get no feeling

that this is the redemption of love from Evnos's destructive obsession.

*The White Isle* is not the sort of fantasy we see often these days. It's a lovely, then horrific, tale that is worth your while to seek out.

Rating: ☆☆☆+

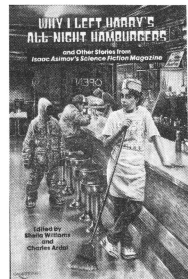
#### For Younger Readers:

*Why I Left Harry's All-Night Hamburgers and Other Stories*

Edited by Sheila Williams and Charles Arday

Delacorte, 1990  
304 pp., \$14.95

This is an anthology of SF stories from *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* (with one exception, an Asimov story from 1957) selected for



their appeal to young adults. Since the stories were written for adult magazine readers, there is no condensation or over-simplification, just clear, well written, and interesting stories. The editors have chosen to concentrate on stories set on Earth: ten of twelve (or eight of twelve, depending on how you count fantasies) are set on this planet.

All the stories are good, and some are excellent. My favorites are the Hugo-winning title story, by Lawrence Watt-Evans, about the strange customers in an out-of-the-way hamburger joint; "And Who Would Pity a Swan?" by Connie Willis, a dazzling look at what happens after happily ever after; and "Empire State," by Keith Minnion, a coming-of-age sea story in a drowned New York.

States under a religious government 100 years from now. The novel is in search of a publisher, but Stevens-Arce says



Carol Heyer

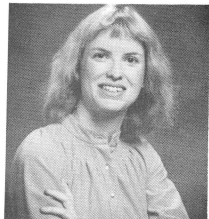
writer James Morrow likes it, so he's optimistic. Morrow is the author of "Bible Stories for Adults No. 31: The Covenant" (Nov.-Dec. 1989). Morrow and his family have become friends with Stevens-Arce and his family and now keep in touch via a "workshop by mail."

When I spoke to Stevens-Arce, he and his wife Tita were busy putting together a volleyball tournament for 200 neighborhood kids.

The art for "Oscar Carvalho" is by David Brian. Brian has done two covers for *Science Fiction Chronicle*, and he just sold two paintings for paperback novels in Europe.

Brian says illustrating the futuristic sketch pad that plays a key part in the story reminded him of the days he used to do a lot of quick sketching as an editorial cartoonist for a Pasadena newspaper. Brian says he recently went horseback riding and hiking in the Hollywood hills. He says the bottom half of the Hollywood sign is covered with graffiti.

Robert A. Metzger and gonzo SF are back with the story "Eyes of Chaos," set in a sanatorium. As we've come to expect



Elaine Radford

from such fare, the protagonist gets stranger as the story unfolds, but there is an underlying method to his madness.

Metzger, who also writes our "What If?—" science column, is working on the rewrite of his second novel, *Reluctant Messiah*, about some aliens who want to convert us to their religion, which is based on physics. Metzger's first novel, *Quad World*, is due out early next year from ROC books.

Metzger the research scientist says his company has been traveling him around a lot, or, as he puts it, "they pull me out of my hole and put me on a plane." His assignment: "looking slightly bumbling and weird and talking science to military types." So far this year he's been to such places as Raleigh, N.C., Omaha, Neb., Des Moines, Iowa, and Dayton, Ohio (twice).

"Eyes of Chaos" is illustrated by Carol Heyer. She is working on some covers for TSR Books as well as interiors for the TSR hardcover *Legend and Lore*. She's also been branching into games with a cover for Steve Jackson Games.

Her picture book *The Easter Story* sold out its first 45,000 copies and is into a second printing. Her next picture book, *Excalibur*, is due out in 1991 from Ideals Publishing Corp.

Elaine Radford brings us "Birdbrain." As an intelligence officer, T-bird leaves homing pigeons in the dust. Radford is the author of "Letting Go" (Jan.-Feb. 1988) and "To Be An Auk" (March-April 1988). When I spoke to Radford she was "bogged down with non-fiction articles" on her favorite subject: birds. Her latest books for TFH include one on parrots and one on training cockatiels.

As you can imagine, she has a variety of birds in her home aviary. Perhaps the most precocious is a young starling that she rescued from a cat's mouth. She says he's a terrific mimic. He can imitate all her birds, her neighbor's rooster, and the local mockingbird. One day she played a static-filled tape of a canary song, and, sure enough, the starling sang it back to her, complete with static sounds.

"Birdbrain" is illustrated by David Brian.

"Three Boston Artists" is by Sarah Smith. Someone once observed that part of a flower's beauty lies in its being ephemeral. Art as a moment in time is explored in this story.

Smith has a Ph.D. in English from Harvard and is a manager for a computer systems firm. She was a part of the team that created the interactive computer-based fiction "King of Space." She's now working on a novel set in the same world as "King of Space." She's also helping to put together *Future Boston*, a collection of linked stories by members of the Cambridge SF Workshop and others, and she's working on *The Child Killer*, a mystery set in 1906 Boston.

Smith has a husband, Fred Perry, two kids, and a twenty-pound Maine Coon cat named Vicious.



Sarah Smith

"Three Boston Artists" is illustrated by Carol Heyer.

"A Matter of Taste" examines the indignities of being lower on the food chain. It's written by Esther M. Friesner, who began exploring alien cuisine concepts in the poem "Who Made the Stew on Betelgeuse II?" (Sept.-Oct. 1988). She also wrote "The Doo-Wop Never Dies" (Nov.-Dec. 1989).

She has three fantasy novels that have just come out, *Hooray for Hellywood*, *The Water King's Laughter*, and *Sphinxes Wild*. Another novel, *Broadway Banshee*, is due out next February. She has short stories appearing in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* as well.

When I called her recently, she was away at Readercon in Lowell, Mass., participating in a number of panels. Her husband, Walter Stutzman, a software consultant, says he is just wrapping up a three-year project for the phone com-



Esther Friesner

Asimov's "Profession" stands out as belonging to an older era, but it still holds up pretty well. The other contributors are Kim Stanley Robinson, Barry B. Longyear, James Patrick Kelly, Jane Yolen, Edward D. Hoch, Andrew Weiner, Somtow Sucharitkul, and Judith Moffett.

Most of the stories emphasize the sense of wonder, which is important in appealing to young adults. It is a fine anthology; there's nothing experimental or outrageous in it, but it's a good introduction to recent short SF for young or old adults.

Rating: ☆☆☆

*Ashar of Qarius*

By Clare Cooper  
Gulliver/HBJ, 1990  
160 pp., \$14.95

When I received *Ashar of Qarius*, a science fiction novel intended for children aged 8-12, I was dismayed by the cover, which features Egyptian-looking pyramids, causing me to fear

that it was some sort of ancient-astronauts nonsense. Fortunately, that fear was unfounded. Clare Cooper's book is a fast-moving and suspenseful story of aliens and adventure.

The story begins at the newly founded human colony on Plioticis. Kate Olafson and five-year-old William Pitt leave the dome to chase after Kate's cat, Timmy, but when they return to the dome, they find it abandoned. They soon find out that the rest of the colony has been kidnapped by insectoid aliens. Then a strange being contacts Kate and William via their computer, a being who gives its name as Ashar and will say only that it is coming.

The plot is exciting, and surprisingly cynical for a children's book. This is certainly not a romantic view of space exploration and colonization. I didn't like the dichotomy between cold science and warm humanity — I don't want children to think that scientists have to be dehumanized.

Kate (whose age is not given but

seems to be about 13) is an appealing and resourceful main character, and William, however brilliant he may be, still acts like a 5-year-old. I'm afraid the ending is a bit sexist, but in the face of the strong depiction of Kate through most of the book, that may not matter.

The science fictional aspect is for the most part acceptable, but there were a couple of goofs that jumped out at me. I don't expect hard-science extrapolation in a children's book, but I shake my head when I come to a sentence like, "Kate had a fairly accurate idea of where the asteroid belt was in this galaxy." In fact, the author seems unclear on the concept of "asteroid"; at one point, people land on the "asteroid" Sorrid, and not only doesn't seem to be low gravity, but it has an atmosphere breathable by humans.

*Ashar of Qarius* was exciting enough to keep this adult's attention. Though far from flawless, it's worthwhile.

Rating: ☆☆☆

## ABORIGINES

By Laurel Lucas

# Encores



For the second year in a row congratulations are in order for several Aborigine award nominees. Kristine K. Rusch, author of "Looking for Miriam" (Jan.-Feb. 1989), "Solo for Concert Grand" (Jan.-Feb. 1988), and



James Stevens-Arce

"Sing" (Feb.-March 1987), has again been nominated for the John W. Campbell Award for best new writer. Orson Scott Card, who wrote "Prior Restraint" (Oct.-Nov. 1986), George Alec Effinger, author of "No Prisoners" (Jan.-Feb. 1990), Connie Willis, who wrote "Circus Story" (Feb.-March 1987), and Mike Resnick, who has a story in this issue (see below), have been nominated for Hugo Awards (see below for the categories). Our editor, Charles C. Ryan, has been nominated a second time for a Hugo Award for best editor.

Speaking of encores, we have two stories from several authors in this issue who have written for us previously. One of them is James Stevens-Arce. As James A. Stevens he gave us "Borboleta" in the July-Aug. 1987 issue. The Puerto Rico resident has since added his mother's maiden name to the end of his in proper Spanish style.

And now comes "Oscar Carvalho —

*Spacial*," a story of first contact. Both "Oscar Carvalho" and "Borboleta" are derived from the same novel-in-progress. He has also finished another novel titled *Soulsaver*, about a United



David Brian

pany in Connecticut.

"A Matter of Taste" is illustrated by Larry Blamire. Blamire had just



Joel Henry Sherman

finished writing a screenplay when I spoke to him, and he was still feeling high about flying out to see the opening of his play "Jump Camp" at the Alliance Repertory Theater in Los Angeles. For this illustration, Blamire says he took out a lot of books on Washington, D.C., to get his aliens in the correct setting.

"The Bogart Revival" by Joel Henry Sherman has a premise that would be great news for nostalgia fans, but bad news for struggling artists.

Nostalgic *Aboriginal* fans can look up Sherman's previous story "Finder's Fee" (Dec.-Jan. 1987). Sherman's latest book, *Corpsman* (Del Rey), is about a slave-based prison system of the future. His novel *Random Factor* is due out in April of next year.

Sherman's other career has him working for the state of California as a loss control consultant. He investigates job-related accidents and promotes job



Charles Lang (on table)

safety consciousness. Sherman has a wife, Carolyn, and a baby daughter, Courtney, who apparently has scientific talents. He says she has been conducting "warm-fusion experiments in the infamous Pampers laboratories."

"The Bogart Revival" is illustrated by Charles Lang. Lang says he is working on art for his portfolio and on a movie poster for a low-budget horror film called *Crawdaddys*.

Lang says the movie poster field can be lucrative, with some artists getting as much as \$100,000 for a poster. But he says it takes lots of guts and determination to succeed, because success often hinges on meeting ridiculous deadlines and out-competing the half-dozen other artists who are typically hired to illustrate a big-budget movie.

Mike Resnick updates medieval folklore with the story of the Wandering Jew in "How I Wrote the New Testament, Ushered in the Renaissance, and Birdied the 17th Hole at Pebble Beach."



Mike Resnick

Resnick is the author of *Ivory, Paradise, Santiago, Second Contact*, and four "Kirinyaga" short stories for *Fantasy and Science Fiction* and *Isaac Asimov's*. He's been working on the *Oracle* trilogy for Ace.

Resnick's wife Carol owns a kennel. He says he loves collies and horse racing and has been on four African safaris since 1986.

"How I Wrote the New Testament" is illustrated by Lucy Synk. Synk says she will be an artist guest of honor twice this summer: at Delacon in Kansas City, Mo., and at the gaming convention Glathricon in Evansville, Ind. She says she's been doing illustrations for the gaming companies TSR and Steve Jackson Games.

Holly Lisle Deaton is the author of the poem "To an Android Lover." Deaton has seen her fantasy story "Glassmaster" published recently in *Stained Glass Quarterly* and has had several poems published in *Being*. She has two fantasy novels, *Faeriefire* in the

*Mist and Minerva Wakes*, in search of a publisher and is working on a "twisted SF trilogy" with Chris Guin called *The*



Lucy Synk

*Tattooed Dragon*.

Deaton is a registered nurse with two children. She says her hobbies include hanging out with the rest of the gang in the Fayetteville, N.C., "Unknown Writers' Group," playing guitar, and writing songs with shocking lyrics.

## Hugo Award Nominees

Needless to say, our *Aborigines* mentioned above aren't the only ones nominated for a Hugo Award this year. The following is a list of the 1989 Hugo Award nominees:

### Best Novel of 1989:

*The Boat of a Million Years*, by Poul Anderson (Tor)

*Prentice Alvin*, by Orson Scott Card (Tor)

*A Fire in the Sun*, by George Alec Effinger (Doubleday/Foundation)

*Hyperion*, by Dan Simmons (Doubleday/Foundation, Bantam Spectra)

*Grass*, by Sheri S. Tepper (Doubleday/Foundation)



Holly Lisle Deaton

**Best Novella of 1989:**

"The Mountains of Mourning," by Lois McMaster Bujold (*Analogue*, May 1989; *Borders of Infinity*, Baen)

"A Touch of Lavender," by Megan Lindholm (*IASFM*, Nov. 1989)

"Tiny Tango," by Judith Moffett (*IASFM*, Feb. 1989)

"The Father of Stones," by Lucius Shepard (*IASFM*, Sept. 1989; *The Father of Stones*, WSFA Press)

"Time-Out," by Connie Willis (*IASFM*, July 1989)

**Best Novelette of 1989:**

"Dogwalker," by Orson Scott Card (*IASFM*, Nov. 1989)

"Everything But Honor," by George Alec Effinger (*IASFM*, Feb. 1989; *What Might Have Been*, Vol. 1, Bantam Spectra)

"The Price of Oranges," by Nancy Kress (*IASFM*, April 1989)

"For I Have Touched the Sky," by Mike Resnick (*F&SF*, Dec. 1989)

"Enter a Soldier. Later: Enter Another," by Robert Silverberg (*IASFM*, June 1989; *Time Gate*, Baen)

"At the Rialto," by Connie Willis (*Omni*, Oct. 1989; *The Microverse*, Bantam Spectra)

**Best Dramatic Presentation of 1989:**

*The Abyss*

*The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*

*Batman*

*Field of Dreams*

*Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*

**Best Short Story of 1989:**

"Lost Boys," by Orson Scott Card (*F&SF*, Oct. 1989)

"Boobs," by Suzy McKee Charnas (*IASFM*, July 1989)

"Computer Friendly," by Eileen Gunn (*IASFM*, June 1989)

"The Return of William Proxmire," by Larry Niven (*What Might Have Been*, Vol. 1, Bantam Spectra)

"Dori Bangs," by Bruce Sterling (*IASFM*, Sept. 1989)

"The Edge of the World," by Michael Swanwick (*Full Spectrum II*, Doubleday/Foundation)

**Best Non-Fiction Book of 1989:**

*Astounding Days*, by Arthur C. Clarke (Gollancz, Bantam Spectra)

*Harlan Ellison's Watching*, by Harlan Ellison (Underwood-Miller)

*Grumbles from the Grave*, by Robert A. Heinlein, edited by Virginia Heinlein (Del Rey)

*Dancing at the Edge of the World*, by Ursula K. Le Guin (Grove)

*The World Beyond the Hill*, by Alexei and Cory Panshin (Tarcher)

*Noreasson Three Souvenir Book*, edited by Greg Thokar (MCFI Press)

**Best Professional Editor of 1989:**

Ellen Datlow

Gardner Dozois

Edward L. Ferman

David G. Hartwell

Beth Meacham

# To An Android Lover

(with apologies to Shakespeare)

By Holly Lisle Deaton

*Shall I compare you to my microwave?*

*You are reliable, where it is not.*

*It often leaves my food too burned to save —*

*But when I want YOU hot, you're HOT.*

*Nor can the television be your equal —*

*With dreary reruns, game shows, mindless soaps ...*

*I hope I never see another sequel —*

*'Unless seen through our rifles' crosshired scopes.*

*Oh, men of flesh will change and slowly fade.*

*And lose possession of their strength and grace.*

*But you, who in men's finest image are made.*

*Will never have a wrinkle touch your face.*

*Your passion and your lust often bewitch —*

*But I like you best because of your ON/OFF switch.*

Charles C. Ryan

Stanley Schmidt

**Best Semiprozine of 1989:**

*Locus* (ed. Charles N. Brown)

*The New York Review of Science Fiction*, (eds. Kathryn Cramer, David G. Hartwell, and Gordon Van Gelder)

*Thrust* (ed. D. Douglas Fratz)

*Science Fiction Chronicle* (ed. Andrew I. Porter)

*Interzone* (ed. David Pringle)

**Best Fanzine of 1989:**

*File 770* (ed. Mike Glyer)

*FOSFAX* (ed. Timothy Lane)

*Lan's Lantern* (ed. George "Lan" Las-

kowski)

*Pirate Jenny* (ed. Pat Mueller)

*The Mad 3 Party* (ed. Leslie Turek)

**Best Professional Artist of 1989:**

Jim Burns

Thomas Canty

David Cherry

James Gurney

Tom Kidd

Don Maitz

Michael Whelan

**Best Fan Writer of 1989:**

Mike Glyer

Arthur D. Hlavaty

Dave Langford

Evelyn Leeper

Leslie Turek

**Best Fan Artist of 1989:**

Steve Fox

Teddy Harvia

Merle Insinga

Joe Mayhew

Stu Shiffman

TaraL Wayne

**John W. Campbell Award of 1989**

(not a Hugo) for Best New Writer of 1988-1989 (sponsored by Davis Publications):

John Cramer (1)

Nancy Collins (1)

Katherine Neville (1)

Kristine Kathryn Rusch (2)

Allan Steele (2)

(1) first year of eligibility

(2) second and final year of eligibility

**Best Original Artwork of 1989 (NOT a Hugo):**

*Quozl*, cover by James Gurney (Ace)

*The Stress of Her Regard*, cover by James Gurney (Ace)

*Rimrunners*, cover by Don Maitz (Warner/Questar)

*Hypertion*, cover by Gary Ruddell (Doubleday/Foundation, Bantam Spectra)

*Paradise*, cover by Michael Whelan (Tor)

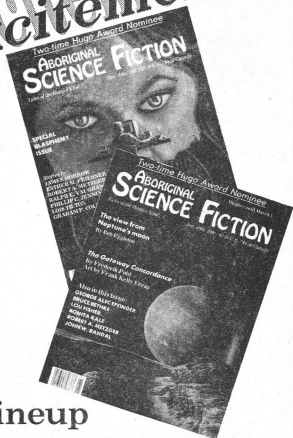
*The Renegades of Pern*, cover by Michael Whelan (Del Rey) □



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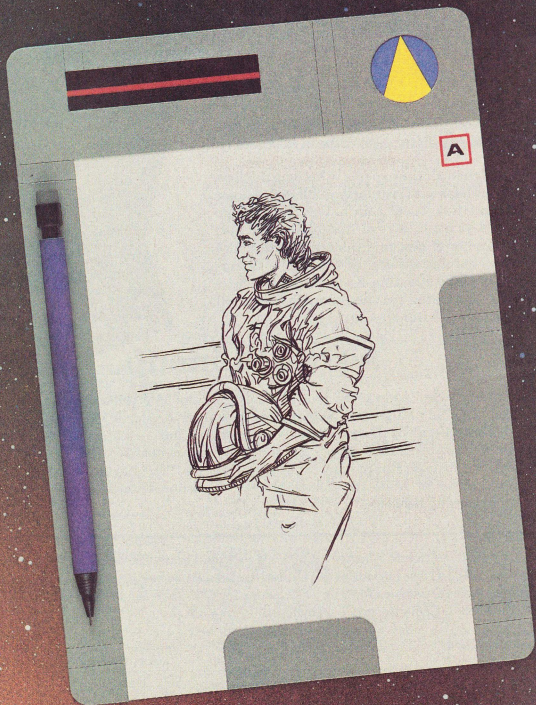
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A

BRIAN  
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# Oscar Carvalho, *Spacial*

By James Stevens-Arce

Art by David Brian

Carvalho stands in the airlock, double-checking the stressed leather of his space armor before signaling for decompression. His hands stumble through the drill, nervously testing seals, joints, pressure points, life support systems.

He never expected to be selected for a mission of this magnitude, but of the personnel aboard the *Sao Tome*, he is the only logical choice. The problem is that he has never been so nervous in his life, and his body clamors at him to turn tail and run. But what he wants is simply this: not to shame himself. He'll be happy if he can just do his job and do it well, with no call for flash or heroics.

And live to tell the tale.

Battle Ensign Oscar Carvalho was putting the final touches to his sketch of Nina Mboye's fascinating African face. He moved his *caneta tinteiro* with practiced dexterity over his sheet of stressed paper, deftly reproducing the intricate design of scars that her tribe's matriarchs had gouged into the living flesh of her cheeks and forehead as the climax of the rite of passage that had marked the end of her childhood.

Though she treated it with a certain ill-disguised contempt, the Captain allowed Carvalho to indulge his hobby during his off-duty hours, so long as he didn't interfere with on-duty personnel. Today, Carvalho sketched in an untrafficked corner of the *Sao Tome's* Communications Section next to a bulkhead covered in fuchsia and wandering jew. He was adjusting the ink pressure in his *caneta* when Nina Mboye spotted the Other ship.

"Sensor contact with alien vessel," she announced matter-of-factly.

Every man and woman in Communications turned swiftly to see, but Nina acted unperturbed. She had picked up the ion trails of Other ships on her screens before. Her previous total of five Sightings already placed her far ahead of any other SensorTech in the Fleet. But this time was different.

Normally, immediately following multitrionics contact the trail would veer off sharply and arrow for the nearest stargate, while the *Spaciales* vessel held steady and merely observed. Ships of the Brazilian Space Corps sailed under standing orders issued by the Lands of the Southern Cross to maintain course and take no action which could be interpreted as hostile during a Sighting.

Only this Other ship wasn't running through the usual paces. It was slanting into a vector on the same plane as the *Sao Tome*, a trajectory which Nina's *ordinador* calculated would loop it into a parallel course just off the *Sao Tome's* port side six lightseconds downrange.

Carvalho figured he'd best make himself scarce, and slipped his drawing tools into a stressed leather shoulder envelope.

Nina alerted the Bridge.

Carvalho signals for decompression. The whoosh of escaping atmosphere fades into the silence of vacuum.

"Band test," the young Ensign says, conscious for an instant of the light pressure of the larynx-mic against his throat.

He hears ComTech Sekela's throaty Afran voice: "Band open and clear." Then the Skipper's clear soprano voice with its charming Nova Brasilia lilt: "Go, Ensign. And may luck go with you."

"Thank you, *senhora*."

Group Leader Carola Ramal had been sleeping for barely 45 minutes when the Other's ion trail registered on the *Sao Tome's* sensor screens. But she came awake fast when the First buzzed her bunk with the report. A Sighting on her first command! Exciting, yes, but worrisome, too. To what number did this raise the total of official Sightings?

Oh, no, she thought, eyeing the purple-tinted, black-veined leaves of the pellionia that ran riot across her cabin overhead's trellis, *I'm not superstitious, but why the unlucky seventeenth?*

Minutes later, on the bridge, she exchanged a quick glance with her First, Group Commander Heriberto Gonçalves.

"Is that damaged sub-light *comunicador* back on-line?" she asked.

"Aye, *senhora*, all communications systems functional. Feeding all data into Ship's Log and Permanent Service Log."

"Bem. Good."

"What do you think, Carola?" Gonçalves said, dropping into informal chat.

"Frankly, Berto, I don't know *what* to think yet. Got any ideas?" The First nodded.

"I think they finally want to talk."

Carvalho watches the airlock port lift like a stage curtain to reveal the Other ship and its armored emissary posed against the starry backdrop of space, both shrunken to toy size by distance. He clambers out onto the *Sao Tome's* stressed wood hull, neutralizes the sticking action of his bootsoles, and reluctantly pushes off in the direction of the alien.

Battle Sergeant Antonio Eanes sat in the Briefing Room with two officers. One looked very young and worried, the other very young and excited. One deck below, in the Ordnance Room, the Sergeant's squad waited in combat armor.

The sensor screen showed the Other ship holding firm

less than a *kilometro* off the port side. Eanes stared stolidly. One of the Techs from Hydroponics broke off from watering the spiderplants and African violets which clung like ivy to the Briefing Room's bulkheads. As if hypnotized, he watched the screen, the stressed leather watering bag hugged to his chest completely forgotten.

Seated together several places over from the Sergeant, the two young officers exchanged nervous glances. The younger one felt the sour swelling of tension in his stomach, but gave no sign. He didn't want to embarrass himself in front of the Sergeant, who had a reputation for nervelessness under stress.

"Do you think it's a trap, Lino?" Carvalho said.

"No, Oscar, I think they want to make contact this time," Lino said thoughtfully. "Or it could be a trap." Count on Battle Ensign Lino Tavares never to commit himself too early.

"They've been edging closer for the last six hours. Another ten *minutos* and you'll be able to reach out the airlock and knock on their hull. I hope the Skipper knows what she's doing."

"You can bet a month's pay she's doing exactly what Master Control ordered six hours ago."

"Aren't you ... a little nervous, Lino?"

"Me? I'm dirtying my unders. I don't have the Sergeant's iron nerve."

Lino grinned at the Sergeant, but Eanes remained expressionless. Lino shrugged and turned back to Carvalho, eyes burning with excitement.

"But the truth, Oscar, is that I wouldn't trade places with anyone in the Fleet. Do you realize what is actually happening here? First contact with an intelligent alien species! And we are here. A part of history. No matter what happens."

"That's one way to look at it, I guess," Carvalho said dubiously.

"It's the only way," Lino grinned, and his eyes flashed.

"*Senhores*," the Sergeant said. Both officers looked over inquiringly. With a slight pursing of his full lips, the Sergeant indicated the screen.

A blister was erupting on the skin of the Other's boomerang-shaped vessel. As they watched, fascinated, the blister swelled ...

... and swelled ...

... and swelled ...

... and popped, spitting forth a space-armored figure.

The figure looked humanoid, and for that the four watchers were glad.

Carvalho breathed easier. *If they look like us, he thought gratefully, there's a chance there'll be other similarities.* Then the full implications of the thought sank in and the tension returned in a rush.

"Well," the AgriTech said, "at least they're not intelligent spiders or slaving blobs like in the Ponzi dos Andes stories."

Lino and Oscar exploded in laughter, but its brittleness betrayed that each had secretly harbored a similar fear.

The Other ship and its backdrop of stars looked motionless, unchanging, no more real than a painting, while the space-armored figure seemed to expand, as though it were a balloon being inflated through its undulating umbilical cord. But the men watching knew it was an optical illusion, that the apparent swelling indicated rapid movement in their direction.

Roughly midway between the two vessels, suspended between the silvery boomerang of its mothership and the *Sao Tome's* interconnected discs of blond stressed wood, the figure drifted to a halt.

Carvalho wondered if the creature out there felt as nauseated from tension as he did or as icily calm as he pretended to be. Suddenly he darted across the cabin.

"What is it?" Lino said.

"My sketchbook!"

"Your sketchbook? What for?"

"I'm missing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!"

"Are you *louco*, Oscar? I'm sure everything's being recorded —"

"Of course it is. But that's all they'll be, recordings, with no soul. I'm the only artist aboard. Don't you understand?"

Lino shook his head in disbelief, glanced at the Sergeant, and twirled the tip of his index finger next to his temple.

Carvalho suddenly felt a little lightheaded, and he wondered whether the thick scent of African violets might be the cause. Checks burning, he ignored Lino's patronizing expression, produced a stick of charcoal from his belt pouch, and began roughing in the scene.

In the foreground he placed the Sergeant's heavy-boned, expressionless face, outlined by white light from the sensor screen, calm, waiting. In the focal area of the composition, he limned in the screen display containing the boomerang-shaped spacer, backlit by this system's white dwarf star, etched against the brilliant backdrop of *O Cao*, the Dog Cloud, the smoothness of its silvery skin marred only by a tiny blister from which extruded the half *kilometro* of umbilical cord which kept the alien alive while it floated patiently in the void.

Waiting.

Once launched, Carvalho experiences the usual temporary sense of disorientation. For a few seconds he feels like the only fixed object in the universe. The *Sao Tome* seems to float away from him, while the alien and its ship appear to drift nearer. Even the distant stars seem to revolve in stately majesty about him.

The sensation passes, and Carvalho corrects his glidepath by firing brief, controlled bursts of pressurized helium from the tip of his index finger. In the near Absolute Zero of space, the gas freezes instantly into streams of crystals which spark violently as sunlight glints off their edges.

Looks like our move, *senhora*," Group Commander Gonçalves said.

Carola Ramal nodded grimly. She didn't relish the situation. True, the rewards, in terms of career goals, would doubtless be great should she acquit herself well, but the enormity of the risk, the responsibility ...

"What does Master Control advise?" she said.

ComTech Chandra Sekela looked up from her stressed teak console. "Still standing by on time-lag, *senhora*." Like Nina Mboye, Sekela bore on her face the fine intricate tracery of scars Afrans considered beautiful, as well as a symbol of adulthood.

The console chimed. "Incoming, *senhora*." Sekela handed her the hardcopy barely an instant after the end-of-squirt signal trilled.

Ramal scanned it with a frown.

"We're to send our top combat trooper out to see what the Other wants, and 'take all precautions.'" She looked at the First. "Whatever that means. Under no circumstances are we to allow our ship to be taken."

She paused and, for a moment, her eyes grew remote. The First guessed she might be appraising her inner resources in light of the coming ordeal. Ramal's features grew grimmer, and she continued speaking as though she had never broken off.

"And, due to the communication time-lag, we're to 'use our best judgment whenever the pressure of events prevents timely consultation.'"

Goncalves's eyes widened in sympathy. The Skipper could say "we" till every star in the Southern Cross burned out and collapsed, but the final responsibility remained singularly and unequivocally hers. He envied her not one whit.

Carola Ramal sighed. "Bem, now we earn our pay. Sekela, chime Sergeant Eanes to the Bridge. He's just been promoted to ambassador."

Carvalho tries to keep his breathing shallow and regular, but it still sounds abnormally loud to him. He had hoped that when the waiting and speculation were ended and the time for action at hand, he would be able to function quickly, cleanly, with no ghost of fear to slow his muscles or cloud his judgment at a crucial moment. But no. Despite all his efforts, his pulse races and adrenalin floods his bloodstream.

Oh, Deus, he thinks, *I think I'm going to be sick.*

In the Briefing Room, Carvalho eyed Eanes's space-armored image which now appeared on the sensor screen, and hastily roughed in details of a reference sketch of the Sergeant approaching the alien. In it, Eanes appeared with his right arm upraised, hand open to show he came unarmed, while his left index finger fired a harmless burst of helium crystals in the alien's direction to cancel forward motion.

The alien bobbed lazily at the end of its umbilical cord and raised both hands to show them empty, then clapped them soundlessly three times. A pause while the Sergeant listened to the Skipper's instructions, then he too raised both hands and clapped them three times.

Seemingly satisfied, the alien withdrew a rectangular metal plate from a slot in its thigh and gestured for Eanes to move closer. After another pause, the Sergeant complied. The alien showed the plate to Eanes, then waggled its hand briskly over it before handing it to the Sergeant with an expectant air.

"This is stupid. Lino," Carvalho said. "He can't expect the Sergeant to understand their writing."

"Maybe it isn't writing. Maybe it's something mathematical that two intelligent species would have in common. You know, the value of pi or the Rule of the Hypotenuse." Tavares suddenly looked thoughtful "Or...."

"Then we've sent the wrong man. The Sergeant's the obvious choice in a crisis situation — nobody's better in combat — but he's no math whiz."

"I don't believe it...."

"What?"

"Drawing!"

"What?!"

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"The Other was drawing pictures for the Sergeant! Bet a month's pay! And now he wants the Sergeant to sketch for him!"

Carvalho frowned. "But, Lino, the Sergeant can't draw a circle without tracing paper."

Lino looked at Oscar with new eyes. "And that means ...."

"Oh, no!"

"Oh, yes!"

Carvalho's call code chimed.

**C**arvalho worries his lower lip between his teeth. Seen from the airlock, the alien looked small, doll-like, unthreatening. But now, up close, he looms.

Carvalho knows he is no hero, has always known it. As a child, he avoided *bolebol*, kick-boxing, any frankly physical sport. Never took a dare, always fled a fight. The reason was simple: he feared pain. Or perhaps what he feared was the idea of pain. Those times he was injured despite all his efforts, he found that the pain was, after all, bearable. What was unbearable was the anticipation of pain.

Other children called him coward and he said nothing, mocked him and he did nothing. But the humiliation he accepted silently inflicted a pain of its own — different, but ultimately worse. This pain he truly could not bear, and so at last he set to prove himself no coward.

Who were the bravest, most respected men and women? *O Spaciales*, the spacers. No debate. To regain his self-respect, then, he would become one of them. So he struggled to get into the *Academia Spacial Almirante do Nascimento*, then battled to survive a system designed to weed out the weak and fearful. At the same time, he fought to conquer that part of himself that longed to quit and run.

Though instructors who encouraged his interest in art were few, he stuck with it. He'd been blessed with a deft talent for drawing, and it gave him pleasure, along with a sense of accomplishment and self-worth. From military history he learned there had been warrior-poets in earlier ages, so why should he be denied his dash of artistry?

Perhaps to make up for it, after graduation he deliberately chose the most dangerous and demanding arm of the Space Services — the Battle Corps. Though no one has called him coward for a long time, he still suffers grave inner doubts. He feels he has never been tested.

Till now.

As he drifts closer to the alien, Carvalho's frantic heartbeat echoes in his eardrums. He forces himself to ignore his body's flight response and act the trained battle officer, calm and steady and observant.

Now he can make out the upper half of the alien's face through the Other's helmet port. Eyes: small, almost beady, close-set, and ... red! Nose: mashed, splayed across its face like an unskilled kick-boxer's. Skin: the color of walnut shells, but stretched smooth and taut over high, prominent cheekbones. The Brazilian's view is too limited to tell whether or not the alien has hair.

Something besides intelligence burns in those scarlet eyes, Carvalho thinks. Wariness and ... fear? *Is he afraid of me?*

Amusement and not a little pleasure mix in with his fear. *Maybe a little, ah?*

The notion lifts his spirits. He starts to give the alien

a reassuring smile, but thinks better of it. The baring of teeth may be a hostile act to this creature. This reminds him of the precariousness of his situation, and he forces himself through a quick set of deep-breathing exercises to quiet his suddenly pounding heart.

He is barely back in control when, on the Skipper's orders, he raises both hands to show them empty, then claps them three times. Too swiftly.

He begins to backroll in reaction. He flips completely upside-down in relation to the alien before he thinks to fire the bursts of helium that will cancel his spin and right him.

He feels like an idiot, and wonders if the alien is laughing at him. (*Pay no attention to that man slipping on the banana peel, please!*) He is sure Lino must be howling on the Briefing Room deck.

*Well, he's not likely to be afraid of me now. Maybe he'll think it's just our way of putting a stranger at ease.* In any case, there's no time to think about it now.

"Ensign," the Skipper says in Carvalho's earpiece, "are you in trouble?"

"No, *senhora*. Everything's under control."

A long pause. Just as he used to when as a child other children mocked him, Carvalho flushes hotly. The Skipper must be thinking she'd been crazy to send this bumbling idiot on so delicate and important a mission.

"Are you sure?"

"Aye, *senhora*. I'm okay now."

"Very well, son. Carry on."

*Son? The Skipper's only a dozen years my senior, Carvalho thinks indignantly. Then he realizes she wants to put him at ease, to let him know she still considers her confidence well-placed.*

Suddenly, appearing clumsy or foolish doesn't matter anymore. Carvalho wants to acquit himself well, if only to repay the Skipper's trust. Besides, he burns to see the metal plate the alien showed the Sergeant.

Feigning an air of confidence, Carvalho points to the plate's slot on the alien's thigh, and holds out his hand for it. The Other releases the plate and, using a slim metal rod, sketches rapidly on it. Carvalho marvels at the creature's fluidity of line, as well as its ability to maintain suit attitude while it works.

Finally, it hands the plate to Carvalho. He blinks in surprise. The Other has divided the metal page into panels and sketched in scenes.

They lack dialogue balloons, and an alien feel suffuses the silver and black linework and shadowing, but the drawings put Carvalho in mind of his childhood chum, Rogerio Plateira, who draws the heroic adventure strip *Ponzi dos Andes*, Spacial for the faxes. Oscar can almost hear Rogerio's reaction when the details of the encounter with the alien become public: "At last! Proof! The comics represent the only truly universal art form. As I've always said."

Carvalho chuckles softly, and returns his attention to the metal plate.

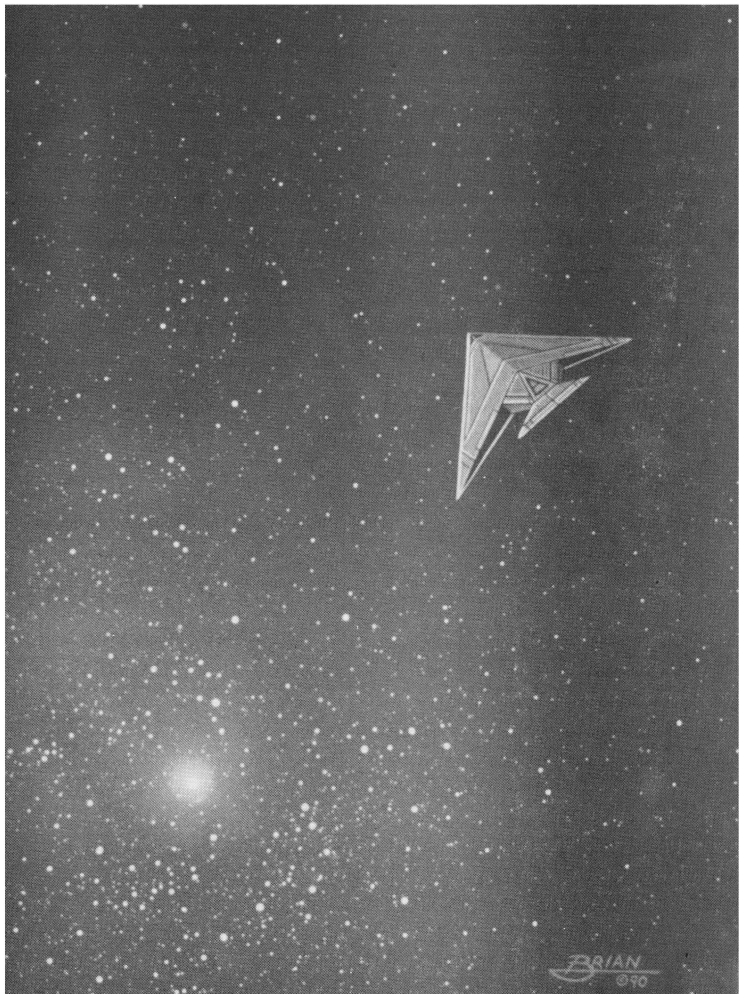
"What tickles you, Ensign?"

"*Senhora?*" he says.

"A moment ago, you sounded ... upset. Now, you sound ... amused."

"The alien's drawn a sort of comic strip sequence, as the Sergeant described."

"And you find it funny?"



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"Ahm ... no, *senhora*. I find the *idea* of it funny."

A pause. "Noted."

Carvalho clears his throat and forces himself to become all business. "First panel: our two ships come together in space. Second panel: they depart in opposite directions, each leaving behind an ion trail."

The Ensign scans ahead briefly. "No, wait," he corrects himself hurriedly. "That must be the third panel, not the second. The panel directly below the first shows the Other and myself in spacesuits meeting midway between our ships."

Carvalho can just distinguish Group Commander Goncalves's voice off-mic: "Ah, they must read from top to bottom."

The Skipper: "But they still read the columns from left to right." Her voice comes back on-mic. "Then what, Ensign?"

"Well, as I said, *senhora*, in the third panel, both ships leave. In the panel below that, the Other ship orbits a ringed planet. Then it leaves, accompanied now by a much larger ship. Our ship does the same: orbits a planet, then leaves accompanied by a much larger ship."

Goncalves's voice: "My daddy can beat up your daddy?"

Ramal grunts. "*Deus*, I hope not."

"The four ships meet back here," Carvalho continues. "Or at least I think so. He's drawn the sun from panel one in the background. They put up a lifebubble at midpoint between the ships and we all go inside and talk."

"Talk?"

"There's a head sketch of one of them without a helmet. Little broken lines come out of his mouth. Then there's a sketch of one of us wearing a helmet, with little broken lines coming from the mouth area."

Ramal's voice: "Is it saying we can't breathe its atmosphere?"

Carvalho studies the sketch of the helmetless alien. They do have hair, or something very similar. Maybe a fin, short fur.

Goncalves: "Probably. On the other hand, maybe it just doesn't know what we look like without a helmet."

The alien taps the edge of the plate in Oscar's hands with the butt end of the writing tool and the drawings vanish. Then it hands him the sketch rod and waggles its hand at Carvalho.

"He wants me to draw, *senhora*."

"Go ahead, Ensign."

"Aye, *senhora*." Pause. "What shall I draw, *senhora*?"

A pause at the other end. Finally: "A very good question, Ensign."

"Aye, *senhora*."

"Try drawing one of us without a helmet and with little broken lines coming out of the mouth and see what the Other does," the Captain says.

Carvalho dashes off a quick, scarless profile of Nina Mboye and shows it to the alien.

"What's his reaction, Ensign?"

"He's drawing a frontal view of Nina, *senhora*, which is odd, since I drew her in profile."

"Of whom?"

Carvalho flushes. "Ahm ... of the ... face I drew, *senhora*. I sketched SensorTech Mboye. I did an inkpix of her earlier today, and it was the first face that came to mind." Carvalho studies the alien's remarkably accurate frontal

rendering.

"*Senhora*, this is odd. He's drawn Mboye's eyes crossed and turned upward. Now he's drawing another picture of Mboye. It's identical, except the eyes aren't crossed and the mouth is speaking. He's pointing at the cross-eyed picture, then at the talking picture, and now he's ...."

Carvalho gasps.

"He's what? What is he doing, Carvalho?"

Silence.

"Carvalho!"

"*Senhora!* He's shrugging, *senhora!*"

"Shrugging ...?"

Goncalves: "He doesn't know whether his atmosphere will kill us or not!"

"But, *senhora!*" Carvalho yells. "*Senhora*, he shrugged! He hunched his shoulders and raised his hands palms upward, just as we do! We have a gesture in common!"

Ramal: "Why do you keep referring to the alien as 'he,' Ensign?"

Brought up short, Carvalho considers. "I don't know ... I ... he feels like a he, *senhora*."

Sekela: "Message from Master Control incoming, *senhora*."

Ramal: "Stand by, Ensign."

Carvalho feels like a child with a new friend. The aliens draw comics, they have two eyes and one nose and a single mouth they use for speech, they have two arms and two legs, they breathe atmosphere and grow hair or something very like it on their heads, and they goddam *shrug!*

They are people, not bug-eyed monsters. Reaching out across space, one culture touching another. Hands across the heavens.

Carvalho feels an almost overpowering urge to hug the Other like some long-lost brother, but he holds back, reminding himself that he has no way of knowing how the alien might interpret the gesture, whether he'll take it as friendly or hostile. And that is when he suddenly realizes that in the excitement of the moment, in the heat of completing the task at hand and getting it right, he has forgotten to be frightened.

"All right, Ensign. Master Control says yes. We'll meet them back here for a chat. Draw the four ships and the lifebubble, as he did, and the head sketches of the two of us talking to each other."

"Aye, aye, *senhora!*"

Carvalho's elation at the decision and at his own newly confirmed steadiness under stress shows in the enthusiasm with which he grasps the plate and rod and starts sketching. He doesn't even notice at first that the force of his movements has started him revolving slowly. When he finally does notice and almost casually cancels his motion with a few expert bursts of helium, he is unembarrassed by what he would earlier have considered a major loss of dignity.

When the Brazilian finally returns the plate, the alien studies it for almost a full minute before slipping it back into the slot on its thigh. Carvalho assumes that the alien must be communicating with its superiors shipboard. Then the Other nods — he *nod!* — his agreement, claps hands ceremonially three times, and waits for Carvalho to do the same.

Enthusiastically (this guy nodded, just like real



people), Carvalho nods back and claps three times. He catches himself barely in time to keep from somersaulting backwards again, although he certainly feels happy enough to turn cartwheels.

For a moment, human and alien hang motionless in space between their mother vessels, eyeing one another. Carvalho feels a sense of wariness, of suspicion and icy fear seeping back into his belly. They are the representatives of two peoples about to enter a relationship from which there may well be no turning back. Is this a warrior taking the measure of an enemy?

Well, if he is, let him. For Carvalho has found — to his surprise and great pleasure — that though he may never

glory in flashy comic book heroics like *Ponzi dos Andes*, Spacial, or thrill to the call of battle with the carefree excitement of his friend Lino Tavares, or fly to meet danger with the nerveless grace of Battle Sergeant Eanes, when required he can do what has to be done. He knows he has finally been tested and has triumphed over his greatest enemy: himself.

Suddenly, without warning, the Other reaches out and seizes Carvalho's right hand in his own.

And shakes it.

Which in reaction sets Earthman and Other, still enthusiastically shaking one another's hand, to turning lazy, laughing cartwheels among the stars. □

## EDITOR'S NOTES

By Charles C. Ryan

# Back to Baggies



We appreciate all the letters of support elicited by my comments on our change in format.

Most of those who took the time to write essentially said that even though they might like the older format with the slick paper and full-color art, it was the stories and articles that they bought the magazine for. A handful indicated that they only bought the magazine for its slickness, and if that stopped, so would they.

We appreciate that honesty. But we're not sure they'd really be willing to pay what it actually costs to produce the magazine in the full-slick format we had. I wrote about this in some depth in an earlier column (*Aboriginal* No. 13, Jan.-Feb. 1989), essentially noting that the large circulation magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, et. al. keep the cover price of their magazines artificially low, practically giving them away, because they make the bulk of their income from advertising revenue. That puts small circulation magazines like us, which have very little advertising revenue, in a difficult position. We really should have charged \$5 per copy and \$18 for a 6-issue subscription for a slick magazine. But most people wouldn't be willing to pay that, conditioned as

they are to the cheaper mass-market prices. As attractive as the heatset printing and slick pages helped make the magazine look, we're not sure it was worth it. The vast majority of the letters we received commiserated with the economic crunch, and said they wanted *Aboriginal* to continue — even if it meant dropping the color art!

As you have undoubtedly noticed, we have again changed the paper and method of production for the same reason we changed it two issues ago — to cut costs.

For the time being, we plan to keep the full-color art, though we are even more restricted than before as to where that art can be placed. (This is a matter of press configurations, and has nothing to do with what we'd choose editorially.)

At the same time, many have written to say the Postal Service has severely damaged their magazines when we dropped the protective bags for the past two issues. (Many of the letters, unthinkingly, considered the damage done by the Post Awful to be our fault, instead of blaming the post office which mangled the copy.) As a matter of fact, our checking subscription copies were just as mauled, and the last one didn't arrive at all. The Postal Service, unlike private busi-

ness, of course, doesn't recognize that when it takes money to perform a service and then damages, or loses, the product, it has the responsibility to replace it. Government-run operations are good at holding others to standards that they eschew themselves, creating some typically bureaucratic Catch-22s.

The Postal Service employees at the local post office are friendly, courteous, and helpful as far as what they do goes. But once the mail hits the high speed machinery, all bets are off. The equipment installed nationally to improve the Postal Service's efficiency (read speed) has also increased the rate of damaged and destroyed goods.

Because of that, we decided it was more important to see that the magazine gets to you, our subscribers, in one piece than it is to keep the slick paper.

Even so, the protective bags do cost more to use, so we ask all those who said they'd be happy to pay more, and those who appreciate the protection, to send in an extra payment to cover the bags.

If you appreciate the extra protection, send us a baggie payment to help defray the extra cost. Information on the baggie cost is located on page 15. Thanks. □



By Mike Resnick  
Art by Lucy Synk

# How I Wrote the New Testament, Ushered in the Renaissance, and Birdied the 17th Hole at Pebble Beach

So how was I to know that after all the false Messiahs the Romans nailed up, he would turn out to be the real one?

I mean, it's not every day that the Messiah lets himself be nailed to a cross, you know? We all thought he was supposed to come with the sword and throw the Romans out and raze Jerusalem to the ground — and if he couldn't quite pull that off, I figured the least he could do was take on a couple of the bigger Romans, *mano a mano*, and whip them in straight falls.

It's not as if I'm an unbeliever. (How could I be, at this late date?) But you talk about the Anointed One, you figure you're talking about a guy with a little flash, a little style, a guy whose muscles have muscles, a Sylvester Stallone or Arnold Schwarzenegger type of guy, you know what I mean?

So sure, when I see them walking this skinny little wimp up to Golgotha, I join in the fun. So I drink a little too much wine, and I tell too many jokes (but all of them funny, if I say so myself), and maybe I even hold the vinegar for one of the guards (though I truly don't remember doing that) — but is that any reason for him to single me out?

Anyway, there we are, the whole crowd from the pub, and he looks directly at me from his cross, and he says, "One of you shall tarry here until I return."

"You can't be talking to me!" I answer, giving a big wink to my friends. "I do all my tarrying at the House of Young Maidens over on the next street!"

Everybody else laughs at this, even the Romans, but he just stares reproachfully at me, and a few minutes later he's telling God to forgive us, as if *we're* the ones who broke the rules of the Temple, and then he dies, and that's that.

Except that from that day forth, I don't age so much as a minute, and when Hannah, my wife, sticks a knife between my ribs just because I forgot her birthday and didn't come home for a week and then asked for a little spending money when I walked in the door, I find to my surprise that the second she removes the knife I am instantly healed with not even a scar.

Well, this puts a whole new light on things, because suddenly I realize that this little wimp on the cross really *was* the Messiah, and that I have been cursed to wander the Earth (though in perfect health) until he returns, which does not figure to be any time soon, as the Romans are already talking about throwing us out of Jerusalem and property values are skyrocketing.

Well, at first this seems more like a blessing than a curse, because at least it means I will outlive the *yenta* I married and maybe get a more understanding wife. But then all my friends start growing old and dying, which they would do anyway but which always seems to happen a little faster in Judea, and Hannah adds a quick eighty pounds to a figure that could never be called *svelte* in the first place, and suddenly it looks like she's going to live as long as me, and I decide that maybe this is the very worst

kind of curse after all.

Now, at about the time that Hannah celebrates her 90th birthday — thank God we didn't have cakes and candles back in those days or we might have burnt down the whole city — I start to hear that Jerusalem is being overrun by a veritable plague of Christians. This in itself is enough to make my good Jewish blood boil, but when I find out exactly what a Christian is, I am fit to be tied. Here is this guy who curses me for all eternity or until he returns, whichever comes first (and it's starting to look like it's going to be a very near thing), and suddenly — even though nothing he promised has come to pass *except* for cursing a poor itinerant businessman who never did anyone any harm — everybody I know is worshipping him.

There is no question in my mind that the time has come to leave Judea, and I wait just long enough for Hannah to choke on an unripe fig which someone has thoughtlessly served her while she lay in bed complaining about her nerves, and then I catch the next caravan north and book passage across the Mediterranean Sea to Athens, but as Fate would have it, I arrive about five centuries too late for the Golden Age.

This is naturally an enormous disappointment, but I spend a couple of decades soaking up the sun and dallying with assorted Greek maidens, and when this begins to pall I finally journey to Rome to see what all the excitement is about.

And what is going on there is Christianity, which makes absolutely no sense whatsoever, since to the best of my knowledge no one else he ever cursed or blessed is around to give testimony to it, and I have long since decided that being known as the guy who taunted him on the cross would not be in the best interests of my social life and so I have kept my lips sealed on the subject.

But be that as it may, they are continually having these gala festivals — kind of like the Super Bowl, but without the two-week press buildup — in which Christians are thrown to the lions, and they have become overwhelmingly popular with the masses, though they are really more of a pageant than a sporting event, since the Christians almost never win and the local bookmakers won't even list a morning line on the various events.

I stay in Rome for almost two centuries, mostly because I have become spoiled by indoor plumbing and paved roads, but then I can see the handwriting on the wall and I realize that I am going to outlive the Roman Empire, and it seems like a good idea to get established elsewhere before the Huns overrun the place and I have to learn to speak German.

So I become a wanderer, and I find that I really *like* to travel, even though we do not have any amenities such as Pullman cars or even Holiday Inns. I see all the various wonders of the ancient world — although it was not so ancient then as it has become — and I journey to China

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(where I help them invent gunpowder, but leave before anyone considers inventing the fuse), and I do a little tiger-hunting in India, and I even consider climbing Mount Everest (but I finally decide against it since it didn't have a name back then, and bragging to people that I climbed this big nameless mountain in Nepal will somehow lack a little something in the retelling).

After I have completed my tour, and founded and outlived a handful of families, and hobnobbed with the rich and powerful, I return to Europe, only to find out that the whole continent is in the midst of the Dark Ages. Not that the daylight isn't as bright as ever, but when I start speaking to people it is like the entire populace has lost an aggregate of 40 points off its collective I.Q.

Talk about dull! Nobody can read except the monks, and I find to my dismay that they still haven't invented air conditioning or even frozen food, and once you finish talking about the king and the weather and what kind of fertilizer you should use on your fields, the conversation just kind of lays there like a dead fish, if you know what I mean.

Still, I realize that I now have my chance for revenge, so I take the vows and join an order of monks and live a totally cloistered life for the next twenty years (except for an occasional Saturday night in town, since I am physically as vigorous and virile as ever), and finally I get my opportunity to translate the Bible, and I start inserting little things, little hints that should show the people what he was really like, like the bit with the Gadarene swine, where he puts devils into the pigs and makes them rush down the hill to the sea. So okay, that's nothing to write home about today, but you've got to remember that back then I was translating this for a bunch of pig farmers, who have a totally different view of this kind of behavior.

Or what about the fig tree? Only a crazy man would curse a fig tree for being barren when it's out of season, right? But for some reason, everyone who reads it decides it is an example of his power rather than his stupidity, and after awhile I just pack it in and leave the holy order forever.

Besides, it is time to move on, and the realization finally dawns on me that no matter how long I stay in one spot, eventually my feet get itchy and I have to give in to my wanderlust. It is the curse, of course, but while wandering from Greece to Rome during the heyday of the Empire was pleasant enough, I find that wandering from one place to another in the Dark Ages is something else again, since nobody can understand two-syllable words and soap is not exactly a staple commodity.

So after touring all the capitals of Europe and feeling like I am back in ancient Judea, I decide that it is time to put an end to the Dark Ages. I reach this decision when I am in Italy, and I mention it to Michelangelo and Leonardo while we are sitting around drinking wine and playing cards, and they decide that I am right and it is probably time for the Renaissance to start.

Creating the Renaissance is pretty heady stuff, though, and they both go a little haywire. Michelangelo spends the next few years lying on his back getting paint in his face, and Leonardo starts designing organic airplanes. However, once they get their feet wet they do a pretty good job of bringing civilization back to Italy, though my dancing partner Lucrezia Borgia is busily poisoning it as quick as Mike and Leo are enlightening it, and just about the time

things get really interesting I find my feet getting itchy again, and I spend the next century or so wandering through Africa, where I discover the Wandering Jew Falls and put up a signpost to the effect, but evidently somebody uses it for firewood, because the next I hear of the place it has been renamed the Victoria Falls.

Anyway, I keep wandering around the world, which becomes an increasingly interesting place to wander around once the Industrial Revolution hits, but I can't help feeling guilty, not because of that moment of frivolity eons ago, but because except for having Leonardo do a portrait of my girlfriend Lisa, I really don't seem to have any great accomplishments, and eighteenth centuries of aimlessness can begin to pall on you.

And then I stop by a little place in England called Saint Andrews, where they have just invented a new game, and I play the very first eighteen holes of golf in the history of the world, and suddenly I find that I have a purpose after all, and that purpose is to get my handicap down to scratch and play every course in the world, which so far comes to a grand total of one but soon will run into the thousands.

So I invest my money, and I buy a summer home in California and a winter home in Florida, and while the world is waiting for the sport to come to them, I build my own putting greens and sand traps, and for those of you who are into historical facts, it is me and no one else who invents the sand wedge, which I do on April 17, 1893. (I invent the slice into the rough three days later, which forces me to invent the two-iron. Over the next decade I also invent the three-through nine-irons, and I have plans to invent irons all the way up to number twenty-six, but I stop at nine until such time as someone invents the golf cart, since twenty-six irons are very difficult to carry over a five-mile golf course, with or without a complete set of woods and a putter.)

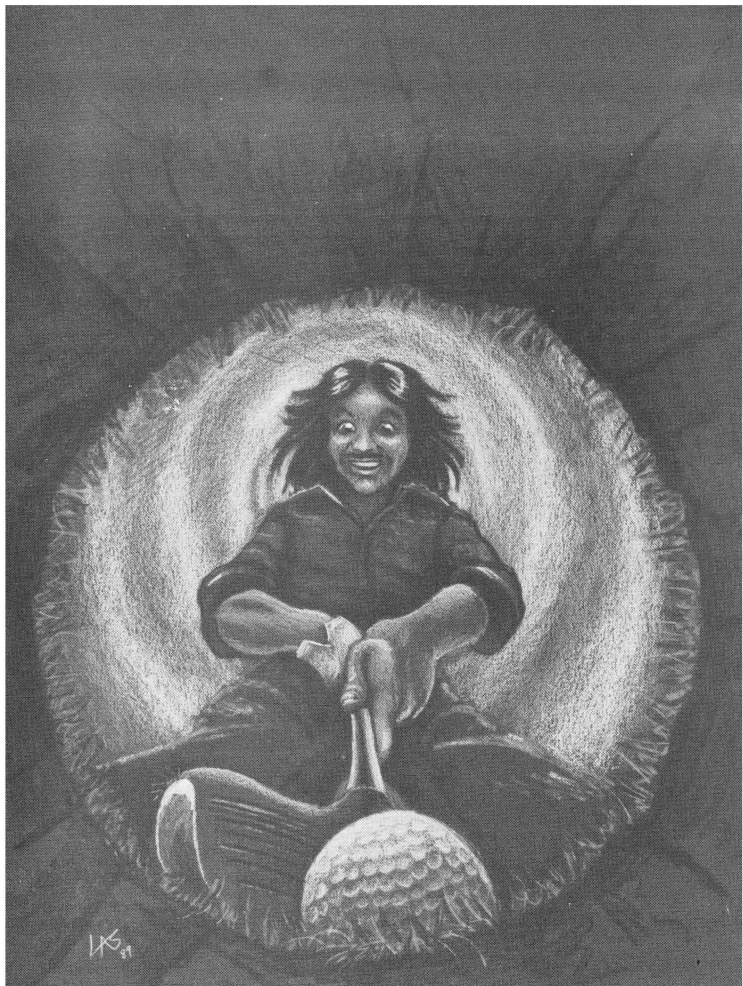
By the 1980s I have played on all six continents, and I am currently awaiting the creation of domed links on Antarctica. Probably it won't come to pass for another two hundred years, but if there is one thing I've got plenty of, it's time. And in the meantime, I'll just keep adding to my list of accomplishments. So far, I'd say my greatest efforts have been putting in that bit about the pigs, and maybe getting Leonardo to stop daydreaming about flying men and get back to work on his easel. And birdying the 17th hole at Pebble Beach has got to rank right up there, too; I mean, how many people can sink a 45-foot uphill putt in a cold drizzle?

So all in all, it's been a pretty good life. I'm still doomed to wander for all eternity, but there's nothing in the rulebook that says I can't wander in my personal jet plane, and Fifi and Fatima keep me company when I'm not on the links, and I'm up for a lifetime membership at Augusta, which is a lot more meaningful in my case than in most others.

In fact, I'm starting to feel that urge again. I'll probably stop off at the new course they've built near Lake Naivasha in Kenya, and then hit the links at Bombay, and then the Jaipur Country Club, and then ...

I just hope the Second Coming holds off long enough for me to play a couple of rounds at the Chou En-lai Memorial Course in Beijing. I hear it's got a water hole that you've got to see to believe.

You know, as curses go, this is one of the better ones. □



# A Matter of Taste

By Esther M. Friesner

Art by Larry Blamire

"I should do what?" The butler's eyes goggled worse than those of the stuffed carp he had carved only last night.

"You heard me, Rawlins." The housemaid fixed a steely gaze upon the priceless antique dinner plate in the butler's hands. He held it tentatively just above the place of honor at the elegantly laid table, but not for long, if Mrs. Connor had her way. "Break it."

The idea set Rawlins's underlip a tremble. "Part of the Trafalgar service, Mrs. Connor? On purpose? Me?"

"Yes, you." Mrs. Connor pursed her lips. "I'd do it quick enough myself, if I hadn't Mother to support. Smash it in a minute, sooner than let that one eat from it."

She cast a meaningful gaze at the closed living room doors, beyond whose mute oaken barrier a select contingent of the Georgetown *haut ton* — and one other — were presently enjoying Mrs. Ruth Longworthy's hospitality. "They'll just be finishing their drinks now — and I shudder to think what that one's drinking — coming in here next, that one a-slithering over the very floors poor Ina spent half her life holystoning. Yes, poor Ina, lying on her bed this very minute without even the comfort of her hair to see her through these awful times!"

Ina was a low blow — a younger Rawlins once had shared a carefully banked passion with said lady — but it had a galvanic effect on the butler. Purposefully he strode towards the Carrara marble fireplace, the guilty plate held high. Mrs. Connor smiled a silent *alea jacta est*. No crockery could survive a tumble to that adamantine hearth.

Rawlins paused. "This will mean my job, you know."

"A-slithering!" Ruthless, that reiteration.

And effective. Rawlins let drop the irreplaceable plate just as the great doors rolled back on their brass casters and the first guests entered the dining room.

"Ah!" the Ambassador exclaimed, and swiftly flicked out his second-lower-left tentacle to snatch the falling plate from doom. He caught it a foot above the hearthstone. "How lucky for you that I am omnidextrous." He passed it back to the butler with an approximated smile.

Rawlins took the plate, being scrupulous to avoid all contact with the Ambassador's rippling cyan flesh. Without a word of acknowledgment or thanks, without even the ghost of a bow, he set the platter in its place and retired to his carving station, ignoring Mrs. Longworthy's glare and the extended and pointed clearing of her sapphire throat.

"I do apologize for Rawlins," she said, a bit testily.

"You cannot blame him, dear lady," the Ambassador replied. "The populace of this city — this country — I will go so far as to say this world in its entirety! — has hardened its heart against me and mine. Yet the crime was so ancient. Had we not had the bad luck to mention it ourselves —"

"Do have some of the duck, Your Excellency," Mrs. Longworthy exclaimed, a bit too brightly, a tad too sharply. At mention of the now-famous abomination, polite dinner chat ceased. All eyes turned to the Ambassador; unfriendly eyes.

"No, thank you," he returned. "We no longer indulge." He gave his full attention to the salad.

"Why not?" It was the son of the Moravian attaché — or perhaps the Brazilian sub-chargé d'affaires — a most disagreeable lad, in any case. "Not as tasty as what you'd really like, is it? After all, duck's only a dumb beast. Why not nibble on our hostess's ear, for old times' sake?"

"Sebastian!"

"Oh, come off it, Ruth!" Sebastian retorted. "You only invited him for the notoriety of it, and we're only at the same table with this — thing — because we're all dog-leg level on our ministerial totem poles. I've put up with this charade through cocktails and hors d'oeuvres — and did you see the wistful way he stared at those Swedish meatballs? — but nothing says I have to swallow dinner at the same table with — with — that one!" He indicated the Ambassador with the same disgust he reserved for his pedigreed but unhousebreakable Afghan hound. The Ambassador's nightingale membranes lowered in shame. He poked his arugula listlessly.

"We're risking our necks being seen with him!" a flighty specimen of local journalistic fauna shrieked.

"I fail to see the risk involved," Mrs. Longworthy's generous mouth was sullen. This scenario had not occurred to her while laying out the place-cards.

"You know what risk," the columnist cheeped. "Revenge, damn it! And not just the nut-groups. Ordinary people. Decent people who aren't about to forgive or forget what he and his kind did to us!"

"Not to you." The Ambassador's voice was barely audible. "We have already tendered our regrets —"

"Don't you dare tender another thing while you're under my roof, Your Excellency!" Mrs. Longworthy was not about to let the Lower Orders win without a tussle.

"You aren't responsible for the actions of your ancestors."

"But if further apology is called for —"

"I forbid it. Have you no pride?"

The Ambassador pondered this. "No," he said at last. "That is, I don't think I have. A strange concept ...."

"Not so strange as your concept of a family barbecue!" Sebastian sniped.

The alien sagged further in his chair. "How could we suspect? Had we but known what you would become — the evolutionary potential — !" He waved his tentacles vaguely, helpless to recapture the past. "We were not so wise, then."

"That was then, this is now?" The British Third As-



sistant Under-Minister for Culture curled his lip. "God, I hate a sanctimonious vegetarian!" A proud member of the C. of E., he still smarted under the horrendous changes it had undergone in the wake of the revenants' shocking confession. When he thought of the new Primate of England, he shuddered.

The closed dining-room doors flew back into their wall-sleeves with a resounding crash. The dinner guests dropped their hostilities to stare. A small, elderly woman tottered in, clad only in a white flannel nightgown. Gray hair streamed down her back in a tousled mane and

framed her wrinkled face in a wispy halo.

"Gubba!" she shrieked.

"Ina ..." The pain in Rawlins's face was immeasurable.

"Ina Harvey," Mrs. Longworthy whispered to the Ambassador. "My housekeeper. She's — not well."

As if to confirm Mrs. Longworthy's understated diagnosis, Ina Harvey lurched forward still gibbering, "Gubba! Gubba!" Rawlins attempted to intervene, leaving the half-carved duck abandoned on the sideboard. His former inamorata staggered towards him. She seemed about to tumble into his arms, but at the last moment she nimbly

sidestepped, lunged for the duck, seized the unattended carving knife, and with a cry of, "Sweet Saint Gubba, guide my hand!" plunged the knife blade into the Ambassador's back.

The wound would not have killed an Earther, but alien physiology being the random thing it is, she connected with the main heart, three of the kidneys, and the durb.

**T**he outcry in diplomatic circles was loud, though not all of it was outraged. The Ambassador was dead, and public opinion was evenly split between Serves them right and What will they do to us now?

Terror seized the planet. Survivalists took to the woods in hordes, sure of civilization-leveling retaliation on the part of the extraterrestrial nostalgophiles. The faithful jammed the newly founded First Church of Darwin, laying their petitions for salvation before Saint Simian and Saint Scopes. Saint Gubba the Australopithecine had her adherents, too, for the Right Reverend Doctor Billie-Joe Chase had been vouchsafed a divine revelation on prime-time TV proving that the families of both Saint Elizabeth and Saint Anne had descended in direct genetic line from this sole protohominid ancestress. Followers of Saint Lucy of Olduvai begged to differ.

"Suddenly it's illegal *not* to teach evolution in Tennessee." Brian Greeley of the recently formed Exogaian Liaison Authority folded his newspaper and passed it on to his subordinate, a skittish young thing with a B.A. in English from Harvard and a government job as a last resort.

"How can you read the paper so calmly?" the underling squealed, letting the daily flutter to the floor unread. "They're going to blast us off the face of the earth!"

"Oh, I don't think so."

"Why shouldn't they? They've got the technology, and we've given them the motive. They came in peace, and what did we do? We killed their Ambassador! We treated them like lepers! We —"

"My dear Hollis, they are reasonable beings. The very fact of their peaceable return proves it. What could they have expected from us, once the secret was out? What sort of reception would Colonel Sanders get if he walked into a coop full of suddenly sentient chickens?"

Hollis moaned. "I'll never see another Yale game!"

The interoffice line beeped once, discreetly. Greeley picked up the receiver, listened, then said, "Show him in."

The Ambassador was dead, but his successor had not been dilatory in assuming diplomatic duties. Greeley's secretary stood well away as she held the door open to admit him. She made no attempt to hide her distaste.

Hollis took one look at their caller and wove his fingers into a Turk's-head knot. "Don't eat me!" he cried.

The new Ambassador furrowed his brow and several other areas of exposed skin in perplexity.

"Ignore Hollis," Greeley said, providing a chair wide enough to accommodate the Ambassador's hummocky body. "He's a twit. Aren't you, Hollis? Now, if you've come to discuss reparations for the death of your colleague —"

Fully three tentacles were raised in a staying motion. "By no means. That sad incident has but emphasized our urgent need to learn what really underlies your animosity."

"Well, there is the semantic difference we have when it comes to the phrase, 'have lunch together' ...."

"No, no, it is more; it must be. We continue to assure you by our most holy vows that we no longer eat meat — not merely yours, but that of more succulent species. Surely there is some other reason —?"

Greeley scratched his head. "Oh, hell, you've been honest with us. Why not tell you the truth? It's pride."

"Pardon, that concept has no equivalent in our lexicon."

"Lucky you. I'll say this for our species, sir: We can take being eaten a lot easier than we can take being forced-humble pie. Creationists said humanity was put on this earth, Evolutionists said it developed here. Suddenly out of the clear blue sky — literally — you folks come to say, yes, humanity was put here; put here by your colonists as beef cattle! Whole herds of hominids, with no greater role in the Universal Scheme than to serve as the Sunday roast."

The Ambassador's membranes lowered halfway. "Stew," he murmured. "Too tough for a roast; though you do — did — travel well."

— and when the colony failed, many of the herds escaped. Evolution took it from there. Like our wild mustangs descending from domesticated horses the Spaniards brought to the New World. Now back you come — our former masters and consumers — to establish friendly relations. How friendly do you think we'd be, once we learned the truth? We're no longer a little below the angels, we're one step from the Quarter Pounder! You've knocked every earthly religion on its sainted ear, you've gutted our language of every food-based idiom, and it's become high treason for someone to tell the old 'I met a bum who hadn't had a bite in days so I bit him' joke."

The Ambassador's frown-lines were trenches now. "I don't understand. Pride ...."

"Self-love, if you will," Greeley suggested. "Esteem, self-image. The value we set on ourselves, the worth —"

"Is that it, then?" The alien's skin smoothed somewhat. "Because our ancestors ate yours, you believe we do not value you highly? Love you with sufficient sincerity?"

"Something like that."

The Ambassador brightened. "But that is most easily rectified!" He rose slowly from his seat. "Tell me, will your television crews be present at our comrade's funeral?"

"We'd need the Marines to keep them away."

"Excellent. Then directly after the rites, I can promise to show your people proof of the high regard, the esteem, the abiding love we cherish for your breed."

"Uhhh, this proof ... Could you specify —?"

"Permit me the indulgence of surprise." The alien ignored the look of misgiving on Greeley's face as he started for the door. "Gentlemen?"

**T**he funeral was held at the Washington Monument reflecting pool. The alien delegation performed the simple yet elegant rites as the late Ambassador's body was reduced to its component elements and dispersed in the atmosphere. The new Ambassador took it upon himself to explain the whole procedure for the cameras, and for the benefit of the few jittery Terrans present in person at the obsequies.

"Such complete disposal of the corporeal form is an old, old way of ours. This is why you never suspected our previous presence on your world. We did not leave behind even our bones."

"And artifacts?" Greeley asked.



"We were — how would you say it? — minimalists. Also tidy." He shrugged off his ceremonial robes and faced the cameras. "Cherished watchers, now attend and witness. In the interests of the harmony between our peoples, let the sending that here follows end all your doubts: to love and value you is truly our second nature; to consume, ingest, or even think of nutritionally assimilating you, anathema."

An oblong section of air behind the Ambassador turned hazy and resolved itself into a holographic projection that was eagerly picked up by the cameras. It was, the alien explained, a transmission directly from the homeworld — only the first of many, if their Terran friends would forgive, forget, and allow. He had arranged it as easily as a college student might phone in a pizza order, no anchovies. The eyes of every Earther with access to a boob-tube were transfixed by the panorama of a civilization from beyond the stars.

The initial epic sweep of that miraculous transmission narrowed to a single-family dwelling. A small alien bobbed across the equivalent of a front lawn, pursuing a multicolored floating star. While earthbound toy tsars barked orders at their R&D departments to develop a knockoff in time for Christmas, the youngling lost its plaything in a tangle of nasty-looking scrub. Tentative proings with its tentacles yielded painful results. The youngster put the wounded extremities to its mouth like any thorn-stung Terran child. For a moment, that one gesture evoked a twinge of sympathy from the human audience.

But only for a moment. The child turned back toward the dwelling, raised two opposing pairs of tentacles overhead, and snapped them like whips. The transmission of sound was as sharp as the picture. No one on Earth could fault it, or later deny what they saw.

The dwelling irised open and a man emerged. He was somewhat hairier and smaller than the norm, with slack posture and no hope of making the Best Dressed list — unless one counted the shiny bangles on his wrists and ankles. But for all his sartorial primitivism, he was bright-eyed, healthy, and eager to please. He fairly scampered across the lawn, listened attentively to the little alien's bubbly syllables, then bounded into the scrub with a happy cry.

When he fetched out the wayward toy, his owner gave him a lump of something green and scratched his back in the one spot no human can reach on his own. It was evident that Mrs. Ruth Longworthy would serve *chat au vin* at her table sooner than that small alien would consent to eat its adored pet.

Hollis needed a winch to get his jaw off the ground.

"Well, hel-lo, Grampa," Greeley said *sotto voce*. "What big brow-ridges you have."

After a lengthy conference in the office of Exogaian Liaison, the new Ambassador was brought to see the error he had made, albeit with the best of intentions.

"Yet if we make amends, why can you not forgive?" he asked plaintively. "Have I not sent instructions to the homeworld, directing the immediate institution of programs to speed the evolution of your ancestral beings? We have the bioforming technology to do this — a simple affair, the stimulation of certain nexi of the brain. No longer shall they be pets to us, though I weep for my

daughter's sake; she was very attached to hers."

"I'm sorry, Your Excellency," Greeley replied, "but that changes nothing. Your broadcast riled folks up worse than before. Now we need time to decide which hurts worse: being your lunches or your Lassies."

"Lassies?"

"You wouldn't understand."

"That appears to be the durb of the problem." The alien's whole massive body seemed to droop. "I agree, Mr. Greeley. It is hopeless to strive for diplomatic relations so long as you people will not understand our position. We shall leave you for a time. Only the mutually guilty can share the pain of inadvertent crime. But you will learn."

"Of course." Greeley really didn't follow the alien, but as a career diplomat he was paid to be agreeable.

The aliens' departure was received with sorrow only within the scientific community. "Did you see what they did with their ship's mascot in just the short time they were here?" one lab tech groaned to another.

"Well, I don't usually stay up for the *Tonight* show, but I made an exception," his partner replied. "A thousand years of evolution leaped in one week. I hear that Johnny's going to let Rover be guest-host for April. What we might have learned!"

On the other hand, the majority of Just Plain Folks said much the same as Mr. Fred Nicely, family man, solid U.S. citizen, Iowan, and pig-farmer, viz: "Good riddance!" He rattled the newspaper for emphasis.

His hired man, Randy Morse, tried to read the article about the alien exodus over his boss's shoulder. It shared front-page space with the new Supreme Court judgment making it a felony to sing "Love Me Tender" in a public eatery. The two men leaned their elbows on the top bar of the breeding sty as they shared the news of the day. "Says here they'll come back when we call 'em," Randy pointed out.

"Ha!" Mr. Nicely's short, harsh laugh was rank with the aftertastes of a hearty bacon-and-eggs breakfast. "They think we'd ever tell 'em to come back? In a pig's eye!"

"Watch your language, Nicely!"

The paper was snatched from the good farmer's hands. Automatically he cursed Randy's rudeness; unjustly, for Randy was incapable of such discourtesy to his employer. At the moment, Randy was incapable of anything. Petrified, paralyzed, only his lips flapping like longjohns on the line, Randy gawked at the real culprit, a prize Spotted Poland China boar who was exercising his newly acquired opposable trotters to turn the newspaper pages.

The boar ignored the hired man's frozen stare and the farmer's guttural scream. He only had eyes for the page-one story on the aliens. He sighed deeply over the photos of his benefactors' leavetaking. He'd miss them, though their mutual acquaintance had been brief and confined to the cover of darkness. Their initial encounter was shrouded in the mists of pre-sentience, but what came after was crystal clear in newfound porcine memory. What they'd done to him and the others hadn't hurt a bit that he could recall. Even if it had, it was a trifling price to pay for facing a tomorrow that now held more than scrappe.

He thumbed to the farm news and remarked, "Says here that pork futures are up."

So they were. □



Loose Hayer

## Three Boston Artists

(Continued from page 2)

She wriggled out of his hands.

"When one of my Phneri eats a fish, he understands the structure of the fish. He worships the fish while he eats. He *esfn*s the fish. They have art too. They have poetry." The old woman looked at him. "Your *Juno's* a good painting. But Rembrandt's dead; he doesn't eat. My artists eat."

"What do you want?" Ernest asked.

"Enough fish, Mr. Pole. I want the R'rched Court to reclassify the Phneri. I want teachers for the Phneri, I want them to learn English, they can do it, I've taught him some. I want money for teachers. I want to get the Phneri out of those raft slums on the South Boston Shoals. I want them to be out of my custody, I want them to be able to apply for work permits on their own, to get into the Cube on their own, because that's where the money is, Mr. Pole, I want them to be able to *live* in the Cube if they want."

"You want them to be citizens."

"Why not? I want humans to look at them the way you look at *Juno*." She smiled crookedly. "Not a lot to want, is it?"

She picked up her translator box to leave.

He held her arm. "I'll look at their art," he offered.

"What?"

"I mean — if they make art, if they don't just — eat things — *destroy things* — 'I'll look at their art.' His hand dropped. 'I mean — it isn't much — it's what I do.'"

The woman stared at him. After a moment she smiled, recovering herself again, she crossed her arms: jeering smile, arms akimbo.

"Art critic for animals? All right. If you can criticize art for *dangerous animals*, I can work for Museum wages."

"You'll do it," he breathed.

The alien was sitting up, trilling at the old woman. She shot one sharp whistle at him. "I shouldn't bring him when I'm bargaining," she said dryly. "Yes, we'll do it. If you come and use your precious human eyes on his kind of art."

The old woman took his elbow and steered him out of the marble room. Outside the doorway, French windows threw on the parquet a square of wavery sun. "Look out there." They stepped out the windows onto an enclosed balcony, glasteel vibrating with the wind. She pointed toward the South Boston Shoals. A guard looked up at them from the terrace below, another one materialized efficiently inside the doorway. The Museum took its treasures seriously.

From this distance the domed raft-slums looked like fantasies from a Buckminster Fuller drawing.

"That's where the real Boston artists live."

The hand was dead black, workmanlike, stubby, a big palm spanning short wide fingers. An old man's hand. It hung attentively at the end of a glittering technology of glass and glasteel in the restoration room, facing *Juno*. The north light shone over her. Dr. Torch explained that *esfn* didn't need light. "It's closer to sonar. He generates waves." The alien, who had eaten his fish in the basement, clicked around the oak floor, whistling softly. "He likes your floor's history," Dr. Torch explained. "The trees it was made of ... He sees the seasons."

The small alien sat up and looked over its shoulder

toward Ernest, an unreadable beaver.

For the *esfnai* they had taken the protective glass off *Juno*. Ernest looked at the helpless paint, thinking of pollution, flaking. "He *esfn*s the structure. He records his *esfnai* on this computer." Dr. Torch patted a small green box. "He checks the *esfnai* as he works by using the waldo-hand to copy the painting. You get a runtime license for the translation software we use," she said, "and the copy of the painting. You can make more copies," she grinned. "Sell them in the museum shop. We get a two percent royalty."

"We only want to restore her."

*Esfn*. The Phneri ability to see structure, see it gesture by gesture as it had been built. Ernest looked across at *Juno's* young, serene face, the steady eyes under their grime and smoke. Immortal beauty made of white lead paint, old canvas, burnt and stained and cracked. The white lead was oxidizing; the canvas would never hold paint well again. Ernest had spent five years convincing himself *Juno* was not too hopeless to restore.

What would she look like now?

"You'll end up hanging the copy," Dr. Torch predicted.

"No."

"Why not? If you think like a Phner, the artistic process is what's important. Not what it produces. The Phneri would let her rot. If you want a record of what she looked like during part of her lifetime," the old woman shrugged, "well, that's only process, isn't it?"

"We think like humans here," Ernest said a little stiffly.

"What's wrong with thinking like a Phner?"

Ernest moved over to the window. Outside, the terrace overlooked the Wall. The ragged rafts bumped each other down at the Shoals slums where the Phneri lived, in the little bustling tides.

"I don't want an Institute answer," Dr. Torch said. "I don't want to hear 'because it's not human.'"

The old woman took a bite out of her lunchroll. Jennifer Torch had bought lunch at the Raanda kiosk just outside the Institute. Her roll was bright yellow and smelled of fish and hot linen. Ernest had brought human food in a brown bag from home. The alien clicked over and sat up, begging bites.

"Dr. Torch," he said, "do you remember back before there were aliens?"

"There were always aliens. They just weren't here," she said sharply, then laughed. "Ernest, I'm old enough to remember Fenway Park being dry."

"Before they came —" Ernest put his sandwich down and tried to figure out what he was saying. "All the food was human food. Everything that everybody ever ate was human. It had been grown, or invented, or something, right here on Earth. Everything that people said was human. People used Boston whalers instead of water-walkers. They didn't have to worry about what human was, because that's all there was. But when I was born, the aliens were already here."

"Are you that young?" She shook her head.

She fed the last of the sandwich to the alien. "Human or not, my food has more vitamins. Come on, guy, time to work." The waldo cap, a gold net, was already fitted over his head. She plugged the leads in, patted the alien, and set him down in front of the painting.

"There's a thing about isolated cultures —" he began.

"Do you know anything about cultural anthropology?"

"No," she said dryly. "I have a degree in it."

"Oh. Well." He still needed to say what he meant. He found what would help in the cabinets at the back of the restoration room. He slid it carefully into a small holding box and carried the box back to her, one hand cupped over it. "Look at this." The fragment was so small, light enough so that, when she leaned over to look at it, it stirred with her breath.

"This came out of a Polynesian culture. A very isolated culture, on one or two islands. It's a miniature grass-weaving. The Polynesians made beautiful things, grass mats and pots." A perfect thing. For years, gaudily, he had wanted to steal it and center a collage around it.

She stirred the inch-square mesh with her finger. "It has *sfjn*."

"We were isolated and we didn't know it. We made Boston whalers and ate baked beans. Or we painted Rembrandts," he said, looking up at *Juno's* serene face. "Rembrandt was a human, and Shakespeare, and Beethoven. Matisse and Henry Moore. And we thought we were all alone."

"And then the ships come," she prompted. "And they introduce the Polynesians to top hats and brass buttons. And they all go off to New Bedford and the Polynesians learn to kill whales."

"Do you know what happened to the grass mats and pots, Dr. Torch? They're in museums because they are beautiful. But the Polynesians today can't tell you what those pots and mats are for. And they can't make them."

"But there are still Polynesians," she said.

"Are there?"

He put the box and the weaving down carefully on a table. He moved over to the window, by her, and looked out through the wavy glass. The mylar-covered rafts bobbed in the winter sunlight. Down by half-drowned Back Bay, waldoes moved over old brown houses, shoring up and tearing down. A dot of bright red walked slowly over the waves toward the harbor. "Nobody knows what those pots and mats are about any more. I never knew what human culture was like when it was all human. This is an alien city. There are twenty-four intelligent species in Boston. We're getting to be like all of them. We're changing. Someday we're all going to be eating krill crackers and operating fish-divers for the Hnarfil; we'll be imitation Manam or Raanda, or Bishop-worshippers. Maybe then we'll know what we're doing. But we won't know what we were." Ernest grinned uneasily. "I think I need to know *Juno*, to know as much as I can, to love her. I need to be a restorer."

In the corner of Ernest's eye, movement caught. The alien was whistling softly at the painting. The waldo was holding a brush and had begun to pick at the canvas, delicately as a dragonfly.

The painting blossomed on the canvas like a dream. Ernest spent every hour that he could spare watching the intoxicating calligraphy of the brush: creams and ivories of skin, translucent shadows, sculptural gold.

The art trip was put off until the day the painting would be finished. The whole Pher community was excited, Dr. Torch told him. They would make a piece of art just for him.

"Something like kites, they said." She smiled. "I met

my first Pher because of a kite. I'll tell you someday."

On the day the picture would be finished, they went down to the rafts in the South Boston Shoals. They would come back in the evening and see *Juno* done.

"You won't like where they live," Dr. Torch had warned. Ernest picked his way across the bobbing floats, following her through the crowd of humans and aliens. He had not expected to see so many humans in the slums. They stood huddled around the fires built in the center of the rafts, scarecrows in layers of dirty clothes, gaping at the Pheri as they would have at a street light or a hopper show.

The float lurched under a heavy wave. Water slopped over Ernest's shoes, fish-smelling and brown.

The waves here rolled unremittingly, every few seconds, not regular. Ernest felt it as a gravity tug in his stomach, then a sudden lightheadedness. Across the water, through the late afternoon sea mist, the City Wall rose up as solid as a planet, the Boston Cube behind it. The sun came through the clouds and turned everything to vapor. *Turner*, he thought. The sunlight strengthened until their shadow across the waves was a choppy nettle-green.

A small tawny-gold paw pressed something into Ernest's hand. He looked at it, not recognizing it. "A flaregun," Dr. Torch said. "That's for later. You don't have to use it." He turned it around in his hand, puzzled, then put it in his pocket.

He saw the artists' tawny tethered at the end of the long strip of slum. Small tawny creatures crowded around the constructions on the raft.

The constructions themselves — Ernest caught his breath and held it, held it till it hurt.

Kites, Dr. Torch had said. They soared. In the whipping wind, banners and windsails raced skyward, whirling. Grey-green with honey-orange, gold skirted with a no-color that tugged at the eyes: fragile towers, bumping, colliding. One shot up into the sky, propelled by some air-engine, and tumbled upward like a vast acrobat. The sky bobbed with rippling shapes. Sails flew glorious and urgent; dragons breathed fire into the clouds. Ernest's soul shot upward on that rippling as if it had been on a string.

"Oh," Ernest said. The longing in his voice startled him. He noticed that Dr. Torch's face was wet with tears.

"Animals?" she said triumphantly.

Ernest watched, rapt out of himself.

Some of the constructions stood on the raft, not meant to be borne on air. They were towers, so gossamer that the walls themselves caught the light and passed it through in dazzle. They ignored gravity, careening castles in a fantastic landscape, balanced on their own secret center.

He watched, lifted out of time.

The light changed. He looked away for a moment, seeing shadows long across water. The sun was sinking red. Ernest was startled. Surely he had been looking only a few seconds.

"I don't want the sun to go down," he said like a child.

"This — this is magnificent. I want it to go on ..."

Dr. Torch laughed. "You'll remember."

It was only dusk. He could clearly see what happened next.

On the raft, the tawny bodies began to tug at a tower. The arms of a windmill flailed, fell. A silken wall tore across and jerked like an animal with a broken back.

"What are they doing? They can't—" One of the largest sails was bucking now. But you can't, I haven't seen it all, Ernest said silently like a man just killed, watching the towers fall like blood out of his heart. The sail swayed back and forth in front of the setting sun and the sun flashed red, shadow, red.

In the sky the great dragons floated, untouched as yet.

The sun touched the ocean and died. From the raft slums, someone, human or Phneri, began setting off flareguns. A vicious light stabbed through one sail. Sparks from the flareguns jabbed at cloth. Sparks cut through lines, crawled purposefully up. A burning kite blundered into another and light exploded across the sky so that Ernest could see the crooked Hancock Tower with light blossoming in its glass. What the kites had been made of, gauze or silk, hung painted in flame, then fell charring. Smudges stung Ernest's face and hissed into the harbor.

And the Phneri sang.

It was a trilling vibration in the rafts, so huge a chorus that the humans' bones shook and their teeth chattered. The dark water pulsed with it in little waves. And in the sky the kites caught and blazed and died until the last of them was only a flaming in the sky.

In the dark the raft closed its shield over them and turned up its heat. "Lights," Dr. Torch said. "No," Ernest said, and he sat bent over in the dark, aching all over.

"Was it beautiful?" Dr. Torch said.

"Beautiful!" he said.

Below them, in the dirty water, the last of the destroyers' songs faded away in groans.

She lived in one of the cheap hives above Kendall Square. Her room was cold, smelling of the river, of Phneri fur. She ordered coffee from the hive kitchen; it arrived in a heat-retaining cup; technology of the Abelnelna, which had replaced Japanese covered cups, plastic heat-baffling cups, everything that had been part of human culture before the aliens came.

"I'm sorry you felt hurt," she said.

He saw the memory of kites floating in the afternoon sky. Somebody had spooned out his soul, bit by bit.

"Beautiful," he said dully. "I thought of Los Angeles. All those paintings in the earthquake, burning."

She raised her eyebrows. "It must be nice to be cultured. All right, I guess I was hurt too, the first time I saw an *esfmai*. I didn't think of Los Angeles. It was before Los Angeles. I was eleven."

She put her elbows on the table. "I had just moved up from Houston and my family was breaking up. They left me pretty much alone. So one afternoon I went out and got lost and I saw a Phner. My first alien. He was little, like a dog. Malnourished, I know now. Phneri were still being killed on sight then. Nobody else saw him. I didn't know what he was. We watched Cody kites together. Those big boxy kites. I took him home. He made me the most wonderful thing I had ever seen, a very little Cody kite out of silver foil. I knew he loved me and I loved him." She held her two hands apart. "Then he destroyed it, just before the police came. I saw him smash it. It was years before I found out why that was love."

"Love?" he said.

## A Long Time Ago

Before taking charge at *Aboriginal Science Fiction*, our editor, Charles C. Ryan, was the editor of *Galileo*, a science fiction magazine published in the mid-1970s. During his tenure there, he helped discover a number of new writers who have since gone on to win Nebula and/or Hugo awards, such as Connie Willis, John Kessel, Lewis Shiner, and more.

We think he did a fine job at *Galileo*, and, in fact, it was on the strength of that performance that we picked him to help turn *Aboriginal Science Fiction* into the first successful SF magazine in a decade.

Now, on his behalf, we'd like to give you an opportunity to see some of the best stories he collected a decade ago.

For a limited time, while copies last, you can purchase a first-edition hardcover copy of *Starry Messenger: The Best of Galileo* for \$10, plus \$1 postage and handling. If you would like your copy autographed by the editor, please indicate how you would like the note to read.

*Starry Messenger: The Best of Galileo* (St. Martin's Press, 1979) features 12 stories by the following authors:

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<sup>1</sup> "And culture. And art. They destroyed the kites for you. So you could see every moment of those objects."

He stared at her, trying to reconcile anything rational with what he felt. He swirled the coffee again. The dark liquid swirled in front of his eyes. Gold-orange and grey-green and the lifting sails.

"Structure's beautiful when it changes," she said.

She whispered commands to the computer. The printer hissed out a page, still warm. The words meant nothing.

*to finish/begin  
all-structures  
(unit=not-here-previous-duration)(unit=not-  
here-duration-to-come)  
esfn to contemplate (all-structures)/is=existence  
...*

"It's some of their poetry. It means something like:

*Finish and begin. Everything is  
and there is not-presence; in contemplation it is.  
Volcanoes exploding in air  
volcanoes in water  
Finish and begin —*

"They don't have a word for individual existence, or for not existing. Only for duration." She tried again.

*Visible, not visible,  
here, not here,  
fires in air  
in water  
All seen is seen forever.*

"They must remember for a very long time," Ernest said dully. He could never forget.

"They don't think about time."

"But humans —" Ernest started. He couldn't say any more.

"The Institute is wrong," Jennifer Torch said. "The Institute has a lot of influence in this town, but it all goes to preserving human culture 'uncontaminated.' No such thing. Ernest, the aliens are here. This isn't a world of humans any more, not humans alone. We pretend it is. We classify intelligent beings like my Phneri as animals. We stagnate, like your Institute, that can't even bear a new taste in its mouth. And all the time, there's so much we could know."

"Like the Polynesians?" Ernest said bitterly.

"Phneri aren't destroyers. They could make those kites again; there were three hundred Phneri at that *esfnai* and they all *esfn*'ed the kites before they burned them. But they'd only do that for humans; those kites were made for this day, that mist and wind and blowing sunlight. And to remember."

It was ignoble of him, clearly, to be happy that he could see those kites again. He looked up at her. She was smiling at him mockingly. "And will they ever be again the way they were today, Ernest? And will you ever forget them?"

He threw down the cup; it closed before it hit the ground. "Humans keep art! That's how we remember!"

She shook her head. "Finish and begin."

"Not *Juno*!"

He had meant it as bluster.

Later it would seem he should have known what the Phner meant. For all the time of the *esfnai* of *Juno*, he had watched, as happy with the process as the Phner must have been. He had gone off today to the art show as if he knew what it meant. "Structure changes." The art show and *Juno* were one work. But he had been blind, been human.

"I told him not to finish her," Jennifer Torch said. "I told him it was important."

Ernest understood the Phner as well as he ever would. "That doesn't matter!" he shouted. "He's an artist."

From the Kendall Square hives to the Institute, late at night with only the robocabs running, it was so long, so long. The robo-jounced them over the night-sleeping river. Jennifer passed him her translator box so he could call ahead to the Museum. But the comm-address of the restoration rooms didn't answer, which should have told them something. In front of the Museum, swarming police lights flashed red and blue and the policemen tried to stop them at the doors.

In the brightly lit restoration room, blood splattered across the floor. For such a little animal, the Phner had made a lot of blood in dying. The policeman who had shot the alien was being interviewed by three reporters. "That animal just started to tear the painting apart!" the policeman was saying. "Tear it right up!" Blood was splattered across *Juno* too. The Phner had ripped the center of the canvas away. *Juno* had lost most of her hair, her neck, and both her magnificent eyes. Jennifer Torch knelt down and cradled the Phner's body in her arms. The Phner's head lolled down over the crook of her elbow. Ernest touched its fur for the first time; oily and smooth, with a soft undercoat, and still warm.

The waldo-hand was still painting. It was almost done. On the canvas *Juno* bloomed, young, bright, perfect. It was the most beautiful thing Ernest had ever seen. Untouched by time. Untouchable.

And not painted by a human any more.

Quite suddenly Ernest sat down on the floor and began to cry.

**T**he City Wall is a place where young lovers meet, friends stroll on the seawall top, gawkers look out over the Shoals. Ernest and D. Jennifer Torch met there one day much later, in spring. The winter winds were over and the first sailboats were cutting their white notches in the river. The granite bulk of the Institute was at their backs.

"They fired me, you know," Ernest said. "From the Institute."

"Well," Jennifer said. "I've been 'retired.'"

Neither said anything for awhile. He looked up at the Institute. He thought he could pick out the glass balcony where he and she had stood, the day they had first met. There were no mylar rafts to look at now; the Phneri and the humans who had shared their slum had been moved away.

"I wonder who has custody of the Phneri now," she said.

"They aren't yours," he said bitterly.

"They never were," she said.

Someone had got a copy of the *Juno* data the Phner had produced, and the waldo street artists had passed copies from hand to hand. So now, on one of the windbreaks at

the top of the wall, on a faded poster, a waldo artist had used up a few idle minutes and copied *Juno*. Her magnificent eyes smiled over drowned Boston. Her pigments were already fading.

"I wasn't even important. The Phner was making a collage and I was a piece of paper he needed." He put out his hand and touched the fading face on the paper. "*Juno* was the big piece in the middle. But she wasn't important either."

He looked out over the river. When he had come to Boston, he had thought he could go away from it and begin understanding things again. "I'll never leave here," he said.

"Ernest," she said. "I'm sorry. I mean — I didn't mean to hurt you."

He picked up a piece of paper that had got stuck in a crevice of the Wall, looked at it without quite seeing it, and stuck it in his pocket. It had the look of something human.

"You still make collages?" She dug in her pocket and half-held out her hand. "I wanted you to have this. For a collage. If you want."

It rested on cotton in an old-fashioned cardboard box marked FILENE'S: a crushed bauble with the sheen of tarnished silver, coin-flat and lighter than tissue. He could see in it the shape that it must once have had. A Cody kite like the kites an eleven-year-old girl had watched with her first alien. It was small in his hand: made for a girl's hand, a girl not full grown, needing to wonder at something much smaller than she, and long ago.

"You said something once," she said. "Humans keep art." She shrugged and turned away, turned back. "Come show it to me when you're done," she said. Then she was gone.

Ernest stood looking out over the river beyond the wall. Humans keep art. Humans have a past, have memory. In the sky the kites were still flying in his head. Memory burns, memory cracks and falls away, memory dies under alien claws. Art hurts and will not stop. What could art be about in a city of aliens?

He reached out and touched the paper with *Juno's* face, but left it on the wall. In his room were all the things he picked up in his wandering. At night, in his room, he pasted together old Coke squeeze bottles, feathers of birds of Earth. He drew on them, eyes, clouds, gestures, hands, urgent shapes on feathers and paper. Collages.

Humans keep art. And somewhere in the human city waited the Phneri, the Phneri and all the somber aliens. He wished that he had dared to steal the Polynesian weaving.

He turned the little ruined silver thing between thumb and forefinger. She had kept it, and kept with it her eleven-year-old self, an afternoon on the Common watching the kites fly. Is art only the stories we tell about ourselves? The sunlight shimmered across the metal. "I could put it into something," he thought, more or less, or merely felt about it what he felt about almost everything, all the time now, the focus of some question. He dropped it back inside the box and put the box in his pocket and wandered on, down the path, toward Boston. □

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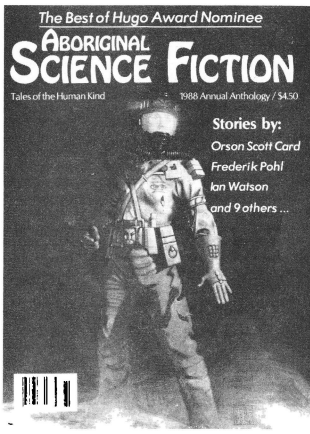
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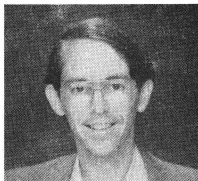
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# Don't Talk to My Grandma



Two of the most cherished and unquestioned beliefs in physics are that the speed of light cannot be exceeded and that time travel is impossible. These two things are often considered givens, boundary conditions that simply cannot be violated when trying to solve some physical problems in the real world. These things are beaten into a physicist at a young and tender age, when concepts and principles have a tendency to get hardwired into the brain. But a few are starting to question these unquestionable facts.

Kip Thorne and his students at Cal Tech have proposed a method to build a time machine. It's actually a two-step process. First you have to figure out a way to exceed the speed of light, and once you've done that, by comparison, the actual building of the time machine is a rather trivial task.

I'm not lying.

These are real scientists, getting paid real paychecks, all for the purpose of violating our most basic beliefs and principles. It may sound impossible, but remember this: Cal Tech is in California, just a few miles outside of Los Angeles. And I guarantee you that if time travel ever is developed, it will be done first in Los Angeles. It may be the only practical solution to gridlock.

But I digress.

How can you exceed the speed of light?

The standard approach has been one that tries to use a black hole. A black hole is little more than a hole punched through the fabric of spacetime by a huge mass (ten, to millions of, times as massive as our sun) which has been squeezed down by gravitational forces until it occupies essentially no volume (this defines it as a singularity, something that mathematicians seem to delight in, but that

makes physicists squirm). The backside of this black hole punches back into normal space at some point at the far end of the universe (or possibly into another universe), producing what could be called a white hole.

Perfect, you might be saying.

Just aim the old spaceship for a black hole and find yourself spurting out its backside through a white hole. You've definitely exceeded the speed of light.

No.

The trouble in using this approach for faster-than-light travel lies with the singularity at the bottom of the black hole. You and everything in your spaceship get squished down to zero volume as you try to pass through it. I would not recommend this.

But people did not give up on the old black hole so easily. They kept pounding on the math and discovered that a tunnel could be opened, allowing you to pass through to the white hole, while at the same time letting you pass by the singularity, if the hole itself were rotating or electrically charged.

But there are problems with even this approach.

The tunnel is unstable — very unstable.

It will collapse under the slightest disturbance.

If so much as a single piece of light, a single photon, were to enter the tunnel, that disturbance would force the tunnel to collapse. And your spaceship would certainly be larger than a single photon. So it appears that the black hole just isn't going to let you zip around the universe, exceeding the speed of light. Another approach was needed, a different way of looking at the problem.

Enter Kip Thorne.

He decided to look at this problem from the opposite end of the spectrum,

not at massive black holes, but at something smaller — so small, in fact, that, by comparison, it would make an electron look like something that could span the galaxy.

Quantum foam.

When you get down to the microscopic world, things begin to get quantized. Things like the energy levels in atoms are no longer continuous, but discrete, with only a few allowable energy levels permitted (this is a quantum mechanics effect). Well, this effect may happen to more than just fundamental atomic particles — it may happen to the very fabric of space. At small enough dimensions space itself may not be continuous, but composed of very small discrete bits. And just how small are we talking about?

This distance, called the Planck distance, is on the order of  $10^{-33}$  centimeters — that's a 1 with thirty-two zeros between it and the decimal point. For comparison, a single atom has dimensions on the order of  $10^8$  centimeters, something that is ten million billion billion times larger than the Planck distance! If you could somehow see down to those dimensions, space would not be some empty, featureless void, but something frothy and foamy with all those little fractured and splintered bits of reality rubbing and grinding against one another.

Thorne and others have postulated that within this foam, small tunnels are opened between these ultra-small bits of quantized space. They're called wormholes. But these are not typical tunnels, something to connect point A to point B. The wormhole has the amazing property that point A and point B are more than just connected by the tunnel; they're actually coinci-



dent. Point A and point B are physically at the same location if you enter the tunnel. If you step on point A, you find yourself mysteriously whisked across the intervening space and also standing on point B. This may sound quite impressive, but remember — the distance between point A and point B is only on the order of  $10^{33}$  centimeters. This method obviously isn't going to let you jump to the stars.

This is where Thorne gets creative.

Theoretical physicists have this warped way of looking at the world. They are quite satisfied if they can simply prove that something is not impossible. To theoretical physicists, the implementation of their mathematical nightmares into something real and buildable is a trivial and often unimportant detail. So what Thorne calls upon to help him out in transforming these wormholes into something large enough to launch a spaceship through is the Arbitrarily Advanced Civilization (AAC). This is someone or something that must still obey the physical laws that constrain the universe but has absolutely no engineering limitations.

To a member of the AAC, things like constructing black holes from scratch, transforming entire galaxies into quasars, or studying the origins of the universe by recreating the Big Bang are the equivalent of you or I managing to win third-runner-up prize in a junior high school science fair for a model of the solar system that's been built out of golf balls and fishing line.

So what does Thorne call on the AAC to do?

First they must expand the wormhole. They must somehow feed energy into it, forcing it to grow into a useable size, while at the same time reinforcing it with a special type of material that will keep it from collapsing back on itself. This is because the wormhole oscillates, its throat opening and closing continuously. If you tried to move through the wormhole while it was oscillating, you'd be squished just as if you'd jumped into a black hole. But the wormhole can be stabilized and kept open if it's laced with a special type of material — a material which has a negative mass energy density. It's this special material requirement that will really stretch the AAC's engineering ability. Thorne likes to call this threading material exotic. And what exactly

does that mean?

This exotic material would have some very strange properties, but you can still think of it as the same sort of normal material that you encounter every day — rocks, houses, dogs, or even physics professors (I'm not totally certain about this one). But there is one major difference. All the things listed above, with the possible exception of the physics professor, exhibit a positive gravitational force on one another — they're all attracted to each other. In the conventional, non-Thorne universe, gravity is solely an attractive force. But this exotic material would produce a negative gravitational field — things would be repelled from it.

This is the weakest point in Thorne's time machine — it may even violate the general theory of relativity (one more of those cherished sacred cows of physics), but that's not quite clear. But if an AAC could generate this material, they could then construct a massive wormhole that would not pinch itself off. If they can do this, transforming the stabilized wormhole into a time machine is now child's play — all it requires is applying the special theory of relativity.

Most of you have heard about Einstein's twin paradox. One twin is put in a spaceship that's sent off traveling at nearly the speed of light. At those speeds, it appears to the twin who has been left back on Earth that time in the speeding spaceship has slowed down. When the traveling twin returns years later, he's only aged a few days, while the Earth-bound twin has aged years.

Think of those twins as being the two ends of the wormhole.

Take one end of the wormhole, launch it somewhere into the galaxy, making sure that it's traveling at almost the speed of light, and then bring it back to Earth. The traveling end of the wormhole has aged less. This means that a person who now steps into the stationary end of the wormhole and then walks out of the end that has just traveled around the galaxy will step out into the past.

You've just made a time machine.

According to Thorne, you've violated no physical laws. You've certainly bent, folded, spindled, and mutilated them, but you have not actually broken them.

We can't yet do this, and may in fact never be able to — the engineer-

ing may always be beyond us. But if there are AACs out there who may have generated all these time traveling wormholes, think of the consequences. They could be creating and discarding these wormholes in the same way that we make plastic bottles and dirty diapers. And just like us, they might try to dump them in some backward spot in the universe, somewhere out of the way and hidden, where there's no one of sufficient intelligence to complain to someone in authority. We could all wake up tomorrow and find the planet full of discarded wormholes.

Think about it.

No one would be safe.

Someone could slip into one, meet your grandmother when she was a sweet thing of sixteen, and spend a few critical seconds talking with her — just enough time to delay her on that fateful morning when she first met your grandfather. Because of that little conversation they never meet. They never marry.

You'll never be born.

This is serious business.

Something should be done about it.

Perhaps a law should be passed about walking into discarded wormholes and then talking to sixteen-year-old girls.

I suggest you write your congressional representatives.

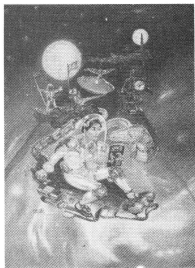
And if they don't write back, or take you seriously, I further suggest you keep a close eye out for wandering wormholes, and make sure that when you do jump into one, you know the childhood address of your congressional representative's grandmother. □

## What is an SASE?

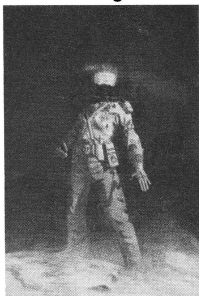
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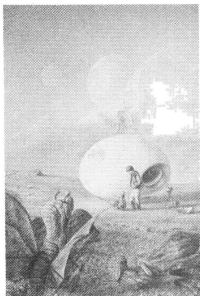
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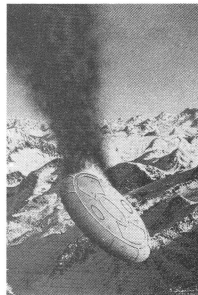
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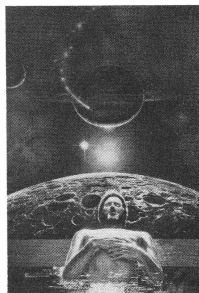
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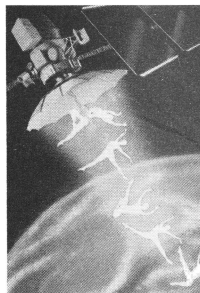
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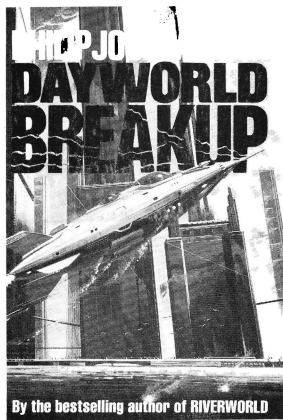
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