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FEAR (Incorporating Movie and The Movie-Makers) EDITORIAL PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB ☎ (0584) 5851 fax (0584) 6044 Managing Editor John Gilbert Deputy Editor Patience Coster Designer David Western Editorial Director Oliver Frey Consultant Editor Mark Salisbury US Editorial Consultant Philip Nutman Literary Associate Stanley Wiater Production Manager Jonathan Rignall Production Matthew Uffindell, Robert Millichamp, Robert Hamilton ADVERTISING Advertisement Sales Executive Sarah Chapman ☎ 0584 4603 OR (0584) 5852 MAIL ORDER Carol Kinsey SUBSCRIPTIONS PO Box 20, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB Typesetting Tortoise Shell Press, Ludlow Colour Origination Scan Studios, Islington, London Printed in England by Pulman Web Offset, Watling Street, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK2 2BP – a member of the BPCC Group Distribution COMAG, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex

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"Trail of the Bat"

I knew there would be trouble! Six months ago, I gathered together the FEAR clans and said: 'Let's do a big British FEAR special on the *Batman* movie when it comes out over here. We'll talk to DC Comics and we'll talk to Warners about doing interviews with the cast and crew, maybe even go for a *Batman* cover. It may cost a bit, but what the hell?'

So, where is it?

Five months later, and you'll find *Bat* coverage in only three American mags, the nationals and a few British publications, but nobody seems to be willing to talk to the general UK press about the film. Most of the stories that have appeared were sought through genre contacts rather than via official channels – note our Tim Burton interview, for instance, in issue 5.

Added to that, *The British Making Of...* book will not be available for review until two weeks before the movie opens on August 11 and the UK merchandising is being kept on ice until very near that date.

I am not the only journalist who feels that Warners may have gone over the top on this one, but I am likely to be the only one to come out and say what a lot of people are thinking. Critics from the States proclaim that the movie is top heavy – 'it's a movie about The Joker, not Batman' – and not as strong as all the hype would have us believe.

Yet, who are we to know?

Many of my pals in the UK monthly market got to see the film too late to run British-made features and have had to resort

to reviews culled from the US release in June. *And we still don't have a UK press kit as we go to print!*

Fortunately, we do have coverage in this issue – received from US sources – and an exclusive comic book mystery interview in the next, but my initial excitement has been somewhat dulled by the lack of response from a film company which should be doing its damndest to promote the movie. It seems that you have to be the Daily Express' Hollywood correspondent, Bazzo of the BBC, or Superman to get anywhere near *this* Dark Knight.

Let's hope the movie is as big as its hype. Certainly, with all the secrecy and with so many journalists' noses put out of joint this side of the Atlantic, it will need to be!

John Gilbert

ASIMOV AND SILVERBERG

Publishers Gollancz and Pan have acquired the rights to three collaborative novels to be written by Isaac Asimov and Robert Silverberg for 'a substantial six-figure sum'.

Each novel is based on an existing Asimov story, the first of which, called *Nightfall*, will be published by Gollancz in the spring of 1990. The second and third books will follow at one year intervals. The publishers expect the pair to be as popular in partnership as Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle.

RANDOM HOUSE BUYS CENTURY HUTCHINSON

On June 7 Random House made an agreed offer of approximately £64 million for the Century Hutchinson publishing group, one of the few remaining independents in the UK. The merging of the two businesses – to be known as the Random Century Group – will take place over 'a period of time', according to Random's Simon Master. The price offered represents one-and-a-half times CH's annual turnover, and 27 times its pre-tax profits. The merger creates an entity with sales exceeding £60 million.

Anthony Cheetham, who with his wife Rosemary and brother James holds around 20% share capital in CH, becomes Chairman and Chief Executive of the new company. Cheetham believes CH's mass market paperback line Arrow will gain the most tangible benefits. 'Arrow was for years and years underinvested,' he says. 'It has done much better recently, but one would not call it a credible challenger to Pan and Penguin. That situation will be transformed overnight.' Arrow currently has a turnover of about £12 million.

The takeover should boost Random House UK's recent lacklustre performance. In a joint statement, Cheetham and Master (who will be Group Managing Director) stated, 'We both feel enormously excited by the future potential of the enlarged group, which will be the most formidable general trade publisher in the British market.'

'We shall preserve the integrity of all imprints and build on our complementary strengths in the UK and overseas. The publishing range of the company in general, specialist, children's and paperback fields will provide a much better balance with which to take advantage of the resources and backing of Random House in the US.'

Deborah Beale, editor of CH's science fiction imprint Legend, professes delight at the deal. 'It's a marvellous publishing fit,' she says. 'The synergy between all the houses in the group will throw up some fabulous new publishing ventures. I am particularly looking forward to developing closer links with Del Rey.'

'For the past two years I have been hearing from agents how Del Rey is one of the most successful US SF and fantasy lists. And indeed their capacity for developing new talent, and their brilliant and varied publishing on both the front and back lists, never fails to impress me. I'm simply very excited.'

Stan Nicholls

DARKER DETAILS

The details of Stephen King's new horror novel, *The Dark Half*, have begun to leak onto paper.

According to the publisher, it concerns a highly respected author who decides to write a series of racy thrillers under a pseudonym. He eventually tires of the game and lays his alter-ego to rest, even erecting a false tomb stone to push home the point.

Unfortunately, the alter-ego does not want to lie down, and returns to wreak vengeance on anyone who helped in his death. The plot is reminiscent of King's own experiences when his alter-ego, Richard Bachman, was laid to rest. The book, which will appear in October along with the paperback release of *The Tommyknockers*, is likely to be a horror thriller in the *Misery* vein.

GET YER COFFIN DUST 'ERE

The Americans have had horror mail order companies for years, but it was not until recently that Necropolis, a Ludlow based company (what a coincidence!), started to import all sorts of horror fare and offer them at UK prices.

Director John Rose promises

a feast of video, T-shirts, magazines, role playing games, masks, prosthetic limbs and books. 'You name it and we should be able to get it.'

'Okay, what about ye olde original vampire coffin dust?'

Silence at the other end of the phone for a few moments, then the sound of wood scraping on concrete. 'Yeah, I think we can do that for you, straight from Transylvania!'

It sounds as if the UK is beginning to offer competition to the US on all horror fronts.



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NECRO SIGNING

Brian Lumley is due to sign copies of his latest novels, *Necroscope III: The Source* published by Grafton and *Hero of Dreams* from Headline, at London's Fantasy Inn on August 11.

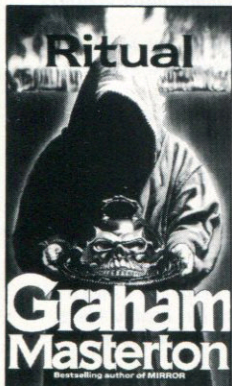
The Source - see our exclusive extract this issue - continues the

story of Harry Keogh and his fight against the Wamphyri while *Hero of Dreams* begins a saga set in the mythic realms originally made famous by H P Lovecraft.

Copies of *Fruiting Bodies*, the talking tape from Grim Reaper Designs read by Lumley and introduced by John Gilbert, should also be available there. The signing starts at 6.30pm, at 17 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0EP. Get there early.

ICE CREAM, YOU SCREAM

Scare Care, the charity horror anthology edited by Graham Master-ton, appears in America in August. Published by TOR in hardback, the book contains stories from brand name horror writers such as James Herbert, Harlan Ellison and Ramsey Campbell.



Ramsey Campbell

The book has, unfortunately, not yet been taken up by a British publisher but if you want more details of the US edition write to TOR Books, Tom Doherty Associates Inc, 49 West 24th Street, New York, NY 10010. Profits go to childrens' organisations, so it's a worthy cause.

Graham's latest British paperback is also published in August by Sphere. *Ritual*, which concerns the mysterious disappearance of kids in a small American town, was originally launched as *Feast* on the US market but, as the author says, 'They changed the title for UK publication because it sounded too much like a Walls' choc-ice.

Also on the cards are the second and third parts of the *Night Warriors* trilogy which will then continue as a comic book from Northstar Publishing. Graham is also finishing a new novel which will be part of a much larger horror saga - we withhold the name for obvious reasons.

BATMANIA

Full scale **Batmania** has come to Britain. Not only are the FEAR phone lines jammed with requests for info about the movie but we've also heard that all kinds of merchandising are going to be available through WHSmith, Boots, Woolworth, HMV and Virgin.

Let's start with plastic figurines, Batmobile models, key chains, pens, window stickers, mugs, dolls, clocks, posters, masks, radios and children's playsuits. Follow that with footwear, jogging suits, nightshirts, boxer shorts, the Official Making Of . . . book, target shooting game, computer game, calendar, bubble gum cards, puzzles and painting by numbers . . . Let's face it, you're unlikely to be able to get away from *Batman* this summer.

On a more serious note, Warner Bros is making sure that its copyright is not infringed. It has even marked each print of the film with a number so that it can tell which one, if any, is used to make pirate copies.

A source close to the movie told us: 'They've hired lawyers and given a blank cheque to ensure that everything officially to do with *Batman* comes through them.' And who can blame them, with US official box office receipts now totalling more than \$90 million?



SUMMER SALVATION

Horror soars to new heights as the temperature rises and genre films make record profits. American correspondent Philip Nutman leaves the heat of the beach for cool corridors of Hollywood production offices to report on the new wave of sizzling fear fare.

DATELINE: New York City, June 1989 . . .

Spring was in the air . . . then crash! The humidity of summer descended upon the Eastern Seaboard like a toxic cloud.

Which is good news for the cinema box office; not just on the East Coast but right across the country. For the arrival of the hot, uncomfortable weather and the Memorial Day Weekend on May 29 signals one thing: summer movies are here, and it's time to spend languid evenings in cool, air-conditioned cinemas as everyone laps up this season's brains-on-hold entertainment.

And The Powers That Be in Hollywood can breathe easy again: the bucks are rolling in.

Summer, next to the Christmas holiday season, is the major box office top-up period in the US. Unlike Britain, where three days of sun in July mean no one goes to the cinema unless a George Lucas movie is playing, summer here in the US is a time of cinema celebration, when going to the local multiplex is an event.

So far, 1989 has seen mixed results at the box office. January, always a slow month, was not helped by lacklustre genre efforts like Sean Cunningham's undersea monster movie, *Deep Star Six*, or any other releases for that matter. Yes, it was a dis-

appointing period, despite the presence of off-the-wall fare like Bob Balaban's excellent black horror comedy, *Parents*, and Keenan Ivory Wayan's hilarious Blaxploitation pastiche *I'm Gonna Get You Sucker*.

Things picked up around Easter time, but proceeded to take a huge dive thereafter. And, as far as the horror and fantasy genres are concerned, there was nothing to get excited about either. *Leviathan*, George (Rambo) Cosmatos' lame Alien clone, all 22 million dollars of it, came, saw and sank, just like *Deep Star Six*. Independent schlock fests like Troma's *The Toxic Avenger II, I, Madman* and *Edge of Sanity*, made no dents at the turnstiles with their limited release patterns and bargain basement advertising. Schlock product has reached the bottom line: general audiences have no desire to shell out seven bucks to see a piece of junk on the wide screen when their local video store has more than 500 pieces of such fodder on the one dollar per night discount shelf. Horror is passé. B movies are boring. Save your money until the summer movies are here, that's the general thought.

HEAVY PETTING

But all that changed with the release of Stephen King's *Pet Semetary* in April.

Horror, the industry was



Stephen King in *Pet Semetary*

bemoaning, is dead. What next? Then Paramount released the latest King adaptation and audiences started queuing around the block. The Mary Lambert directed film turned out to have one of the highest grossing opening weekends in the history of terror box office: \$13.5 million in two days; \$42 million gross after six weeks on release, and, as I write, it's nearly over the \$50 million mark in two months. Which is great news for horror and somewhat surprising considering just how grim and depressing the film is.

Big screen adaptations of King's work have been less than satisfactory, with only David Cronenberg's reworking of *The Dead Zone* coming close to capturing the feel of the author's prose. But with *Pet Semetary*, scripted by King himself, Mary Lambert, whose only feature credit is the dismal Palace Pictures production *Siesta*, scores highly. The film is so grim it provoked one national newspaper to liken it to William Friedkin's *The Exorcist*, as one of the darkest films in American cinema history. So don't expect safe chills here, even if the film does have some narrative problems.

HOUSE III, MARK IV

Also a grim and depressing experience, but for all the wrong reasons, was *The Horror Show*, the debut feature from former special effects co-ordinator Jim Isaacs. A potential usurper to the throne of Freddy Krueger (or so distributors United Artists hoped), *The Horror Show* is a fine example of what is wrong with the majority of contemporary genre movies, specifically a disregard for narrative logic and a seeming lack of interest in new ideas.

The Horror Show is, in fact, *House III* given a different title and a more serious (if that's the right word) slant. Gone are the humorous elements that made the first of these flicks mildly entertaining and totally ruined the second, resulting in a routine reworking of the, now tired, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* theme: supernatural revenge that plays havoc with dreams and reality.

Produced by *Friday the 13th* originator Sean Cunningham, the flick is about serial killer Max Jenke (Brion James) and his vendetta against tough cop with a heart, Lucas McCarthy (Lance Henrikson), the man responsible for sending him to the electric chair. Of course, you can't keep a bad guy dead, and Jenke returns via his discovery that the spirit can be transmuted into electrical energy if the body is conditioned to accept large doses of current, and sub-

We've got a column to fill with your pustulant prose and deathless doodling, so crawl out of that coffin and lob us a line. Send letters and/or artwork to RAISING THE DEAD, FEAR, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.

JUST TESTING . . .

Dear FEAR

I happened to notice in your May/June issue a slight - er - error. In the mail order section for films/books etc, under the heading for science-fiction, there is a video entitled *Alien Sex Fiend Live in Tokyo*. I ought to point out that this isn't a sci-fi classic but a music video of the 'Fiends in concert on their Japanese tour!

Thought I'd mention it, just in case anyone ordered same and was disappointed . . . Great magazine, though. Best of its kind!

Mik Bridgeman, Exeter

Oh dear, our researchers tend to be turned on by anything with a fiend in it! Sorry.

ALICE IN CHUNDERLAND

Dear FEAR

Firstly, I would like to compliment you on getting as close to the mark as possible with a magazine covering sci-fi, fantasy and horror. You do a much better job than another magazine I could mention and better than others that

only cover one of your fields.

In Issue 5 you printed an interview between **Shaun Hutson** and **Iron Maiden**. Can we expect more? How about an interview with the master of bad taste and horror stage shows, **Alice Cooper**?

Lastly, I would like to enquire about three books. I have searched all bookshops in my area without finding a single copy of **Skipp and Spector's Light at the End** and **Thomas Harris' Black Sunday**. I have also searched in vain for even a glimpse of **Ramsey Campbell's Ancient Images**. After reading the tasty morsel you threw us, I cannot help but feel that this may be his best yet. Where and when can I get a copy?
Andrew Thorpe, Stockton-on-Tees

You're in luck, Andrew. More band interviews are on the way; Skipp and Spector's books and Black Sunday can be obtained from Transworld Publishers Limited, Century House, 61-63 Uxbridge Road, London W5 5SA. Ancient Images is out of print, but details of Ramsey's books can be obtained from Legend, Brookmount House, 62-65 Chandos Place, London WC2N 4NW.

sequently takes up residence in the McCarthy family boiler (one of the story's most illogical elements) and starts creating bloody mayhem that forces Lucas to question his own sanity. The film is annoyingly pre-

dictable, slow and downright stupid. Like the rest of this season's non-starters, it only performed for a couple of weeks.

The month of May did, however, have one noticeable surprise in the chilling form of

BETTER AND BETTER . . .

Dear FEAR

I was enjoying thumbing through your excellent magazine when my pleasure was trebled by the discovery of your review of my film, *Critters 2*. Congratulations to you and your staff on a genre publication that is as good-looking as it is readable and - mostly - thanks for your fine and perceptive taste in cinema!

Mick Garris, Studio City, California

VERSE AND VERSE

Dear FEAR

After reading Spring-heeled Jack's very short piece of horror poetry in Issue 6, I was inspired to send in a few words of my own. I hope you enjoy them.

*Freddy Krueger, let it be said,
Would cut down Jason Voorhees dead.*

*Never would he rise again
If he set foot in Fred's domain.*

*The land of dreams is where he rules,
Four-finger knives his only tools.
Each soul he meets becomes his slave;
Yes, Fred will dance on Jason's grave.*

*Freddy Krueger, what a sight.
For Jason it would be goodnight.
Please don't cry, don't shed a tear;
Jason's gone but Freddy's here.*

Peter M, Stoke-on-Trent

*They get longer and my hair gets sparser.
Come on chaps, surely you can do better than this garbage! - ED.*

Steve De Jarnett's *Miracle Mile*, an apocalyptic tale of love, death and the nuclear destruction of Los Angeles. Starring Anthony Edwards as an out of town musician who meets the girl of his dreams while on a trip to the city of Angeles, the story quickly spirals into gripping suspense and terror as the hapless romeo accidentally intercepts a phone call from a soldier at a missile silo who is trying to contact his father to alert him that World War III has started and that the ICBMs are due to arrive in 70 minutes. When this is confirmed, Edwards sets out to find his lover and escape the city on a private plane. But LA on the brink of destruction is a nightmarish place fraught with dangers, all of which Jarnett uses to great effect, creating a relentless movie that never lets go of the viewer. Although it's rough around the edges and heavy-handed in parts, *Miracle Mile* is an assured debut that knocks *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* and *Star Trek V* into a cocked hat as far as edge-of-the-seat tension is concerned. Watch out for it.

FILMS IN PRODUCTION

FEAR Vestron

Producer: Richard Kobritz. Director/Screenplay: Rockne O'Bannon. Starring: Ally Sheedy, Lauren Hutton, Michael O'Keefe.

GOBLINS Wedner/Kozlow Productions

Producers: Ellen Wedner, Michael Kozlow. Director: Mik Cribben. Screenplay: Fred Sharkey. Starring: Michael Robertson, Robin Lilly, Richard Hamilton.

HALLOWE'EN 5 Magnum Pictures

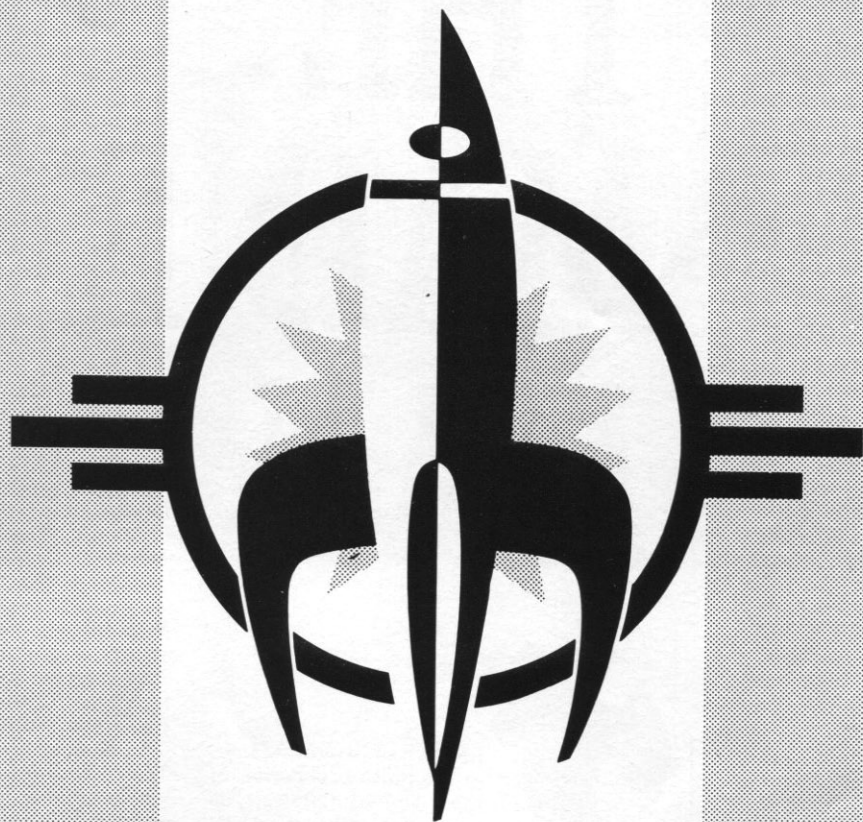
Producer: Rick Nathanson. Director: Dominique Othenin-Girard. Starring: Donald Pleasence, Danielle Harris, Ellie Cornell.

HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD II New Horizons

Producers: Tom Merchant, Chris Beckman, Rodman Flender. Director: Steve Barnett. Screenplay: Michael Sloane, Scott Narie, Don Pugsley. Starring: Ginger Lynn Allen, Kelly Monteith, Eddie Deezen.

SCHIZO Smart Egg

Producer: Luigi Cingolani. Director: Manny Coto. Screenplay: Jackie Earle Haley. Starring: Lisa Aliff, Aron Eisenberg, Chris McDonald, James Pucell.



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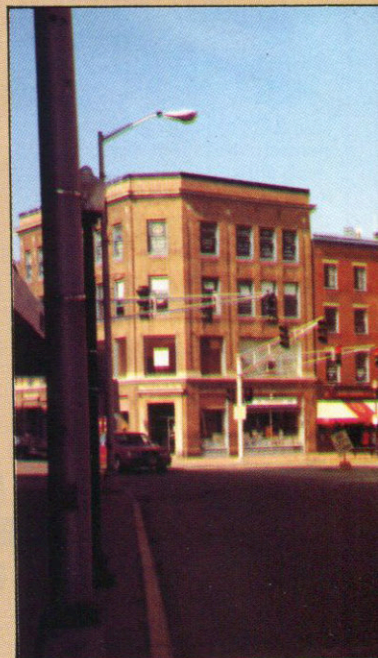
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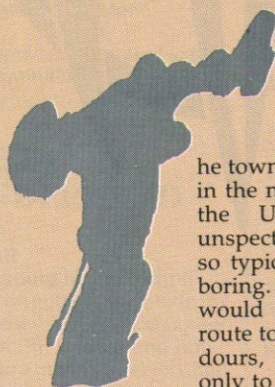
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Stephen King, the world's most successful horror writer, has made his home town of Maine, New England, USA the centre of many of his novels. Hundreds of fans have made the pilgrimage to see his home and the sights that inspired books such as *It*, *Cujo*, *'Salem's Lot* and the novella *The Body*. But there are many readers who may never be able to go. For you, we present the first in a pictorial two-parter from the heart of Kingdom by our expert, Paddy McKillop.

THE MAINE MAN



"Bunyan stands, larger than life, overlooking Main Street and the Penobscot River, a thirty-one feet tall Technicolor monument to the triumph of enthusiasm over good taste"



The town of Bangor, Maine, in the north-east corner of the United States, is unspectacularly average, so typical as to be almost boring. It's a place you would pass through en route to more scenic splendours, worthy of a stop only to grab a quick coffee or buy the kids a \$1.49 plastic frisbee emblazoned with a red lobster. If you are looking for the average, you have found it in Bangor.

So, why the visit?

If you are a Stephen King fanatic the answer is obvious – this is *Himself's* home town.

King attended the University of Maine at Orono a few miles up the road, married a local girl from nearby Old Town and later taught in the high school a few minutes away at Hampden. Although the Kings have only lived in town since 1980, Bangor's influence echoes through much of Stephen's work. Even for the passing tourist conversant with only one of King's novels – the mammoth *It* – humdrum Bangor takes on a more sinister character and provides an insight into what makes his writing so universally popular. So, take my arm now as we embark on a walking tour of Bangor, *Derry* and *It*.

PLASTIC LANDMARK

Derry is an amalgamation of Bangor's geography and history and King's memories of his childhood days in Stratford, Connecticut. The 'barrens', the focal point of much of the action in *It*, is lost to Stratford development but the Bangor landmarks remain. The controversial figure of Paul Bunyan is the first to greet visitors to the town. As chronicled in the novel, the town fathers erected a giant plastic statue in celebration of the great American mythical hero and caused a storm of passionate protest. Oblivious to all such discussions

regarding his aesthetic worth, Bunyan stands, larger than life, overlooking Main Street and the Penobscot River, a thirty-one feet tall Technicolor monument to the triumph of enthusiasm over good taste.

In King's novel, smart-mouthed Richie Tozier is shocked into silence when he wakes from a gentle doze to confront an animated Bunyan whose forehead is 'low

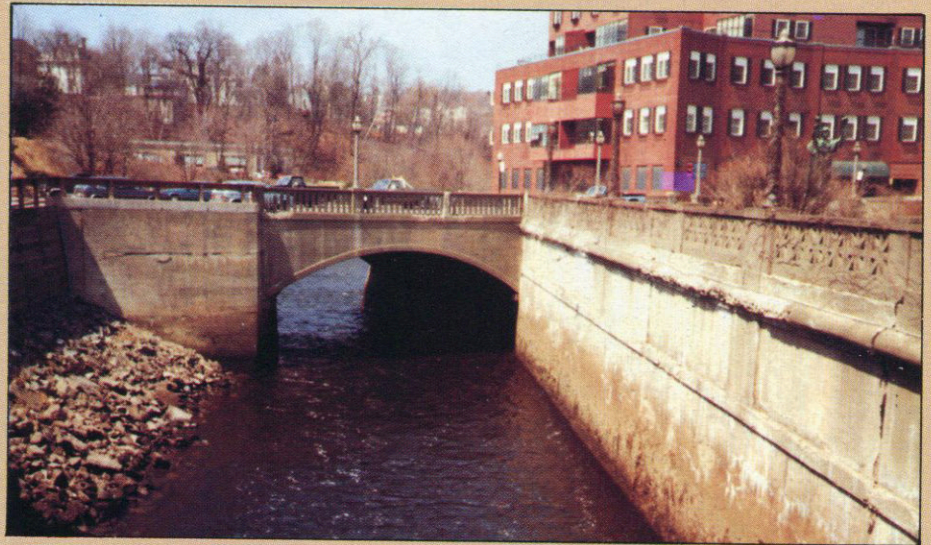
"If you are looking for the average, you have found it in Bangor"

and beetling; tufts of wiry hair poked from a nose as red as the nose of a long-time drunkard; his eyes were bloodshot and one had a slight cast to it.' That is a slight exaggeration, but if you stand really close to the enormous brown boots and gaze up at the axe and bearded face, the wide grin does begin to look threatening. King applied a little more imagination to the subject and a memorable scene was born. Dead easy.

DIRTY WASHING

North along Main Street leads into the centre of town, mirroring *Derry* with the downtown area bisected by the canal and the rest of the town creeping up the surrounding hills. Passing the now empty shell of what used to be Freezes department store – the scene of Richie's narrow escape from a beating at the hands of Henry Bowers and friends – we come to one of the bridges which span the canal, and here fact and fiction become largely indistinguishable.

Where King's imagination and creativity were called on to make something of Bangor's plastic poser, the canal demanded a journalistic approach. To celebrate the town's 150th birthday, Bangor held a mini-festival called River City Days. At the close of the festivities, three local youths attacked two homosexuals with whom they had tangled previously. During the scuffle, one of the homosexuals was thrown off the Bangor Bridge into the canal channelling the Kenduskeag Stream through the town. The man died of suffocation related to his asthmatic condition.



The incident provided King with a ready-made chapter. He changed the names of the participants, made use of police interrogation notes and accounts of what was said during the fight, and the result was the 'After The Festival' chapter.

King followed his own advice to 'write about places you know,' adding the presence of Pennywise the Dancing Clown to tie the real event into the fictional plot of the novel. Bangor might not have appreciated its dirty laundry being washed so publicly, but King was not deterred.

In addition to the town's homophobia, King utilised more of Bangor's dark history in *It*. The sequence detailing the massacre of a group of loggers involved in union busting was lifted from history's pages and given the King treatment (one of King's dead was a certain Eddie King, 'a bearded man whose spectacles were almost as fat as his gut'. Was Stephen Edwin King putting himself down before his neighbours got the chance?). And the slaughter of the Brady gang in Bangor found its way into an *It* interlude as the demise of the *Bradley* gang. None of the historical references reflect

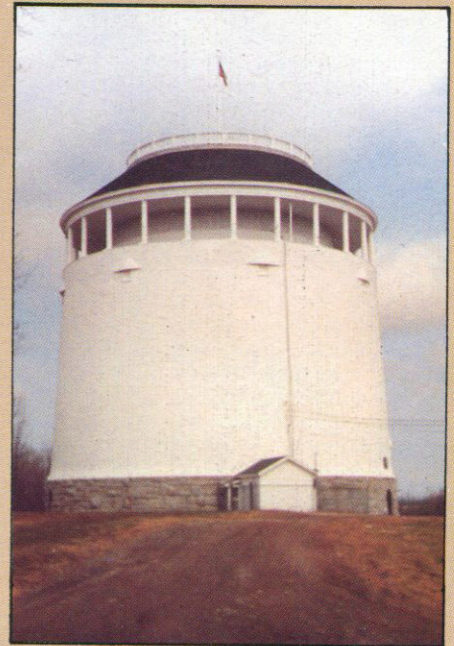
well on Bangor and King seems to manipulate the excesses of his fellow townsfolk with mercenary abandon.

THE STANDPIPE

From the centre of town with its numerous stocky bank headquarters – on which a colourful taxi-driver passes disgusted judgement in the novel as he drives Bill

"When he investigates, he finds himself in danger of his life as the walking corpses of two boys, long ago drowned in the tower's 1¾ million gallon water store, approach him with evil intent"

Denbrough out past the Derry Home Hospital (in reality the Eastern Main Medical Center) and Mount Hope Cemetery toward the Derry (Bangor) Mall – a ten-minute climb up Ohio Street brings us to the highest point above the town and to another *It*



Clockwise from centre top: just an average day in downtown Bangor; the Kenduskeag Stream; the Thomas Hill Standpipe; and, up for sale, Freeses department store



landmark shrouded in Bangor history.

Stan Uris, the most orderly and aloof of the Loser's Club of '58, is hoping to spy a male cardinal bird in the region of the town birdbath when a noise from the nearby water tower, the Standpipe, attracts his attention. When he investigates, he finds himself in danger of his life as the walking corpses of two boys, long ago drowned in the tower's 1¾ million gallon water store, approach him with evil intent.

All the young people in Derry know the Standpipe is haunted, and when King needed to know if Bangor's Thomas Hill Standpipe was similarly haunted, it was the local children he asked. Their response constitutes the Derry tower's notorious reputation.



The truth only partially supports the myth – there was indeed a death back in the days when picnics atop the tower were popular. When a retarded boy leaned too far over a railing and fell to his death, he ensured that the Standpipe would go down in local superstition as a haunted place.

King wrote of Derry's Standpipe before he knew of the Bangor building's true history, but as he believes 'the myth is always better', he changed nothing. As with the death at the canal, it was the asking of questions rather than the taxing of the imagination which bore literary fruit.

APPOINTMENT WITH FEAR

From the Standpipe, it is a mere five-minute walk to the place where all the factual and fictional threads were woven into book form – the home of the world's best-selling horror author. As you would expect of a man not short of a dollar or two, his house is large and very grand, in an avenue of similarly splendid homes built around the turn of the century for Bangor's lumber barons.

Perhaps knowing who owns the place colours one's impressions, but I don't think the house would look out of place in a spooky Vincent Price movie. The fence surrounding the property certainly bears the King hallmark – assorted bats, gargoyles and monsters adorn the black iron spikes, and the Kings give a very literal interpretation to the term 'bat wing' gates. This is a horror writer's house all right.

But it is also a home and work place and fans are asked to respect the family's privacy, to resist the urge to dash up to the front door and invite themselves to stay for a few days. The Kings do not see people without an appointment and you will be politely ushered back beyond the bat-wings by a member of staff (if you don't take the hint, rumour has it that they unleash a rabid Saint Bernard to bite chunks out of you). Be content to end your tour of Bangor with a quick gawp at the house and snap a photo or two.

Bangor would never claim to rival Disneyland. You make your own entertainment there. When you have exhausted the few sights, unless you have the nerve and nasal fortitude to explore Bangor's sewers for subterranean *It* echoes, there is little in town to detain you. There is a pocket-sized

"None of the historical references reflect well on Bangor and King seems to manipulate the excesses of his fellow townsfolk with mercenary abandon"

train trestle where the Kenduskeag joins the Penobscot for those given to re-enacting great moments from the movies, although if you require a train to add authenticity to your *Stand By Me* rerun, be prepared for a long wait (for three hours I gripped that rail ready to shout 'Train!' and run like fury). Why not pack away your Maine frisbee and head for grander tourist traps?

It is worth a day of your time to see the sights which provide material for King's work and to get a flavour of the area. *It* is littered with Bangor places and happenings, but more importantly it is a novel



invested with Maine *spirit*. Rather like King's house, visitors see the public face without really discovering what lies beneath.

King has manipulated Bangor's hidden secrets and the attributes of his neighbours and produced remarkably successful fiction to which everyone can relate. He learned well from Burton Hatlen, his English Professor at university, who says of the state: 'Maine is, for the writer, not simply a fate to be endured, but also a resource to be cherished.' Visit Bangor and see the resource King has so profitably tapped.

Do not, however, arrive while the circus is in town as I did – streets full of balloon-bearing clowns is a little *too* close to fiction for comfort.

COMING SOON: Paddy McKillop visits Colorado and reveals the secrets of *The Shining's* Overlook Hotel.

Above: the King domicile at 47 West Broadway. Below: the train trestle over Kenduskeag/Penobscot junction. All photos: Paddy McKillop



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Screen Story by **JOHN WOODWARD & DARRYL WIMBERLEY**
Produced by **PATRICK WELLS & STEVEN E. BERMAN** Directed by **KEVIN S. TENNEY**
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DANTE'S DIVINE COMEDIES

He's worked with Steven Spielberg, directed dark and witty box office smashes such as *Gremlins*, *Inner Space* and *The Howling*. He's had his fair share of fights with the studio bosses and holier-than-thou critics. Joe Dante is, however, determined to direct *Gremlins 2* his way and, as he reveals to Tim Lucas, it'll be one of the wackiest films you've ever seen.

When Joe Dante's new film, *The 'Burbs*, was released in America last Feb-

ruary, it was met with perhaps the worst critical scathing in recent memory. The most definitive response was this bombshell from a prominent New York critic (whom I'll paraphrase): 'For Tom Hanks to receive an Oscar nomination for *Big* and to have *The 'Burbs* released over the same weekend must be like visiting your doctor and hearing that you're about to become a father . . . but that you also have cancer.'

Obviously, this goes beyond criticism; it is the howl of a touched nerve.

Any film that is dismissed this venomously, by the same critical establishment that revered the dish-watery *Broadcast News* and *Working Girl*, demands a closer look. Indeed, a closer look at this mischievous film reveals that Dante's catalogue of feature films, shorts and television episodes has been underappreciated, and that, most likely, is the reason for this rampant critical misunderstanding.

Dante's penchant for cinematic shenanigans began with *Hollywood Boulevard* (1976), a ten-day wonder which satirised the

mercenary production tactics of the studio that produced it, Roger Corman's New World Pictures. Dante brazenly cribbed the opening shot of *Piranha* (1977) - a ridiculously tardy *Jaws* imitation - from *Citizen Kane*. What makes *The Howling* (1981) so endlessly watchable is its tricky teetering between merciless terror and merciless satire. Dante's contribution to *Twilight Zone: The Movie* (1983) is arguably his masterpiece; a bracing, heady exploration of the cinematic possibilities of integrating animated figures with live action, which paved the way for Spielberg's future success, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* (1988).

Then came *Gremlins* and suddenly the cultish Dante found himself being considered a major, mainstream director. The films that followed - *Explorers* (1985), *Innerspace* (1987) and episodes from John Landis' comedy compendium *Amazon Women on the Moon* (1987, 1988) - are rare birds of witty, personal, commercial film-making, but they have confounded the sensibilities of American mainstream critics, who have foolishly presumed Dante to be one of their own.

I interviewed Dante when his usually chipper personality seemed a bit tempered by the barbs hurled at *The 'Burbs* and later during pre-production on the long awaited *Gremlins 2*. Where to start? I had just caught up with the video release of a



certain motion picture, which was generously leavened with footage from Dante's *Hollywood Boulevard* and *Piranha*, not to mention a hundred other pictures. And it seemed as good a time and place as any.

"I never thought, when I was using comedy in my horror pictures, that I was feeling superior . . . I was trying to introduce a different perspective"

GRAVE ROBBER

TL What did you think when you saw Jim Wynorski's *Not of This Earth*?

JD What did I think? How can I seriously complain when some-

body rips me off, when I made *Piranha* and when my first movie had footage from fifteen other pictures in it? What am I gonna do, be upset? [laughter] **TL** To see Corman robbing his own grave like that, it made me smile from ear to ear because it's the most Corman-esque thing he's produced in years. Since *Hollywood Boulevard*, in fact.

JD It is indeed a Corman-esque thing to do and Roger owns the stuff and he can do more or less whatever he wants with it. Actually, it's probably better to ask me what I thought when I heard they were remaking *Hollywood Boulevard*! They're shooting, as we speak, *Hollywood Boulevard II* - which is not a sequel, but an actual remake! Not with the same cast, but with apparently the same plot - who knows, maybe even the same scenes reused from the same pictures! Concorde is also going to do *Rock 'n' Roll High School II*, they've already done *Big Bad*



A bandaged cutie-pie from *Gremlins* (left) before the transformation, and an ugly great brute from *The Twilight Zone* (above)

Mama II . . . It's bizarre, it's kind of like living through all those years at New World all over again. It's sad, actually, when you think of it. Talk about being bereft of ideas!

TL Your early horror films introduced elements of comedy in some very fresh and inventive ways . . .

JD Well, it's kind of old hat by now . . .

TL That's my point. Nowadays comedy has become a very tiresome fixture of horror films. It's got to the point where it's virtually gelded the genre.

JD Well, I don't feel like I started it. I don't feel guilty about it. I think what's happening to the horror genre is basically what happened to the western; it went through a lot of transmutations and then it dropped dead. I don't think this particular genre will drop dead, however, because it doesn't rely on horses and it doesn't always have to take place in 1880. They'll keep making these pictures, but there comes a time when you've done all the clichés to death and there's nothing left to do but to act superior to them. I never thought, when I was using comedy in my horror pictures, that I was feeling superior to them; I was trying to introduce a different perspective. Now, in a lot of these pictures, you get a feeling that [the filmmakers are saying] 'this is junk and the only way to elevate it is to make fun of it'. I don't think that works particularly well and, as a result, I really haven't seen a lot of recent horror pictures.

HOWLING WITH MIRTH

TL After you made *Innerspace* you were quoted as saying that it was far more satisfying to you, as a director, to make an audience laugh than to make them scream.

JD Because it's harder to do. You can get a scream out of any number of familiar, tried-and-true techniques. However, just showing somebody slip on a banana peel or hitting them in the face with a pie does not guarantee laughs. Definitely. And, also, I think laughter is a much more basic emotion, one that more people are actively in touch with, than screaming. The screaming that I always knew from going to the movies was screaming *combined* with laughter; the audience would scream, feel silly about it, then laugh, and this helped me see that it was better to inject comedy into the picture to give them something to laugh at, rather than have them supply their own jokes, out of nervousness, at the picture's expense.

TL Can you pinpoint the moment in your career when you felt yourself teetering more in the direction of comedy?

JD Well, I would classify *Piranha* as almost a comedy, in that the concept of the movie - which was to rip-off a big, successful, famous movie two years after it had come out, with fish that aren't gigantic and scary, but small . . . [laughter], and with no money . . . [more laughter] - struck me as a crazy idea to begin with.

By the time I got to *The Howling*, it was a much more conscious decision to leaven the horror with comedy because the audience has a built-in scepticism and resistance to super-

natural stories. They want to be able to believe it, and the first thing that takes them out of it keeps them from believing the rest of it. The more a movie can find its own identity as it starts and defines its own world in which its characters can move around freely, the more an audience is willing to go with the picture.

TL This was especially important to *The Howling* because the plot was so outlandish.

"I don't share his [Spielberg's] sunny optimism. Because we're not alike in that respect, it may be easier for us than when he works with directors who are trying to make their own sunny movies . . ."

JD The whole concept of werewolves is outlandish! [laughter] We felt that the audience would not be willing to take werewolves seriously unless we had a story that presented characters with the same doubts, so, instead of going to the gypsies to find out what a werewolf is (which is the old staple of these films), we assumed that our picture would take place in the same world we were living in, where werewolves are common knowledge and not believed in.

HO! HO! NO!

TL The dark streak in your work first became noticeable with the Santa Claus story Phoebe Cates tells in *Gremlins*. I

remember you telling me that you weren't sure you were going to use the scene originally. But the reaction against the scene was so intense that you decided to fight to keep it in.

JD The scene was in the script when I first read it, although the speech was delivered by an anti-ques store owner who was cut out of the movie. The scene took place in a McDonald's hamburger joint where all the people had been eaten, but none of the McDonald's were! [laughter] We never shot the scene. Then it became obvious that Phoebe's character needed something to lend her some shading - because she was written as a B-movie heroine, hanging onto the hero's leg. I thought that speech would give something to her background that would make her interesting and mysterious and make us wonder what her story was. We did two scenes, one as the hero walks her home and she lets slip that she doesn't celebrate Christmas and, secondly, when she explains why. To me, it was the only strength of the character that she had going for her and, also, it was one of the few chances Phoebe had in the movie to do anything.

As I was shooting it, the crew was saying it would never make it into the picture. Nobody liked it, but I was adamant.

Gremlins was never a picture that the studio liked very much because they thought it was in terrible taste, but it was sent out to preview screenings and met with tremendously great reactions. Suddenly the studio was very pleased with the film and with the fact that they had hired me, but there was only one problem. Which was, of course, this Santa Claus story had to go!

I resisted taking it out and, over a period of months, they really started ragging me about it. So, one day, I went directly to Steven Spielberg and said, 'What do you think of this scene, Steven?'

He said, 'Well, I don't really like it.'

And I said, 'Well, I think it's important to the movie and I think it should stay in. And I think you should back me up on this, because I've been very cooperative and we've worked very well together on this picture and this is important to me.'

To Steven's credit, he said, 'Okay, I'll tell them that,' and he really did.

Then the president of Warner Communications *himself* was getting on the phone, calling

Spielberg, trying to get him to make me cut this thing out! [laughter] I mean, it was *incredible!* I must say, on Warner's behalf, that they were right, in the sense that many people do hate it. They just despise it. I think it's a wonderful scene, one of the best I've ever done. I think it's funny and it's sad, poignant, ridiculous, very black, and I also think it's the best acting Phoebe's ever done.

DISASTER MOVIE

TL Speaking of Steven Spielberg, you've been able to work with him perhaps more successfully and consistently than almost anyone.

JD That's because we're temperamentally alike, in the sense that we both love movies. But I don't share his sunny optimism. Because we're not alike in that respect, it may be easier for us than when he works with directors who are trying to make their own sunny movies, which is his forte. The picture that he had the most to do with that I've worked on was *Gremlins*, actually; while on *The Twilight Zone*, because of the accident (in which actor Vic Morrow was killed), he and most everyone else walked away from the project, allowing George Miller and myself almost total freedom.

TL Your segments were shot after the accident?

JD Everything was shot after the accident. John Landis shot his stuff months before everybody else and, when the accident happened, they shut down the picture and, frankly, I never thought it was going to happen. Then they decided to go ahead with it. The accident happened in July and we shot our stuff in late August/September.

TL Let's move on to your recent work. *Innerspace* bears a superficial resemblance to Richard Fleischer's *Fantastic Voyage*. The similarity might have put off another director. Were you setting out to improve the movie?

JD The idea was not particularly to rip-off *Fantastic Voyage*. It was Peter Guber's idea to make the picture, and he'd never seen the movie. We had to explain to him that the idea had already been done. Peter's original concept was to do it as a straight action picture, which I didn't think was going to work, so I passed on it and did *Explorers*. In the meantime, he hired Jeff Boam, who rewrote it as a comedy. When I read Jeff's draft, I thought it might be fun. It's probably the best script I've ever worked with. Also, *Explorers* had been a dismal failure and it was such a personal movie, I decided that it might be wise to direct a movie that could be a hit, something that people would go to see, rather than



Dennis Quaid finds himself in *Innerspace* without an A-Z

stay away from! [laughter] And so, even though I don't like spy movies, I thought I'd like to see if I could make a big, Hollywood movie.

EXPLORERS LOST

TL If you were given *carte blanche*, would you be making your films any differently?

JD The fact of the matter is, I wouldn't. Through the arduous technique of battling for what you want, I've managed to make my films pretty much my own way. If people don't like *The 'Burbs*, I can't complain that the studio made me make a bad movie. I'm sorry they don't like it, but it is the movie I wanted to make.

I didn't fight against shooting a new ending; I was pleased to shoot a new ending because the other one didn't work. The same goes for every picture I've done, except *Explorers*; it's the movie I wanted to make, even though I didn't get to finish it. Nobody ever came to me and told me I couldn't make it my way.

But it's a struggle, making movies, and it's going to be a struggle to make *Gremlins 2* because the same discussions [Warners and] I had on the first film – about how it was too strange, too offbeat and too weird – are going to crop up again. Even more so, because it's going to be more expensive. In my view, of course, there's no reason to make a sequel unless the film can be different, different in every way except that it's outrageous. But the outrageous qualities are the things they want to suppress.

At the moment, what they would really like to do is make exactly the same movie over again, because they know that *Gremlins* made money. So any deviation from that formula that I care to suggest is now considered suspect.

GREMLINS EAT BIG APPLE

TL Actually, I'm surprised to hear you're doing *Gremlins 2*, because I've been seeing your name affiliated with a film version of *Plastic Man*.

JD Yes, I've been seeing that, too! [laughter] It's one of those things were you tell somebody, 'Well, yes, if you ever get a

"It's a struggle, making movies, and it's going to be a struggle to make *Gremlins 2* because the same discussions [Warners and] I had on the first film – about how it was too strange, too offbeat and too weird – are going to crop up again"

decent script, I'll be interested.' There's a lot of inherent problems, including the extra problem that they want to make the film in a period setting.

Personally, I think it would be very difficult to write a decent script for a feature-length film about *Plastic Man*.

TL You've admitted to preparing *Gremlins 2*, when the 'official' working title is *Monolith*.

JD Oh, that's the same old bullshit they always pull, like *Return of the Jedi* was called *Blue Harvest* when it was being made. Amblin and Lucasfilm feel that the other title will draw less attention to the picture and allow us to work with fewer interruptions. I don't know what *Blue Harvest* meant, but *Monolith* comes from the fact that there's a big building in the movie.

TL If Warners was so pestered by you on the first *Gremlins*, whatever possessed them to offer you the sequel?

JD They're getting me to do the picture because they still don't understand why the first one made money.

TL Can you reveal any specifics about *Gremlins 2*?

JD Zach Galligan, Phoebe Cates, Dick Miller and Jackie Joseph are all reprising their original roles. We've also cast Robert Picardo, Robert Proskey and Christopher Lee. It was scripted by Charlie Hass, who wrote Jonathan Kaplan's *Over the Edge* (1979) with Tim Hunter. It's less of a horror film than the earlier one, I think. It's set in New York. Rick Baker will be doing the special effects.

TL No other details?

JD As far as the details go, even I'm not interested in the details!

TL Joe Dante isn't talking?

JD Of course not! Are you nuts? I've already told you more than I've told anyone else!

BATMAN: CAUGHT BY THE COWL

They thought they were safe, hidden away in their closed sets with their oh-so-secret scripts . . . But they were wrong! In an occasional, ribald look at the film industry, Dr Jack, FEAR's undercover physician, reveals the movie-makers' most intimate details, from the size of their trailers to the colour of their toilet paper.

Ever wondered what **Batman's** worst enemy is? The voice-activated shield on the roof of the Batmobile, that's what! Imagine, if you will, what can only be described as an under-sized actor leaping into an oversized prop and yelling 'Shields on!' Lo and behold, the lethal sun-roof glides forth and slices the tips off the ears of the bat cowl! Holy Bat-bricks!

Let's stomp around in *Aliens* territory and postulate the plots of the next three movies . . . *Alien II: Alien Spawn*: the survivors of *Aliens* arrive at a space station under construction on the outskirts of the Galaxy. Bishop is infected with an Alien virus which alters humans' DNA structure so that they mutate into you know what! **Ripley** and **Newt** are found. **Newt** is safely defrosted and sent with a shuttle to ensure that **Ripley** gets safely back to Earth. The big guys make their appearance, the station's blown sky high and **Bishop** escapes in a pod, only to find an egg clinging to the side. He self-destructs to protect humankind.

Alien IV: Alien World: **Newt**, now a buxom twenty-year-old, reaches Earth. **Ripley** is defrosted and they set out with a squad of soldiers to find the Alien home planet, there they meet . . . any guesses? . . . You got it! **Daddy Alien**. **Newt** is caught, cocooned (No! **Don Ameche** isn't in it) and, in the time-honoured fashion, rescued by **Ramb** . . . sorry! . . . **Ripley**, who gets killed as the planet explodes. **Newt** takes off in the spaceship, little realising she's been impregnated by . . . that's

right . . . **Daddy**.

Alien V: (wait for it!) *Alien Child* (what originality!): predictably, a remake of *Escape From the Planet of the Apes* sets in as **Newt** and her baby, who's not such a bad kid after all, arrive on Earth and have to flee from the authorities who want the ultimate bi-ped weapon for their own. It ends with the possibility of an Alien invasion. We do hope that this is idle postulation, don't we, **Walter Hill** and Twentieth Century Fox?!

TIME LORDS, PLEASE

The Watchmen are here to stay, **Gilliam** directs, **Mickey Rourke** stars and generally shouts unintelligibly in *I*, while *II* and *III* are on the cards . . . **George Miller** escapes from *Les Patterson Meets the Martians* to consider helming *Batman II* . . . While busily wrapping *Flip-Back: Back to the Future III*, **Christopher Lloyd** may well be looking at the same script under the lines headed *Two-Face*.

If I were to mention a certain hero named after an American state with a father who used to be a certain OO agent, you'd know who I was talking about, wouldn't you? Well, in the latest film, Mr American state is caught by the Nazis and about to be whipped. The director chose that moment to demonstrate the right way to flay. Not knowing the lines he ad-libbed; 'That's for *Hanover Street* . . . That's for *American Graffiti* . . . That's for *Witness* . . . ' The list was endless!

And finally, come on **Mel**, you can't be serious . . . *Spaceballs III: The Search For Spaceballs II* we can take, but *Spaceballs IV: We Have Found Spaceballs III*?!

THE 'BURBS

Starring: Tom Hanks, Bruce Dern, Rick Ducommun, Carrie Fisher
Director Joe Dante
Distributor UIP
Cert 15

The Universal globe becomes the planet Earth, with all of its tantalisingly unknown nooks and crannies, for the opening credits of Joe Dante's latest feature. On the one hand, this ILM spectacle is something to keep those eyes entertained, which couldn't care less about the professional names scrolling by, but long after the film is over the viewer can't help comparing this clever trick with Hitchcock's attested hatred for Universal's logo and his latter-day quest to present it in different, stylised ways on all his films, beginning with *The Birds*.

Then one remembers what **Steven Spielberg** did with Paramount's mountain logo at the beginning of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. The more arcane among us might go so far as to make a connection to **Bob Clampett's** *The Mouse-merized Cat*, a hilarious Warner Bros 'Babbitt and Moustello' cartoon, which begins in exactly the same way. The beauty of this unfolding process is that, with Dante, all of these associations become not only logical but also meaningful.

The 'Burbs, which veers from horror to slapstick to suspense to sociology lecture, is, on the surface, familiar territory previously explored in films like Hitchcock's *Rear Window* and **John Avildsen's** *Neighbors*. A suburban male (**Hanks**) with too much idle time finds the window overlooking his new neighbour's yard a viable alternative to the television screen. The plot unfolding on the neighbouring property falls somewhere between *The Fly* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Tasmanian, teletortion-like bursts of energy emanate nightly from the **Klopek's** cellar to shake the neighbourhood, while the **Klopeks** themselves - subhuman, nocturnal, Viennese hillbillies who never venture forth from their decrepit, peeling hovel - seem to be dabbling in human sacrifice . . . at best.

When **Hanks** and his suburban cronies (**Dern** and **Ducommun**) join forces to spy on the **Klopek's**, their collective voyeurism impels them toward their own forms of aberrance and criminality. As Hitchcock was fond of saying: murder leads to lying.

The film's performances are, in general, very winning, with **Hanks** at the head of a typically well-cast Dante ensemble. **Dern** and **Ducommun** manage noticeably well to infuse their characters, written without particular



Tom Hanks

depth, with a much-needed dimension of dopey humanity. Also one can't help suspecting there's a joke lurking behind the fact that **Carrie Fisher** gives the warmest performance in the picture!

Dante has called this film a 'trifle', which only shows what a talented, instinctive and underrated film-maker he is. Actually, 'overrated' (not in the insulting sense) would be a better descriptive word here, as mainstream American critics destroyed *The 'Burbs*, based on the principle that it seemed (to them) to be unworthy of Dante's time (not to mention **Hanks'** abilities), preferring him to step out of seclusion once every four years with another safe, monumental 'A' picture - as if he's ever made one! In fact, *The 'Burbs* goes a good way toward recapturing the impish Dante magic that was somewhat obscured by all the sprawling clutter of *Innerspace*.

It's disturbing to see Dante's hands slapped for putting **Tom Hanks** in a movie that belongs on the same mental shelf as the works of **Gogol**, **Cheever**, **Sturges** and **Pekar**. While *The 'Burbs* isn't up to the best work of those particular men, it's as close to a meeting of their subversive minds as you're likely to find at the movies this year.

The 'Burbs is coming . . . and this critic hopes you'll be receptive to the experience.

Tim Lucas



BATMAN

Starring: Jack Nicholson, Michael Keaton, Kim Basinger, Jack Palance, Billy Dee Williams, Lee Wallace, Pat Hingle, Michael Gough
Director Tim Burton
Distributor Warner Bros
Cert 15

Right from the moment that the semi-Godfather of Gotham City, Carl Grisom (Palance), over-actingly appoints slimy, purple-suited lounge lizard Jack Napier as the leader of a raid on Axis Chemicals you know that something nasty is going to happen to poor old Jack. But that doesn't stop him . . . he soon bounces back wearing an alarming amount of face powder and red lipstick, wanting nothing more than to kick the butt of that well known Bat.

After an eternity in postproduction, it's finally here and flapping towards your local cinema, but was it worth the wait? Well, I've certainly never seen anything like it. Anyone expecting a movie a la *Beetlejuice* is in for a shock. There's a dark, satanic edge to an already electrifying atmosphere, and there are four reasons for this:

Firstly, there's Jack Nicholson's startling performance. No doubt there will be certain critics who'll condemn him as OTT, but anyone familiar with *The Joker* in the comics will know that this is how he should be. Nicholson's Joker is the personification of madness mixed with a streak of genius, his broody malevolence has shades of *Eastwick* about it, but it's altogether different at the same time.

Secondly, there's the stunning realisation of Anton Furst's Gothic-inspired sets. And thirdly, Derek Meddings redeems himself after the shambles of *High Spirits* with some stunning effects work, the Bat-Wing (plane) being most impressive.

Finally, there's Tim Burton. His dark sense of stylisation has enhanced the image of Batman and brought it into the Nineties. Move over Spielberg!

Michael Keaton just about scrapes through by the skin of his teeth, but Basinger is just shallow. The question is: will *Batman II* survive without Nicholson and Burton?

Wait for the next exciting instalment . . .

*FEAR US PREVIEW



Michael Keaton as Batman versus the forces of evil in Gotham City's back streets





Jack Nicholson as The Joker ▼



FEAR
competition

JOIN JOE DANTE IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE



Director Joe Dante has won the hearts and purged the pockets of millions of cinema audiences with his magnificent fantasy films *Gremlins*, *Innerspace*, *The Twilight Zone Movie* and, soon to be released, *The 'Burbs*.

We have five copies each of *Twilight Zone The Movie* and his latest budget video SF comedy, *Innerspace*, from those awfully nice Warner people. **Just tell us the name of the Twilight Zone movie segment Joe directed.**

Send your answer on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope to Dante's Inferno Competition, FEAR, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB. All the usual competition rules apply . . . snore . . . and entries must be in by August 20.

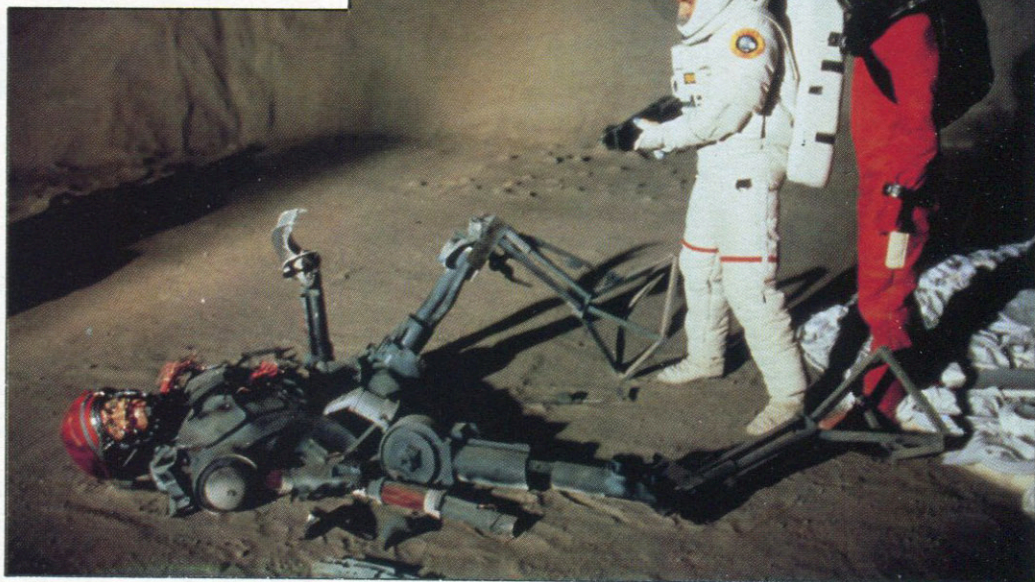
MOONTRAP

Starring: Walter Koenig, Bruce Campbell, Leigh Lombardi
Director Robert Dyke
Distributor Parkfield Entertainment
Cert PG

The message of this science fiction thriller is that we may have reached the moon in 1969 but we were not the first.

No sir. More than 14,000 years ago a swarm of robotic creatures landed on the lunar surface with the sole intention of invading Earth. They bided their time until 1989 when two astronauts – Koenig and Campbell – land to investigate the nearby discovery of an alien space shuttle. The robots are easily able to reconfigure any type of technology and have built a spaceship; there is only one more component necessary to launch them into space – you guessed it – our heroes' lunar lander.

Koenig discovers the lone female survivor of a race of humanoid whose bodies have been plundered for spare parts by



the robots. They are captured by their foes and forced upon the alien ship, from which they eventually escape and make plans to save Earth.

All of this is wonderful SF fun and as close to the original *Star*

Trek as you're likely to get in this day and age. The acting's not particularly brilliant but Koenig, who sounds strange without his Chekov accent, has an assured air about him. It's as if he's been here before.

The special effects are creative and backed up by an innovative script. *Moontrap* is a real find and is likely to score as one of the best SF pictures this year.

John Gilbert

STAR TREK V: THE FINAL FRONTIER



Starring: William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelly
Director William Shatner
Distributor UIP
Cert PG

Did you know that Spock had a brother called Sybok? He didn't either, till Shatner and his writers dreamt up this oh-so-original plot device. Exactly what kind of audience *Trek V* is aimed at is hard to define. It's certainly not for the people who have enjoyed the television series or the past four films because it shows no respect for their faith in the concept *what-so-ever!*

After a jolly holiday for the boys in the mountains, Kirk, Spock and McCoy set off with the rest of their ageing chums for Nimbus III. Shatner must have really enjoyed his time in *Barbary Coast*, because the plot revolves around elements that featured heavily in that show; namely being set in the Old West. Paradise City is where the main action (?) takes place, looking like the *High Noon* set, if that film had been made in 1999.

David Warner looks embarrassed as a British colonial stereotype in space, while the rest of the cast try to breathe life into a severely wasted opportunity. Shatner obviously thought it was good, but something's gone tragically wrong; this isn't what *Trek* should ever be. Watch, but don't raise your expectations above the 'mundane' level.

*FEAR US PREVIEW

HEADHUNTER

Starring: Wayne Crawford, Kay Lenz, Steve Kanaly
Director Francis Schaeffer
Distributor Cineplex
 Cert 18, 90 mins

Low budget horror flicks can't come any worse than this, surely. Indian gods, grisly rituals and a supernatural vendetta may initially raise the interest but, once you start watching this turkey, you'll soon realise that the film's mixture of inattention to detail and hysterically funny special effects ensures a hasty retreat from the television screen.

We join this frolic as a spirit of vengeance is loosed by a Nigerian witchdoctor. It decides to settle in Boston where it systematically hacks off the heads of Nigerian exiles. The police, in the forms of Crawford, Lenz and Kanaly - late of *Dallas* - are not particularly happy with the situation. The former duo decide to investigate while the latter does his best to get them onto other cases.

The denouement is particularly predictable, the acting atrocious and the camerawork appears to have been done by a chimpanzee. This headhunting demon may have been 'born in Hell' and 'unleashed on Earth' but that's no excuse for unimaginative and sloppy movie-making.

John Gilbert

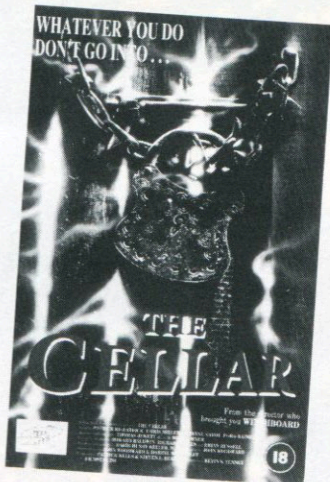


THE CELLAR

Starring: Patrick Kilpatrick, Chris Miller, Suzanne Savoy, Lou Perry
Director Kevin S Tenney
Distributor Castle Home Video
 Cert 18, 90 mins

An ancient monster, originally conjured up to drive the whiteman off Indian land, is revived when a couple move into an old oil prospector's house and start up the drilling rig again. It is, however, their son who pulls up the spears plunged into the earth by a contemporary medicine man to keep the monster pinned down and so releases the creature.

People from the nearby town begin to die around an old watering hole where the demon rises out of its earthy tomb, but its real base of operations is in the cellar of the prospector's house. The boy slowly begins to realise that the creature is real but he cannot convince his father who becomes less and less enamoured with the young man's ramblings. Eventually the father wedges the kitchen/cellar door open and traps his son in the kitchen to try and cure him of his delusions. The result rapidly reinstates the father's belief in the supernatural and the creature is destroyed - for now.



The Cellar is a competently directed and well acted movie with some surprisingly good special effects. The monster occasionally looks a little ragged around the edges but, no cop out here, at least you see the ravaging beast rather than the odd scaly hand or leg with only the promise of something more to come.

John Gilbert

LADY IN WHITE

Starring: Lukas Haas, Len Cariou, Alex Rocco, Katherine Helmond, Jason Presson, Jared Rushton
Director Frank La Loggia
Distributor Virgin
 Cert 15

Frank Scarlatti, a best-selling horror writer, returns to Willowpoint Falls, the New Jersey town where he grew up, and visits the graveyard. He flashes back to 1962 and narrates the story of how he got involved in the scare business. On Hallowe'en, young Frank (Haas) is locked into a school cloakroom by the neighbourhood bullies, and sees a ghostly little girl who was the first victim of a child-killer who has been terrorising the community. The murderer turns up, looking for something he left behind, and tries to strangle Frankie.

The child survives apparent death and the black janitor is arrested for the crimes. But Frankie knows the man is innocent, even if he can't identify his attacker, and continues to be visited by the transparent Melissa. What connection do these events have with the mysterious local spectre, the lady in white? Who is the old woman who lives in a half-burned mansion on the edge of

town? And who is the mad killer whose favourite tune is 'Did You Ever See a Dream Walking?'

Lady in White is, like the British *Paperhouse*, an ideal horror movie for kids that won't disappoint adult audiences. Along with an encouraging number of recent genre movies it relies on plot and character at the expense of flashy trickery, so one hopes it will be a big success. Which is not to say that the movie lacks chills, or even optical tricks.

The low budget shows through in its few too many matte fringes, but there are several magical sequences that provoke shivers and enchantment, as when the invisible ghost girl wanders through Frankie's house, breathes on the window and draws a heart in the condensation. It's a simple trick, but more convincingly supernatural than any number of rotting zombies or broken mirrors.

Frank La Loggia, for whom this is very much a personal project, was behind the unusual but compromised *Devil* movie *Fear No Evil*, and this second film confirms his promise. If anything, *Lady in White* tries for too much in its mix of *Stand By Me*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Moonstruck* and *The Uninvited*, but in the era of Jason and Freddy it's a pleasure to

find a chiller with any ambitions, let alone too many.

There is a definite problem with the identity of the killer, which is as transparent as any of the superimposed spectres, and La Loggia includes a touch too much Italian-American colour in dealing with Frankie's babbling, pasta-eating family.

But the schoolroom stuff, the Bradbury-ish small town setting, the understated period recreation, and the gently melancholy

ghost story work very well. Plus you get a well-executed, traditional house-burning-down, dangling-from-a-cliff finale. It's a uniformly well acted movie, especially by the children and Katherine Helmond gets a chance to pull out all the melodramatic stops as a Miss Havisham-style crazy who wanders around in ghost make-up and a tattered wedding dress.

Kim Newman

DARK ROOM

Starring: Aarin Teich, Jill Pierce, Jeffrey Alan Arbaugh
Director Terence O'Hara
Distributor Guild
Cert 18, 90 mins

An unpretentious psycho thriller in which a family is threatened and, one by one, killed by a camera carrying mass murderer who ultimately has a thing for fire and women in bondage.

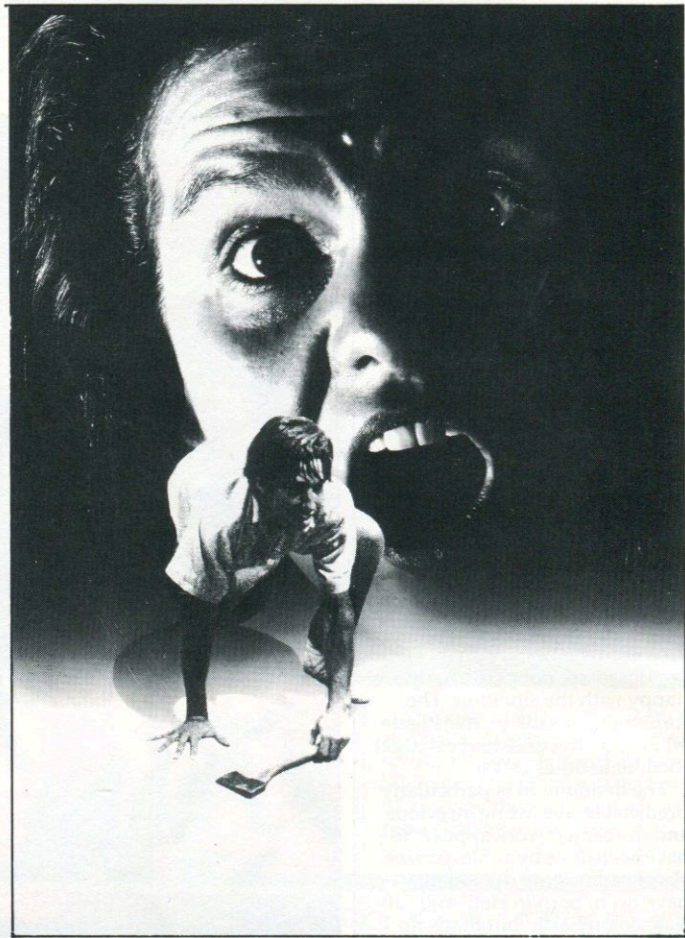
The killer likes to photograph victims before and after death, developing the negatives in his own dark room (shades of Michael Powell's Sixties shocker, *Peeping Tom*). Initially, the local loony boy is regarded as the major suspect but, from the way he acts, it's unlikely that he could actually

handle a camera let alone develop film.

At denouement time the only question is: which brother did the murders? There are several of them, plus the sister's boyfriend, who turns up unexpectedly for lunch, so you just have to make your choice like taking candy from a stranger.

Director Terence O'Hara has done a marvellous job with some stock material. There are several carefully crafted shock points within this movie and the suspense is well maintained between them, which only goes to prove that you don't need to have a big budget or the promise of a distributor's 'A' list promo campaign to come up with a winner.

John Gilbert



WAR OF THE WORLD III: THE TELEVISION SERIES

Starring: Jared Martin, Lnda Mason Green, Philip Akin, Richard Chaves
Distributor CIC
Cert 15, 90 mins

The next two episodes in the US television series based more on the 1950s film rather than the original H G Wells novel. First up, *Dust to Dust*, in which an archaeological grave-robbler steals a sacred Indian head-dress from an ancient burial ground. During an ensuing press conference the aliens, who are disguised as human beings and just waiting for a chance to rule the Earth, discover that one of the crystals on the head-dress is a vital component for one of their missing warships. The regulars go in search of the original burial ground at which, the aliens who are following them believe, the spaceship can be uncovered. If crystal and ship should ever get together . . .

The second episode, *Biological Warfare*, has alien invaders stealing vials of a deadly virus from a research lab on a polytechnic campus. The invaders, however, get caught up with a role-playing game in caves under the campus and murder one of the students. His death becomes known to the



series regulars who realise that aliens are at work. They uncover an alien plan using the virus to wipe out millions of human beings and take over their identities . . .

Both episodes hold little in the

way of creative television but are as entertaining as any *A Team* episode. The series uses aspects of the hugely successful *V* - i.e. aliens swapping identities with human beings - but don't expect as much characterisation or plot

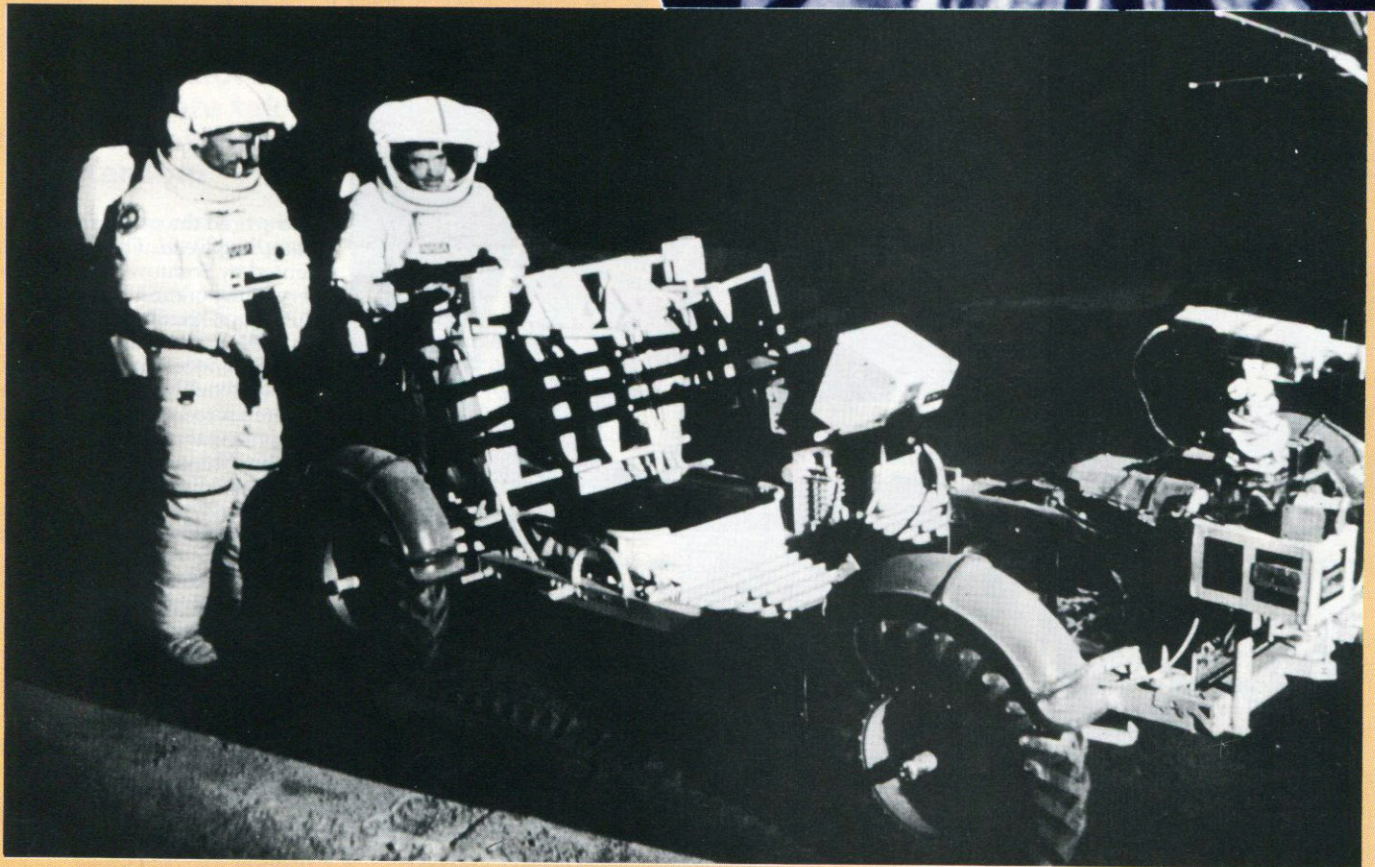
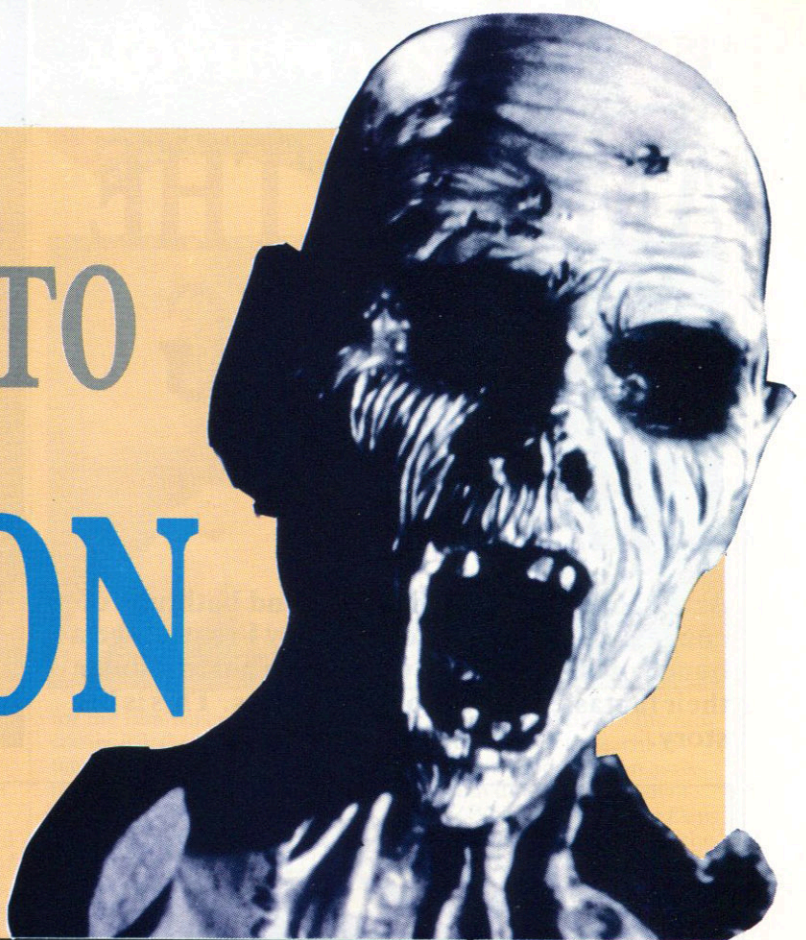
as in another video television series, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. None of the characters seem capable of original thought.

Andrew Morentis

FEAR
competition

WIN A TRIP TO THE MOON

WITH WALTER 'STAR TREK' KOENIG
AND BRUCE 'EVIL DEAD' CAMPBELL



Take a gander at the old silver orb, hanging there like a newly minted ten pence coin in the sky. Imagine what it would be like to be up there, the claustrophobic fit of your space suit, the soft moon dust, the lunar craters, the mountain ranges, the view of Earth.

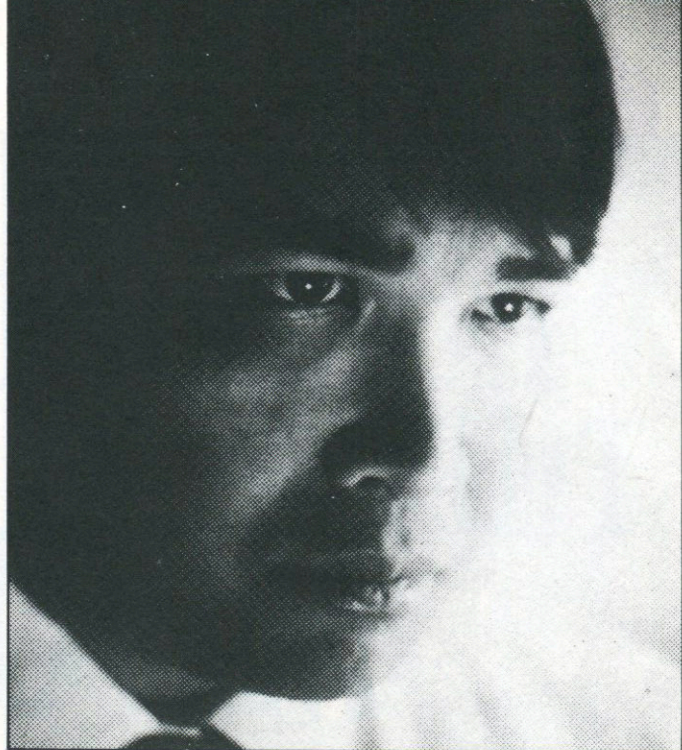
Now think again. According to **Parkfield's** latest major video release, *Moontrap*, the picture is entirely different from the views of peace and tranquillity brought back by the astronauts after their first lunar landing in 1969. A fleet of killer robots lies in wait for the unsuspecting visitor, ready to hijack their craft and use it to invade Earth.

Forewarned is forearmed and, to stand a chance of winning one of ten copies of the video plus a massive full colour poster, just answer the following question. **What is the location of the Epcot Centre where the story of human space travel is told: is it Disneyland or Disney World?**

Answers on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope to be in before August 20. Entries should be sent to Moon Flight Competition, FEAR, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB. All the usual competition rules apply.

AMONG THE LAUGHING DEAD

Aztec zombies, Mayan priests and bathtubs of congealed blood. Author Gregory Frost joined a bunch of famous genre writers in a bid to indulge their fantasies and become film stars. This is his story.



(above) Somtow Sucharitkul, (left) The two Mayans and Victim number one, (top right) Our Man Frost in the Waterless bath, (bottom right) in a dream sequence, Ivan emerges, hideously transformed, out of Tess.

I sat in a bathtub, my hair soaking wet, suds all over me, a dripping washcloth gripped tightly in one hand. Because the tub was a Hollywood bathtub it contained no water. Instead, tucked around me was a thick layer of clear plastic packing material full of big squeezeable bubbles, the kind found on every loading dock. Two special effects people had piled a luxurious froth of whipped-up dish-soap on top of the plastic. So to anyone watching – certainly anyone in a movie house – I was having a bath in lots of hot sudsy water.

The bathroom itself had but two-and-a-half walls made out of cheap plywood, and it stood on a small riser in the middle of a warehouse. The name of my character, not coincidentally,

was Frost.

In the adjoining 'room' sat Raymond Ridenour dressed in a bathrobe. Ray played a character called Dozois (named, as an inside joke, after the masterful science fiction editor, Gardner Dozois). Watching something pornographic on television, Dozois called out to Frost in his weird nasal voice: 'Come take a look at these *mamacitas*'. His interruptions annoyed Frost: 'I'd appreciate it if you'd let me finish my bath in peace!' Frost snarled. A few moments later, with Frost adamantly remaining in his bath, a dark figure entered the adjoining room. Dozois cried out for help, but received none from the irascible Frost. He had called out too many times already. The dark figure whipped its arm across Dozois' throat, severing his head. The head flew out the window and dropped into a

basketball hoop below – which proved to be a blackly humorous foreshadowing of the use the head would be put to later in a subterranean Mayan ball court, in a soccer game played by zombies.

"The head flew out the window and dropped into a basketball hoop below"

This may give you some sense of the utter weirdness of *The Laughing Dead*, a film boiled up out of the mind of SF/fantasy writer Somtow Sucharitkul. His novel, *Vampire Junction*, has recently appeared in European editions, under his horror *nom de plume* of S P Somtow. A one-man whirlwind, Somtow wrote, directed, coproduced

and scored the music for *The Laughing Dead*. The film, presented by Somtow's Archaeopteryx Corporation and distributed by Skouras Pictures, was an independent project. As a result, Somtow realised early on that he would not be relying on veteran screen actors for most of his principal players. Instead, on something of a whim, he wrote the main parts with certain fantasy/horror/SF writers in mind – and gave them first crack at the parts. That was how I wound up in that bathtub (and in far worse circumstances), playing a haughty, priggish character with my own last name. I was not alone in this rare endeavour.

The lead male role – that of a Catholic priest named Ezekiel O'Sullivan – was taken by SF writer Tim Sullivan (author of *Destiny's End*); the female lead, Tess Smith, went to Wendy Webb, a writer of horror stories and author of the novel *Widow's Walk*. The film centred around these two and on an outing the priest leads into Mexico. Driving the bus that carried him and his group of amateur archaeologists was award-winning SF writer Ed Bryant. And the villain of the piece – the wicked, cackling Mayan, Dr Um-Tzec – was played by none other than Somtow Sucharitkul himself. But the attack of the

literati did not stop there.

Deep in underground grottos, hidden behind rotting zombie make-up, even more authors were taking a crack at movie stardom: William F Wu, Arthur Byron Cover, Tim Powers and even the famous (or infamous) Forest J Ackerman. In fact, *The Laughing Dead* might well go down in history as the first film ever to employ more writers than actors.

The film's cinematographer, David Boyd (who has been hailed as 'a total genius, unfailingly imaginative' and a master of 'guerilla film-making'), explains what it was like to have writers instead of actors on set. 'Actors,' he says, 'tend to be consumed by self-involvement. These guys were different. They understood my job much better than actors - you could talk about metaphorical lighting and camerawork and they would understand.' Then crazy, star-struck writers will do almost anything for almost nothing.

"Deep in underground grottos, hidden behind rotting zombie make-up, even more authors were taking a crack at movie stardom"

But, given an opportunity to act in someone's movie, could you say no?

The story of *The Laughing Dead* goes something like this. A disillusioned priest, Father O'Sullivan, is obsessed by the memory of a nun with whom he once made love. The nun, Tess, became pregnant and fled her convent and her vows. Twelve years later, the two of them meet again, seemingly by accident; but this is no accident. The priest, fascinated by Mayan and Aztec ritual, conducts amateur archaeological expeditions to Oaxaca. His group is on its way to a small hotel to observe the *Dea de los Muertos*, the Mexican festival of the dead, when Tess and her son climb on board the tour bus and his equanimity is shattered. The boy, Ivan (played by Patrick Roskowitz), doesn't know who his father is.

On the way to the festival, the bus crosses the path of two mysterious figures dressed in Mayan costume who vanish into the night when confronted. Once the group has arrived at its destination, these two figures reappear everywhere, enclosing the group in an evil aura. O'Sullivan soon comes under Um-Tzec's spell and it becomes clear that the evil Mayan has fatal plans for Tess and Ivan - and the tourists. But by then,

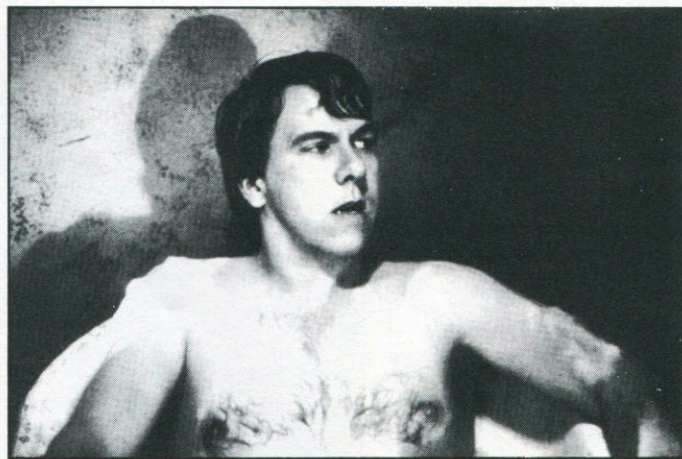
Um-Tzec has kidnapped Ivan and is ready to perform a sacrifice from the time of Zapotec domination that will change the course of history.

O'Sullivan is helpless to resist, and Cal must lead the survivors down into the bowels of the earth and against an army of zombies under the Mayan's command. There are surprises there, too, for one of the tourists is not what he appears - he is the ancient god Quetzalcoatl come to do battle with his equally ancient enemy, Um-Tzec. Their battle will decide the fate of humanity.

By carefully conserving his budget, Somtow had enough money to acquire the services of John Buechler's Mechanical Make-up Imageries (MMI) studio and staff to create glorious special effects. Buechler, who has previously designed effects for such well-known films as *Re-Animator* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (3 and 4) and who directed *Troll* and *Friday the 13th Part VII*, claimed that for him *The Laughing Dead* was 'a labour of love'. The feeling can certainly be seen in the wondrous effects he and his people devised. For example: Tess has a nightmare in which she gives birth to a murderous version of her own son. A bus driver is squashed by his own vehicle. And people transform into grotesque, serpentine gods of the ancient Maya.

The remarkable sets, both in Los Angeles and on location in the western-set 'town' of Old Tucson, Arizona, were designed and constructed by the team of Diane Hughs and Philip Vasels. They built the seemingly endless underground caverns and, for the film's finale, the Mayan ball court of death.

Also producing special effects



for the film was relative newcomer Rik Carter and his LA team. They created the zombie make-up and some of the simpler but no less stunning effects. In one sequence, Father O'Sullivan stands paralysed as Um-Tzec's evil assistant bares and then tears open her breasts, removes her heart and buries it in the priest's chest, thereby giving Um-Tzec possession of O'Sullivan's soul. And Frost loses one arm to the possessed priest, then has it stuffed viciously down his throat, his swallowed fingers wriggling out of his neck courtesy of Carter's effects work. A gripping death, so to speak.

These few scenes pass in a matter of seconds, but the shooting of them had me sitting in my own blood for six hours while it slowly hardened and glued my clothes to the floor. What's this? You ask. Blood that turns to glue? Oh, yes, when that blood is made from corn syrup.

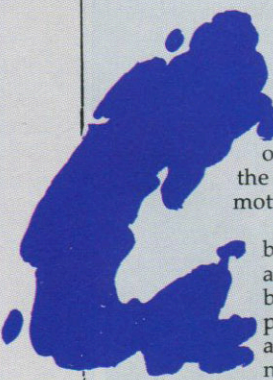
The other credits on the film include Wendy Ikeguchi as Executive Producer. An assistant film director in her own right (*Weird Science*, *The Days and Nights of Molly Dodd*), she advised Somtow on much of the shooting. The film would not exist but for her knowledge and skill.

The real actors playing supporting roles included Bryan Effner (Cal), Larry Coven (Wilbur Lemming), Julia Vera (Old Woman), George Salazar (Es-trada, the hotel owner), Maritza Tamara (Corazon), John-Anthoni and Tim Sampson (the acolytes), Krista Keim (Clarisse Lemming) and, as Harlan, Matt Demerit, who has had the rare distinction of playing *ET* in Steven Spielberg's film.

If you want laughter and scares, don't miss what Father Ezekiel O'Sullivan calls 'a journey into the dark heart of the human psyche'. Just remember while you're watching, there's no water in that tub!



Special effects master Tom Savini created Jason Voorhees. Since that fateful day, when the hockey mask became one of the most controversial faces of fear, he has worked his visual magic in *Eyes of a Stranger*, *Martin*, *Day of the Dead*, *Creepshows I and II* and, just recently, George Romero's rendition of *Monkeyshines*. Now he tells *FEAR*'s Stanley Wiater that he wants to direct a remake of *Night of the Living Dead* . . .

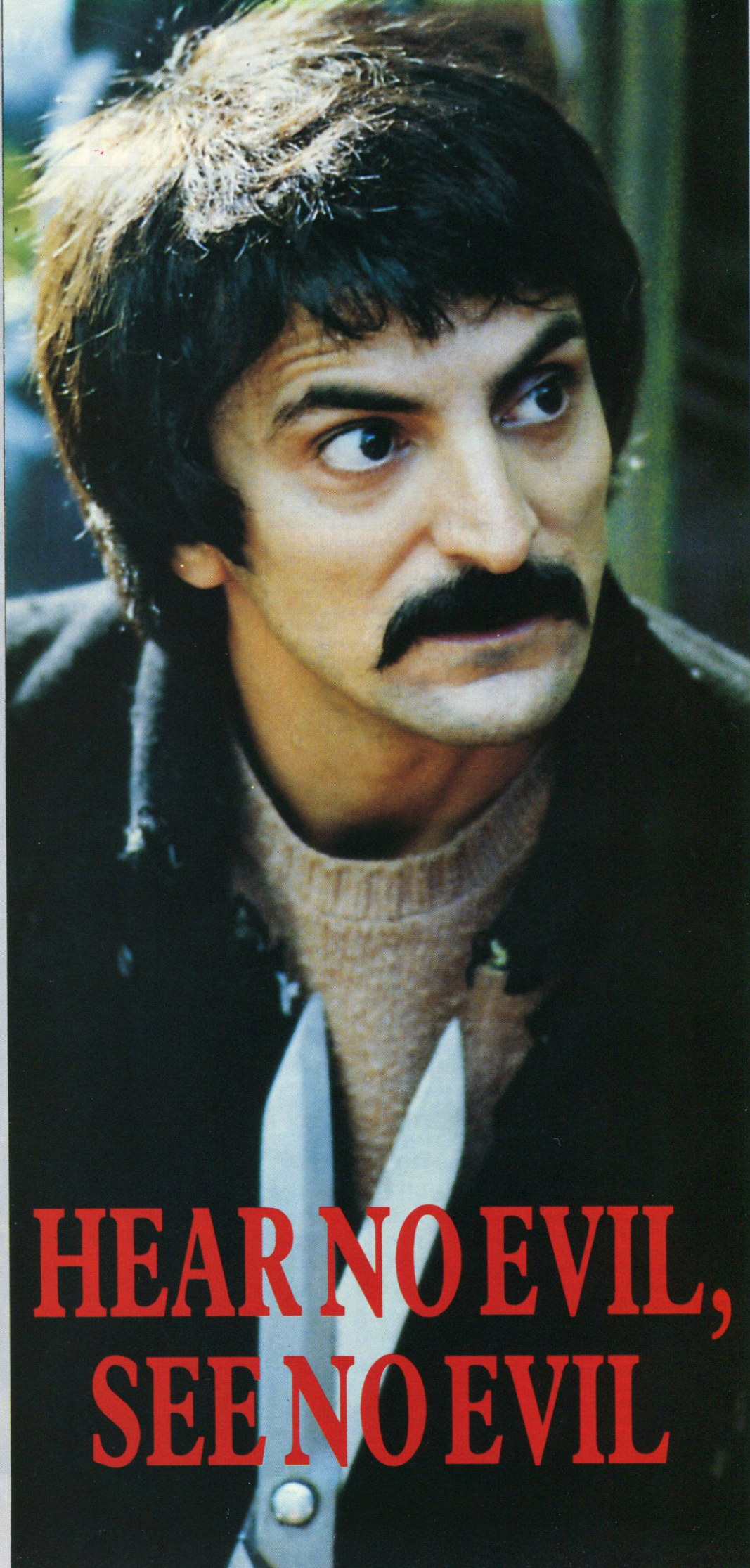


Consider how the history of motion pictures can still

be changed by an individual—by a director, a producer or an actor. But it is not only the

frontmen who alter the course of things, especially not in the horror genre. For in the summer of 1980 a low budget, independently produced film entitled *Friday the 13th* was released.

Not only was it a surprise hit, it spawned a continuing series of sequels (seven to date) and a television series (aptly called *Friday the 13th: The Series*). More importantly, this extremely gory tale of multiple murders by a masked, unstoppable killer spawned dozens, if not hundreds, of imitators. It was one of the first of the notorious 'splat-



**HEAR NO EVIL,
SEE NO EVIL**

ter' films, so termed because they were produced primarily to show every grisly death as explicitly as possible: gunshot blasts to the head, arrows through the eye, throats cut . . . Yet the man most responsible for *Friday the 13th* being such a huge success was not the first-time screenwriter, nor the director, nor any of the unknown actors. It was special make-up effects master, Tom Savini.

Savini's credits go well beyond *Friday the 13th*. They include *Deranged*, *Eyes of a Stranger*, *The Burning*, *Maniac*,

"We all know that the main movie-going audience is between the ages of thirteen and twenty-one, so how do you go about reconditioning these young people to appreciate the way suspense and violence were done by the masters?"

The Prowler and *Invasion USA*. But he is better known for his work with director George A Romero, with whom he has worked on *Dawn of the Dead*, *Martin*, *Creepshow*, *Day of the Dead* and *Monkeyshines*.

He is also an accomplished actor, fight choreographer and stuntman. His acting credits include Romero's *Knightriders* and the title character in the little seen *The Ripper*.

Further expanding his range, Savini has also made the move to directing, with several episodes of television's *Tales From the Darkside* - available on Channel 5 video - to his credit. He is anxiously awaiting his opportunity to direct a feature motion picture.

At the time our conversation, Savini had just finished work on two features. One, an action-adventure film produced in Africa, called *Red Scorpion*, the other, an independent horror production *The Awakening* made in his backyard of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for his friend John Russo.

THE AWAKENING
SW Your love for movies and make-up began when, as a child in Pittsburgh in 1957, you saw Lon Chaney's life story, *Man of*

a Thousand Faces. Correct?
TS Yes - in the same movie theatre where I was going to see *Creature From the Black Lagoon* and those kind of things [laughs]. I had no idea then what the movie was going to be about. At the time I went to see practically every movie that came out; I lived in the movie theatre. But it was the movie that made me realise, 'A-ha! Make-up! That's how they do those monsters!' And for me that was the day that the *Creature*, and the Frankenstein monster and all the other monsters I believed in, died. Because I suddenly realised, at twelve years old, that they were all created by make-up people. I'm still living in the same neighbourhood, but back then I was a poor little Italian kid, loafing around the street corners. This was the movie that gave me a purpose.

SW Your talents go beyond make-up. You have one of the lead roles in *The Awakening*, besides your responsibility for the special make-up effects. What amount of creative energy does that take away from accomplishing your effects?

TS None! In fact acting gives me energy. I played a part, staged the fights and did the effects! It was the most fun I have had in a long time doing a film. It was like *Dawn of the Dead* again, when every day was Halloween.

SW In terms of doing such effects, to what degree do you confer with the screenwriter or the director as to how explicit the result should be?

TS I work closely with the director, of course. In *The Awakening*, the director was John Russo, who also wrote the book and did the screenplay. So we had a lot of conversations before we even started production. I always ask: 'What do you want to see?' And the director tells me, and we'll see if we can do it or if it's impossible. In fact nothing's impossible; it's just a matter of working it up. I tell them what I need in order to make the shot work. Like a magic trick, but on film.

SW Could you give us an example of your magic?

TS In *Friday the 13th* there's the scene where the person is hit in the face with an axe, but in fact it's a fake one. I like to have a shot of the real axe hitting something like a wall or some object, so we establish that the real axe has some power and is deadly. When the rubber axe actually hits the actor, the audience still believes it has the power of a real axe.

TOTAL CONTROL
SW Which type of effect gives you the greater personal satisfaction - totally outrageous as in the zombies of *Dawn of the Dead*, or totally realistic, as in the operating room sequences for *Monkeyshines*?

TS Well, you didn't give me a third choice - directing! [laughs]. That's my ultimate goal. Because as a director I could continue to be doing the effects and I could still be acting. I could still do everything - but have control over it all. Of course, if it's bad, then it's my fault. So far I can look back at a couple of my movies and say they're bad because of the way the editor cut them, or the way the director shot them, or whatever. This would be a way of alleviating some of those frustrations. Second, it's emotionally intoxicating. And third, it's the most rewarding. As the director you do everything. It's ridiculous the way people think directors just say 'Action' and 'Cut!' You shoot the whole movie on paper before you even begin anything else; you cut pieces to a puzzle and, when you're done, you put the puzzle together.

SW Some of the movies you've worked on have been panned by the critics as purely exploitative, to say the least. More often than not, however, your contributions have been singled out as the only item worthy of praise in otherwise forgettable films. In a sense, your effects were the true stars.

"What I really believe is: the less you show, the better off you are; the better the audience should like it, too"

TS I think you've hit it there. I read the reviews and they're always kind to me. 'No matter where the movie failed, at least Savini's effects delivered,' that sort of thing. I used to hear that Sean Cunningham, the man who directed *Friday the 13th*, had said: 'I made Tom Savini's career. I made him famous.' Depending on who it was said to, they would come back with, 'Well, Savini didn't do too bad for your career, either. He made you famous, too.'

After a while, I began to realise that my effects were the star of that particular film, just as the reviewers said. But lately I've seen some films where the effects were wonderful, but the

film itself stank. I mean, in *Phantasm II* the effects were great, but I fell asleep so many times . . . ! Good effects do not necessarily a good movie make. You can have a clunker that's still full of good effects.

SW How close are you to directing your first feature?

TS Very close. I'm very close to doing a remake of a film which at this time I'm not at liberty to tell you the title (it is, in fact, *Night of the Living Dead*). But the script is brilliant. The script is the most unique handling of a remake that I've ever read. So, we'll see.

MANIAC DISOWNED

SW As I'm sure you're well aware, there's intense censorship of horror films around the world, including in England. What are your thoughts on the subject?

TS It's pretty strange about censorship and England. When I was growing up, we used to see the Hammer films with whole chunks missing - like when *Dracula* decomposed at the end of *Horror of Dracula*. I understand that those scenes would of course be intact in England, and they would censor it here! But now it seems to have gone into reverse, with them censoring scenes in England and leaving them intact here.

Censorship is pretty strange to me anywhere. One of the films I did, *Maniac* (1980), was untouched everywhere except in Miami, Florida! Why? Maybe because at the time there was more violence in Miami? I don't know. But I really don't believe in censorship. It's really illogical when you think about it, because the films released in the video stores can get away with pretty much anything, while they attempt to censor the films that play the theatres. Now I realise there are a lot of films which shouldn't be seen by children. I wouldn't let my own young daughter see any of my films until it's explained who these imaginary people like Elvira and Freddy Krueger and Jason are. But in a theatre, anyone who really wants to get in to see an R-rated film will get in. So do these ratings really work? Who knows?

SW Actually, you and your colleagues are the very first victims of censorship, as in a horror film the gory special make-up effects are always the first to be excised.

TS Well, I could say I hate the censors because they cut all the effects out of certain films. But

what I really believe is: the less you show, the better off you are. The better the audience should like it, too. Except, lately, the audience would be disappointed if you didn't show them everything. Like in *Fright Night*, for example. The effects were so wonderful I had to go back and see it a second time. But then I realised how the first forty-five minutes were so boring until the effects came on the screen.

SW Yet the infamous *Maniac*, which even you have disowned, seems to have been designed only to present disgusting scenes of murder and dismemberment. So how can you claim 'less is more'?

TS It was the grossest splatter film that my name has ever been associated with. Yet I can logically say that's okay, because it was just a showcase for splatter. When you sit down in a theatre and you don't know what's coming, and then the effects come – that's glorious! That's great. But when you're getting effects from the very beginning of the film, and it's just splatter, just excuses to show blood . . . That's when it becomes real close to porno films. When an effect happens, and the camera goes right up close to it in graphic, clinical detail – that's pornography to me. That's why I hate porno films, because to me it's like watching people go to the bathroom. I have no interest in seeing a clinical study of somebody do that.

SPLATTER-PORN

SW But you've built your reputation on breaking down the barriers on graphic gore and violence. How can you say it doesn't interest you?

TS I agree wholeheartedly – that's where my initial reputation was made. But we're leading to a point here. The point being, even though I've done that kind of effect before, it doesn't mean I didn't realise it was 'splatter-pornography'. Because that's the way the filmmakers did shoot them: 'Let's get some teenagers together, and when we kill them, let's go in real close and be really graphic about how we show them being killed'.

This is all going back to the less you show, the better or more dramatic it is. Nobody has been able recently to handle this premise, with the exception of *Alien* and its sequel, *Aliens*. Kubrick can. Romero – with the exception of *Dawn of the Dead* – can do it. Polanski can do it . . . and William Friedkin. But you don't see their names on the dozens of *Nightmare on Elm Street* and other splatter films. You never see their names associated with this kind of film. Can you imagine if Kubrick did

a Freddy Krueger movie? And Hitchcock, of course, who was a master at putting himself in the position of the audience and figuring out how best to entertain them. The best way is *not* to show them everything.

Unfortunately, today's audiences are looking for the 'instant high'. They're not patient enough – because we've spoiled them – to wait for the film to present itself in a way which will give them the greatest level of entertainment. It's our fault, because now the greatest level to the audience is the 'cum shot' – the instant porno high. We all know that the main movie-going audience is between the ages of thirteen and twenty-one, so how do you go about reconditioning these young people to appreciate the

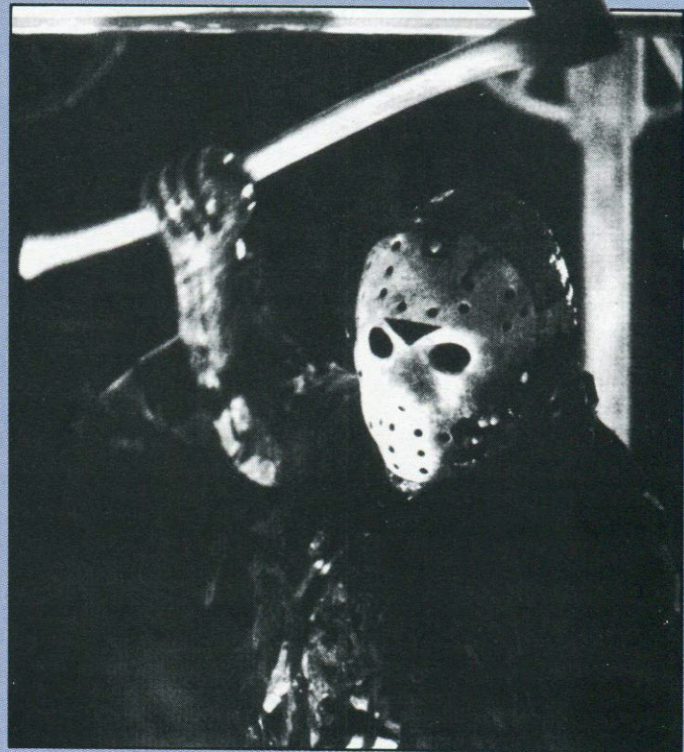
"It's not me as a creator of these films saying I won't do any more splatter, it's me as someone who makes a living doing these effects who takes the work when it comes"

way suspense and violence were done by the masters?

SW Yet the critics still damn you by saying that, because of filmmakers like yourself, today's audiences not only have to see someone being shot, but witness the bullet blowing the head apart and then splattering the wall behind it.

TS But wait; there is a difference here. What most critics do is to put the blame on me. But I don't personally like that stuff. And I'm not saying there's something wrong with those filmmakers who do; there's a reason for everything. But my job, when someone presents a script to me, is to make this scene as realistic as possible. Obviously, my notoriety comes from how well I do that. Only as an artist, when I'm the director, can I do it in the way I've been talking about. I'm like everyone else who has to make a living, pay the light bills. So I did these films.

At one point I even said I wasn't going to do any more splatter films, because I wanted to make the transition to creatures and monsters. I was lucky enough to be able to do that for a while, with films like *Creepshow* and the film I did in Hong Kong, *Scared to Death*. But then *Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter* came along, and I did that because I wanted to kill off Jason, who I had created in the



Carry on splattering: axe-wielding, hockey-bemasked Jason is just one of Tom Savini's grisly inspirations

original. How did I know they were going to keep making more? And *Day of the Dead* for George Romero. There was no way I was going to turn down that film after *Dawn of the Dead* and my long association with George. So it's not me as a creator of these films saying I won't do any more splatter, it's me as someone who makes a living doing these effects who takes the work when it comes.

TORTURED

SW You've described yourself as a 'paid assassin': you go where you're hired, and cinematically kill who you're ordered to kill. Are there any motion pictures you refuse to be associated with?

TS Listen, I've passed up so many splatter films you can't imagine! Like a movie where the whole premise revolved around a Swiss Army knife and the killer using different instruments on it to kill his victims. I remember another film where the murder instrument was a cuisinart! I turned down *Neon Maniacs*, I turned down *It's Alive III: Island of the Alive*. I turned down *Return to Salem's Lot* . . . and *The Stuff*. I mean, my resumé should be the projects I turned down! [laughs]. And I was right to do so, because those films didn't last very long in the theatres.

But I've also done films which aren't splatter, including *Monkeyshines* and the Chuck Norris picture, *Invasion USA*. That had some variety in it, with bullet hits to the head and a knife in the hand . . . or the torture scene in the new Dolph

Lundgren film, *Red Scorpion*. Those aren't splatter films. But you have to remember, I don't write these pictures and I don't direct them.

I still feel less is more. But I think just about everybody misses the boat on suspense. No matter what my effects can do, it's the director who creates the suspense, and it's created before you shoot one frame of the damn movie. So, even if I do these films because I have to make a living, I can still feel that they haven't been done correctly. And that all leads back to why I want to direct.

SW Since it appears inevitable that this dream will come true, what kind of goals have you set for yourself as a director, when your reputation clearly rests on your special make-up effects?

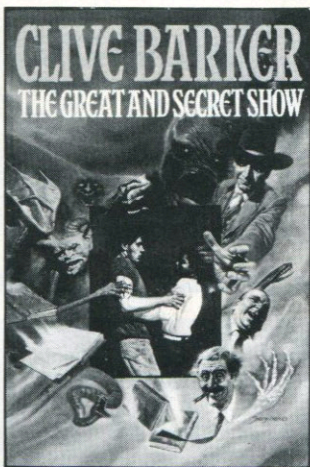
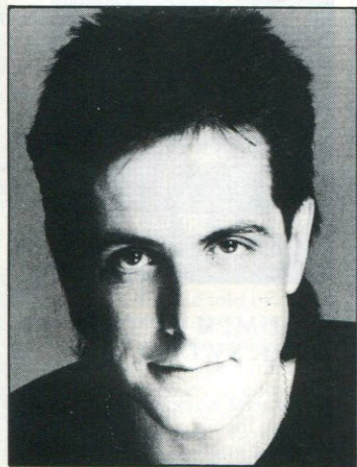
TS I realise I have to have some effects in my films, or I will disappoint an audience. They'll say, 'I went to see a Tom Savini film and there wasn't a single effect in that goddamned thing!'. Okay? But my goal is for somebody to say, 'I went to see a Tom Savini film, there wasn't one effect in the damn thing, but it was fabulous! It was great! It scared the piss out of me!'. To me, that's the highest compliment.

COMING SOON:

Steve Patino, FX artist on the recent crop of underwater monster movies, *Re-Animator*, *Predator*, *Prince of Darkness* and *Phantasm II*, exclusively reveals the secrets behind the shows.

From Clive Barker to Michael Stewart by way of Stephen King, FEAR leafs through the latest offerings from horror, sci-fi and fantasy authors. Read on, if you dare . . .

THE GREAT AND SECRET SHOW THE ART BOOK ONE



Clive Barker
 Publisher Collins
 Format Hardback, £12.95
 Category Horror/fantasy

I was expecting a novel which combined the idealism of *Cabal* – aka *Nightbreed* – with the length of *Weaveworld* and, for the most part, I was not wrong.

Clive Barker's latest foray into the fantastique is a tome of pure narrative simplicity, handsomely coupled with conceptual complexity. Like so few writers these days, he has mastered the art of turning everything that he does not bin into something new.

Take this first book of *The Art*, for instance – and I strongly suggest you do. The story is seemingly so simple. Two men, one good, one evil, become immortal in their struggle to release the ultimate powers controlling reality and illusion, and also to find a spiritual sea called Quiddity. To do so they couple with human beings who have children to continue the fight on the physical plane. Reality is ripped away and a much greater spiritual evil presents itself like the hulking shoggoths of Lovecraft's *Cthulu* myths.

You see, I am already beginning to find symbols within this book and, I believe, anyone who reads it is likely to have the same experience one they have read just a few pages. There are, for instance, the Greek mythological references – there's even a character named Homer – to which can be added the symbolism of alchemy, Christianity and Kabbalism to name but a few.

Yet the book is also one of the

simplest reads I have ever had. Gore fans will get their chills, subtle horror readers will have theirs and the lighter fantasy readers will be entranced. Yet the book could almost be treated like a mirror. It contains elements of Jackie Collins – if only she could write as well – and the more mainstream thrillers of King and Koontz. It is what you read into it, and that's what makes *The Great and Secret Show* so exciting to me. If this is what Barker has managed to cram into the pages of the first part of this trilogy, what wonders are in store as he develops his themes?

John Gilbert

BATMAN

Craig Shaw Gardner
 Publisher Futura (UK), Warner (US)
 Format Paperback, £3.50
 Category Fantasy/science fiction

I wonder just how much money Craig Gardner has been paid for producing this uncharacteristically lacklustre novelisation. It is little more than a transcription with lots of space-filling dialogue but very little characterisation.

Surprisingly, it is the British version of the book that is the most impressive, if only in terms of its packaging. The American novelisation is a simple affair with colour stills on the front and back covers. But the Futura edition contains a Bat picture for each chapter heading and eight pages

of glossy photos.

Admittedly, you don't get much for your £3.50, but no doubt most fans will buy it just to follow the crowd and be completists. It does follow the movie to the letter of the Bat Law but, whatever you do, don't read the book before you visit the cinema!

John Gilbert

POE MUST DIE

What an original idea! A Victorian black magician, very much in the vein of Aleister Crowley but here named Jonathan, is after the Throne of Solomon and control of all Hell's demons. Ranked against him are pugilist Pierce Figg and that famed poet and author of macabre fiction, Edgar Allan Poe.

Blending real life figures with fictional characters and plot is not a new device but Marc Olden provides a magnificent, darkly Gothic tale (*Futura*, paperback, £3.50), with graves, ghouls and black magic rites, which equates wonderfully with the Amicus horror films of the Sixties.

Olden does not seem too concerned with the factual portrayal of the real life characters such as Poe and, at the beginning of the novel, Charles Dickens, but the

way in which he portrays his performers is totally convincing. Let's have more. Or, in the tradition of such films, a sequel at least.

Mark Westerby

ANTARES DAWN

A chilling SF novel from Michael McCollum, the author of *Antares Passage*, *Antares Dawn* (Grafton, paperback, £3.50) takes up the story of the Altan civilisation, a society which was cut off from the rest of humanity when the star Antares cut off all the interstellar travel points.

Some time later, a massive interstellar battleship manages to get through into the trapped system but all the humans on board are dead and something has torn the Terran ship to pieces. The Altans, once ecstatic about the entry of a Terran ship into their space, are now worried that something more deadly and planet-threatening might break through.

McCollum has written a chilling space adventure with overtones of Colin Wilson's *Space Vampires* and, on a more basic level, the original *Star Trek*. His talent for telling an image-, rather than technobabble-, laden tale is obvi-

BRIAN LUMLEY

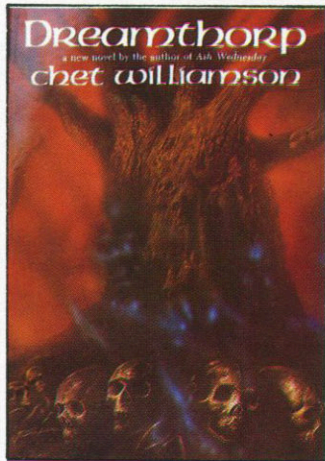
will be signing copies of
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ous from the first few pages and *Antares Dawn*, together with its sister book, provides an ideal entry point for those who know little about the SF genre.
Mark Westerby



DREAMTHORP

The small, American township of Dreamthorp lives up to the name of Chet Williamson's latest novel (*Dark Harvest*, hardback, \$21.00), until two events, thousands of miles apart, release the souls of a group of vengeance-hungry Indians.

The first event is the removal of an ancient Indian artefact from a

mass grave site. The spirits of the ancient savages were entombed with the talisman so that they would not continue to wreak the destruction of their early lives.

Once the talisman is removed, a series of fatal accidents occur. The town starts to fall to pieces and the wiser residents start to move out.

Two people are, however, not willing to uproot; Tom, a sculptor trying to reforge an emotional bond with his son and Laura, who is recovering from attempted rape by a psychopath. Both want to stay in their home town but they have their own all too human problems with which to contend. Tom's son is shot dead in an accident and the psychopath escapes from his police captors and is slowly homing in again on Laura.

Both elements are unusually linked in this tale of disbelief in the face of supernatural evil. People die because of their ignorance, not of logic and science, but of the old, witchdoctor ways that were once so much a part of American life.

Williamson has produced a tale with an unusually American supernatural element which can, however, be translated into the folklore of any nation, be it the traditional English ghost story or Haitian voodoo. It cross-pollinates the contemporary mass murderer with the violence of the past to produce a cunningly timeless tale. The sort of story we continue to expect from his pen.

Bob Rachin

GRACE

Michael Stewart
Publisher Collins
Format Hardback, £12.95
Category Psychological thriller

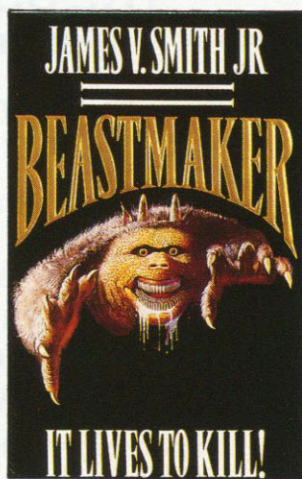
Grace Holmwood, the young heroine of Stewart's latest scientific thriller, appears to have the stuff of sainthood: she begins to experience strange visions of the Virgin Mary. Her mother, Laura, is worried, the local priest is keen to prove divine intervention and Laura's boyfriend, Dr Leonard Grigson, desperately wants the events to be seen as nothing more than a girl's delusions.

As a church investigation begins, Grace becomes pregnant – seemingly by immaculate conception – and a neighbouring blind woman regains her sight. Both events are at first seen as miracles, but soon the church begins to view Grace as a liar and drops its investigation while Grigson begins to realise that he is partly to blame for the incredible happenings. The truth is a devastating revelation which involves both nuclear and psychic powers.

The sheer logic of the story, combined with Stewart's well-honed nose for plot ideas and characterisation, should ensure

that *Grace* is a best-seller. It may not be a genre book, but if you're looking for specific things in a read then you'll find subtle horror, suspense and science. It's all here.

John Gilbert



BEASTMAKER

From the outside, this gaudily packaged book by James V Smith Jr (*Grafton*, paperback, £3.50), looks like a slice and dice kind of book with a less than cuddly monster as antagonist. In fact, it's

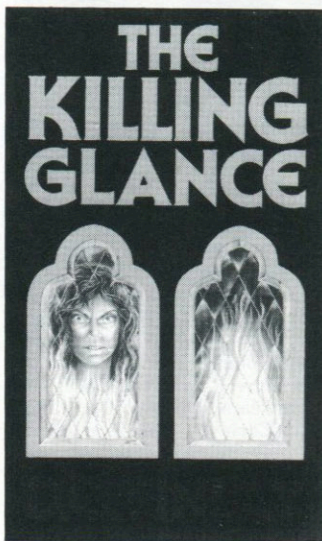
a cross between Dean R Koontz's *Watchers* and *Midnight*.

It's about genetic engineering gone wrong, a favourite subject of SF and horror writers – this is most definitely a horror novel.

Captain Mark Payne knows that the trail of corpses strewn across the West Texas countryside is the work of a hideous monster. The knowledge makes him and his beautiful co-pilot targets for the creature and those who seek to hush up its existence.

The book is well-written, though not a patch on Koontz for suspense, and is the type of read you would take on a short holiday. Smith is stuck between two genres, horror and thriller, both of which have their forms and conventions. Unlike Koontz, however, he follows those conventions to the letter and, for that reason, I cannot see him losing the genre as King and Koontz have done – at least not yet.

Mark Westerby



THE KILLING GLANCE

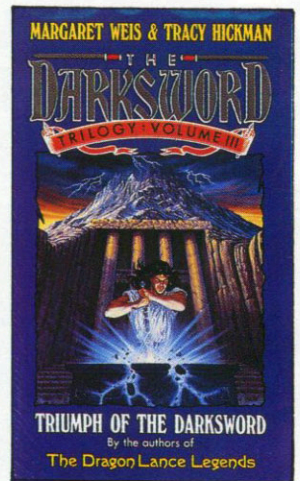
D G Finlay's massive, four volume *Watchman* series is at last available in one book.

Based around the fortunes of the inhabitants of Lavenham, a country house, *The Killing Glance* (Arrow, paperback, £4.50) comprises an unusual mixture of Gothic suspense, mystery, horror and romance which spans the six generations of two hundred years. The house has brought evil even to those who built it and appears to infect all who live in it, from Jess and Amy in the eighteenth century to the Bayliss family in the twentieth, with an almost voodoo-like curse.

The book would be at home with the Gothic romances of writers such as Susan Howatch and Victoria Holt, but it has a cutting edge which all aficionados of the horrors of authors such as Machen and even James will appreciate. It also contains elements of the late V C Andrews' work – indeed the typography is reminiscent of the corporate coverwork of Andrews' books –

which I can only assume will bolster sales amongst those people who, like me, have not seen D G Finlay's work before.

Mark Westerby



TRIUMPH OF THE DARK SWORD

I have always regarded these role-playing inspired books as the bodice-rippers of the fantasy genre but this trilogy by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman is solidly written and packed with the sort of action for which high fantasy fans crave.

This, the last volume of the trilogy, logically called *Triumph of the Dark Sword* (Bantam, paperback, £3.50), releases Saryon from a tomb of living stone in which he had chosen to be imprisoned in place of his friend and master, Joram.

Meanwhile, Joram and his wife return from beyond the Border of the World, reunite with Saryon and together with the Mosiah and Simkin begin a quest to fulfil the prophecy of the *Dark Sword* which will mean the world either falling to the powers of good or evil. Sounds very similar to a hundred and one other fantasy series, but *The Dark Sword* has a special place on my bookshelf because of the non-stop action, the noble attempt at characterisation in a genre in which stereotypes are all too common, and the way in which the authors do not attempt to pass off their work as great literature. Long may their style of fantasy continue to pull in readers.

Mark Westerby

ANGEL FIRE

Do you believe in angels? Well, faith isn't a necessity for the enjoyment of Andrew M Greenley's latest fantasy (*Legend*, hardback, £12.95). It concerns a notorious Nobel prize winner, Sean Desmond, who is being tracked by agents determined to kill him because of some of the impertinent things he plans to say

in his acceptance speech.

Enter his guardian angel, in the shape of a beautiful woman, who intends to keep him alive. Their relationship, which begins very coldly then begins to warm up, is the real reason for the rest of the book. Their exchanges are wildly witty and link together the often surprising thriller elements of the plot.

The prize winner, whose real name by the way is not Sean Desmond, remains fairly level-headed during this book-length encounter, and the chemistry between the two main players makes me hope that Greenley will try this light fantasy cocktail again – and soon.

Mark Westerby

RED PROPHET

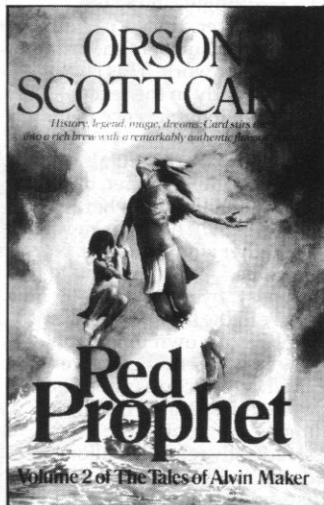
Orson Scott Card
Publisher Legend
Format Hardback, £11.95
Category Fantasy

I love series books, especially when they are as startling and creative as *The Tales of Alvin Maker* by that master of science fiction and fantasy Orson Scott Card.

The second volume of this fantasy travelogue, *Red Prophet*, picks up from the tale told in *Seventh Son* when Alvin Miller, a young man with earth-shaking and stone-splitting talents, meets a drunkard in the form of a Red Indian called Lolla-Wossiky.

Lolla and his brother, Ta-Kumsaw, have had their fair share of problems since their father was murdered by white men. Both have taken separate paths to deal with the killing. Lolla, as the old saying goes, has found solace at the bottom of a bottle, while Ta-Kumsaw is still looking for bloody vengeance. At the centre of it all is Governor Bill Harrison who has it in mind to play each party off against the other for his own ends. Enter Alvin who, as in all good tales of the Old West, aims to see justice done.

Unlike many other trilogies and series, *Red Prophet* is not just a stop-gap between more



interesting volumes. It is a pleasurable and hopeful read during which you gain respect for the characters, though not at the expense of the simply-styled, tapestry plot. *The Tales of Alvin Maker* is certainly developing into one of the most lively and compassionate fantasy series around and, though different in tone from Feist and Donaldson, is likely to equal if not top the popularity of the Thomas Covenant and Midkemia novels.

John Gilbert

THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

David Wingrove
Publisher New English Library
Format Hardback, £13.95,
trade paperback, £8.95
Category Science fiction

Epic, in fantasy or SF terms, usually means a trilogy of fat looking books, often puffed out by superfluous detail. David Wingrove's latest feat, however, redefines that term; indeed I am staggered by the sheer size and depth of his proposed project. We're not talking three books here, but eight!

The first is *The Middle Kingdom* and it, to some degree, sets out the ground rules for what is to follow. Wingrove intends to chart the history of a society of the

future and, for that reason, this is more than simple science fiction. Indeed, I'm not sure that the series can be categorised.

We're still on planet Earth but it is now the twenty-second century and the Han empire rules the world.

Expansionism is out and the imperial Council of Seven ensures that tradition is maintained. Vying against this repressive dogmatism is a group of rebels, a new generation, who want to redevelop the sciences and, perhaps, take off into space – to conquer rather than consolidate.

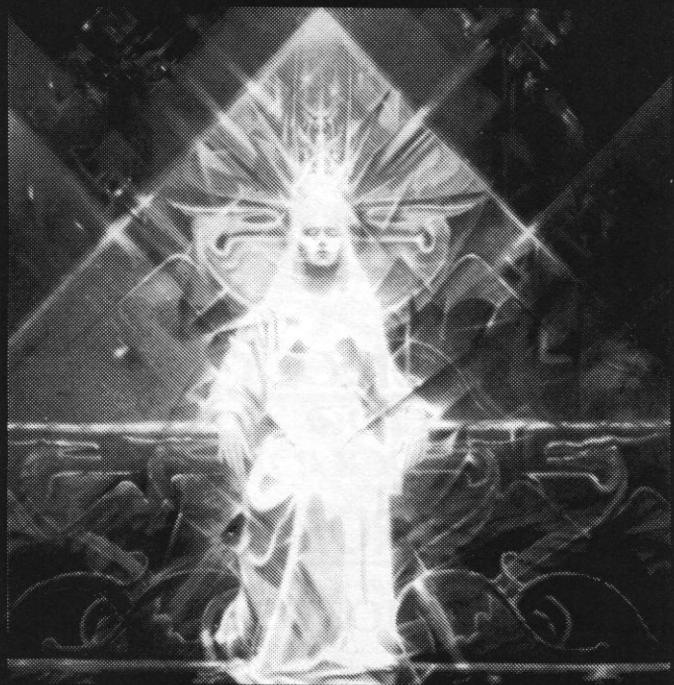
The Middle Kingdom is a fabulous work – so far – handsomely written by someone who has an eye for detail as well as the wider concerns of social engineering. New English Library has taken on what, at first glance, appears to be a massive gamble but, if Wingrove gets the attention he deserves, before the second book sees print they will have another best-selling author.

John Gilbert

Not just a new publisher...
Not just the start of a
breathtaking new trilogy...
But the most exciting, most
imaginative and most
ambitious new epic of magic
and marvels yet from the best
fantasy writer in the world

DAVID EDDINGS'S THE DIAMOND THRONE

BOOK ONE OF THE ELENIUM

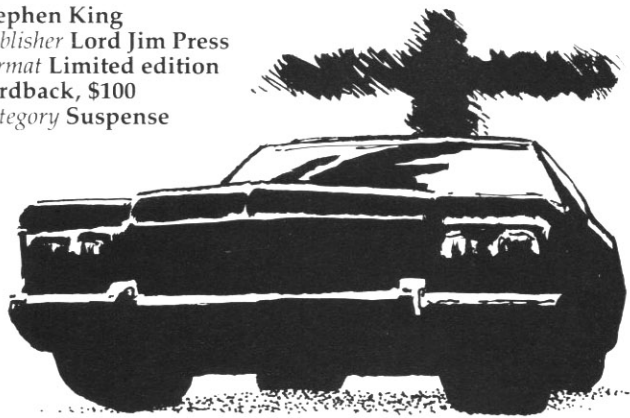


The very latest from the
bestselling author of *The
Belgariad* and *The Malloreon*

GRAFTON BOOKS

DOLAN'S CADILLAC

Stephen King
 Publisher Lord Jim Press
 Format Limited edition
 hardback, \$100
 Category Suspense



Let me tell you this: *Dolan's Cadillac* is not vintage King. Hitting the tape at only 64 pages and a good spit short of 20,000 words – an amount usually considered not unreasonable for one of King's forewords – the book is also a slight tome in terms of both plot and denouement. Indeed, the success or otherwise of the whole affair lies in the working of the tale and the sheer mechanics of Robinson's (the central character's) perverse and single-minded determination to avenge his wife's murder.

But it is this aspect of the book –

ultimately pigeon-holed as a reworking of Poe's *The Black Cat* and *A Cask of Amontillado* with overtones of *Mission Impossible* and a modern-day smattering of Jim Thompson's moody *bête noire* dialogue thrown in for good measure – which, though considerably short of riveting, makes *Dolan's Cadillac* an enjoyable read. But then one should not expect anything less.

The Dolan of the title is a moneyed, well-connected crime czar who boasts ostentatious jewellery, a taste for fancy women, a penchant for removing

dissenters and potential trouble-makers in the grand fashion redolent of 1930s Chicago, and one soft spot in the form of a grey Cadillac sedan DeVille. It is Dolan's Cadillac which the grieving widower sees as the means of effecting his revenge: quite simply, he intends to bury Dolan alive in his car en route from Los Angeles to Las Vegas.

The story of how he achieves his goal makes for an interesting addition to the King canon for several reasons.

Firstly, there's a rare economy – and a resultingly simple but effective power – in the narrative which is not usually found in King's longer work. This is evidenced early in the text by Robinson's first reference to his late wife:

'She was not beautiful, but she was pretty. She was quiet, but she could laugh. I dream of her. Of her hazel eyes. There has never been another woman for me. Nor ever will be.'

Secondly, by placing the narrative in the first-person, King exemplifies his own philosophy of how to write truly effective thriller/horror fiction (as outlined in 1981's *Danse Macabre*) by not letting us see 'behind the door'. He steadfastly refuses to allow the reader to revel in Dolan's claustrophobic incarceration and slow demise in his Cadillac tomb in the snug-fit tiger-trap basement which Robinson has prepared beneath a forty-foot section of Route 71.

This element of the book signals an almost conscious step back from the current vogue of literary excess favoured by the likes of Skipp and Spector, Rex Miller, Joe Lansdale and even the more subtle (though only slightly) mind-boggling mayhem of Clive Barker. *Dolan's Cadillac* moves more toward the moody pacing of Ramsey Campbell in setting the scene and allowing both reader and protagonist to wonder what it must be like for Dolan . . .

' . . . Sitting in the back seat of his telescoped Cadillac, one of his men injured and moaning, probably pinned by the engine block, the other either dead or unconscious.

'I imagined it and felt a jittery moment of what I can only term sympathetic claustrophobia. Push the window buttons – nothing. Try the doors, even though you can see they're going to clunk to a full stop long before you could squeeze through.

'Then I stopped trying to imagine, because he was the one who had bought this, wasn't he? Yes. He had bought his own ticket and paid a full fare.'

In Robinson's eyes, Dolan paid his fare when he wired dynamite to the ignition of Mrs Robinson's car. 'She was in pieces,' Robinson says inwardly, as a means of spurring himself on during the exhausting job of digging up some 500 cubic feet of Nevada desert hard-top, only to reflect later that: 'As a cheer, it was never going to replace 'Go, Bears.'

This light-relief observation is an almost isolated incident in a text which only just begins – because of its brevity – to plumb the deeper recesses of human obsession. Students should look elsewhere in King's work for better examples of this: notably *Ballad of the Flexible Bullet*, *Misery*, *Pet Sematary* and the Becka Paulson section of *The Tommyknockers*. This latter piece is most eloquently evoked by Robinson's supposed mind-link with his dead wife; though it is never made clear whether or not this illustrates a supernatural element (man talks to ghost or vice versa) or whether (like Becka and *Bullet's* frustrated writer) it signals a gradual deterioration of the mind, like the slow and laborious decay of fruit left uneaten.

In truth, the Elizabeth Robinson now working on her husband from beyond the veil is one hard-nosed sister, totally at odds with his early nostalgic image of her. Even as Robinson is still formulating a plan, his wife is not afraid of adding her two cents' worth:

'Cut his out, the voice inside that spoke for Elizabeth kept whispering. Cut him out the way an experienced sheepdog cuts a ewe out of the flock when his master points. Detour him out into the emptiness and kill him. Kill them all.'

And as Robinson nears the end of his preparations, toiling through the night, body racked with pain and muscle-fatigue, hands blistered and sore, he also nears the end of his resolve. Maybe it can't be done?

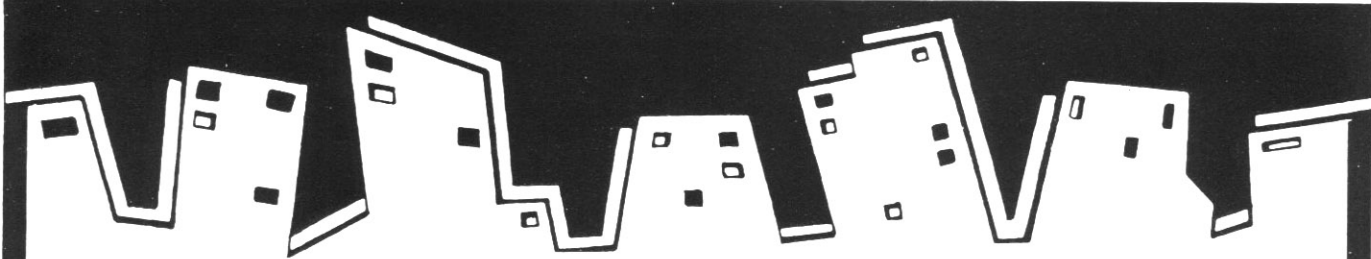
'Please, darling, Elizabeth whispered back. Impossible as it would have been to believe once upon a time, that whispering voice had begun to take on unpleasant undertones in my mind; there was a sense of monstrous implacability about it. Please, don't give up. Please – go on. 'Go on digging? I don't even know if I can walk!'

But there's so little left to do! the voice wailed – it was no longer just the voice that spoke for Elizabeth, if it ever had been; it was Elizabeth. So little left, darling!

But while it would have been easy and predictable to sacrifice the obsessed Robinson, the transgressor, King allows him to live. He allows him to complete his mission and the indications are that Robinson survives and rebuilds himself, both physically and mentally, following the ordeal. But, as the closing paragraphs drift up the page, King artfully changes the book's timbre: for even Robinson acknowledges that the dead Dolan now has a right to his own retribution. It's a succinct definition of revenge which King, through his text, skilfully portrays without reference to good or bad: for him, the personal need is enough. As the Spanish proverb which opens *Dolan's Cadillac* puts it: 'Revenge is a dish best eaten cold.' Bon appetit!

Pete Crowther

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YOUNG BLOOD



The young adult fiction market is blasting back into fashion – but now tales of death, mystery and horror are in, while Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys are out. Best-selling American novelist Christopher Pike is spearheading the campaign to get kids reading again and, as he tells John Gilbert, it's all a question of seeing them as adults.

Suffer the children . . . It's a religious phrase often used with relish by horror writers but, in describing the work of Christopher Pike, its use is more apt than most.

His books, the first two of which were launched last month by Lightning, show that children have their own world in which they are adults. They have their own feelings, secrets and morals, their own basis for viewing life – and these elements are used by Pike to produce taut, unnerving thrillers. Children can have adult adventures and they don't have to be

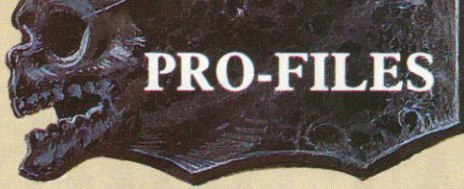
"I think one of the difficulties with the young adult market is . . . that most of the books are dumb. They don't treat teenagers as if they are intelligent"

the Hardy Boys or Nancy Drew. 'I think of myself as mystery/suspense but I try to just have interesting ideas and sometimes they fall here and sometimes they fall there. I don't think of myself as writing specifically a young adult book; I try to write just a good book that has young adult characters.'

'I think one of the difficulties with the young adult market is – and this may sound arrogant and I don't mean it to – that most of the books are dumb. They don't treat teenagers as if they are intelligent.'

Part of the trick of writing young adult novels is to appeal to the adult in the adolescent. As Pike's incredible success in the American young adult best-seller list shows (he has five titles simultaneously in the Top 20), he possesses a prolific habit of pulling rabbits out of hats. 'I have a lot of fan letters from adults. It started in the last year, even though my books have been out for a while, and now probably one out of ten letters I receive is from an adult.'

Despite his sudden fame, Christopher Pike is a pseudonym which has already



become a trademark in the States and is soon likely to do the same in Britain, but he has no regrets about not using his real name, Kevin McFadden, on his first book, *Slumber Party*, which initially saw print five years ago. 'My middle name's Christopher and it was spur of the moment. No profound reasons at all. Pike is a short last name and Pike was the first captain of the Starship Enterprise. But really it was spur of the moment and then it was a successful book and they wanted a second one – by Christopher Pike. So really that's it.'

MORAL DILEMMA

Authors in the young adult market have never been too hot on working messages into books, so that in some cases, such as the Hardy Boys novels, the story is all and the characters are merely gears of temperament used to steer the plot in one direction or another. It is as if the writers are scared to waken teenagers into adulthood with even the suggestion of sex, death, drugs or rock 'n' roll. But the kids are already there and that's why the audience for such adventure stories has diminished and become younger. 'It's a funny thing, I wrote this book – my favourite book in young adult – called *Remember Me*. It's told from the point of view of a dead girl, and it goes back three hours before she died and goes through the whole experience.

'In America (I don't know how it is in Britain), the second cause of death amongst teenagers is suicide. It's remarkable. Just outside of car accidents it's suicide. So I think I was trying to address this problem in a story form. You don't want to start a book: 'and I'm going to have this moral that you're going to understand'. You want first to have a good start. But it's nice to put in something that is encouraging, and so I think that I did not encourage suicide but showed that it was a very serious mistake.

'*Chain Letter* is about guilt. It is guilt which drives the book. I guess I deal with the theme, but indirectly. I'm not really here to preach.'

TEENAGE TRAUMA

Pike's style is simple yet compelling and his precise definition of his target audience as 'young adult' rather than 'teenage' shows a respect that few other authors share. 'I'm not talking down to my readers. I think this desire to write a teenage book – to want to get into the teenage mind – is half the problem. I think that they're intelligent people, but that they're

just a little bit younger.

'Obviously you do have to take care of things that relate to their age, of getting their first boyfriend or girlfriend. Those things, yes, I deal with those. But I think that there is so much emphasis on trying to write a book for a teenager that it ceases to be an intelligent book.'

Despite the sentiments, Pike never harboured an ambition to publish young adult fiction. Indeed, his interests lay in science fiction which translated into some of his earlier jobs. 'I was a computer programmer and I also painted houses, which was not science-related. I have read so much science fiction and studied a lot of science, so I guess I could say I know a lot about science.

As with so many writers, it was not the physical act of putting ink on paper that led Pike to become an author, but rather the desire to share dreams. 'It's the desire to tell a good story. There are many other answers; you can talk about wanting to be published, wanting to be

"I wrote this book . . . called *Remember Me*. It's told from the point of view of a dead girl, and it goes back three hours before she died and goes through the whole experience"

respected, of not having to get up and go to a job which, mind you, are all good motivations. But the main motivation is just to write and tell stories.'

That motivation began to bear fruit when Pike was just twenty-three, but again like so many best-selling authors he was encouraged to do something practical with his life rather than sit down and write. 'I was never really encouraged. The only one who encouraged me a lot was my younger sister, Anne – I dedicated *Chain Letter* to Anne. But really I did not receive much encouragement, even after I was published. Then when I started to make a lot of money I was the golden boy. It's sad, but that's the way it is. Success is still perceived in terms of money.

'I don't think I'm a great writer, but I think I've become a good storyteller. I'm a sucker for a good story myself. I love science fiction, particularly if it's a good story, I love horror, I can get into a good love story, you know, anything as long as it's a good story. But yes, you do have to keep at it, and keep working.'

TIME AND TIDE

Five years is a long time in publishing, and Pike has published ten titles in that time. His prolific output has also enabled him to develop a working knowledge of how books are put together for a deadline. He does, however, feel he is lucky to be working as a writer in a market that is so difficult to break into. 'If I had not succeeded as a writer I would have been frustrated in life. But I realised, when I was twenty-four/twenty-five, that I just had to keep doing this because there was nothing else I really wanted to do.

An early start is probably the best advice an author could give a hopeful writer. You have plenty of time to develop technique and style and the restraints of later life have not started to bite into the creative bone. 'I was fortunate because I was not married, I could get by. I could pay my house off, I could work at my job, but I could keep writing. Now that I'm married it would probably be different.

'A lot of writers get married first, before they are published, and then they are frustrated because they just don't have the time that I had.'

Time and dedication are not the only factors which make it difficult to get published. To those outside the industry, the market appears to be contracting as the bigger sellers take the griffin-sized share of the publicity. It's a tough time for new

writers. 'It's getting worse in publishing because, for instance, our chain [American book distributors] decided that they would have half the books there that they used to have and have them face out. Kids would only buy books if they were face out, which is, of course, great for me because I've got a lot more books on the shelf. Suddenly having half the books on the shelves means that the lead titles get preferential treatment. That means more trouble for those who are trying to get published.'

Pike, of course, no longer has those problems. The monetary rewards from the States and those promised in the UK mean that, by his own admission, he will never probably never have to work again. Four more books – *Gimme a Kiss*, *Last Act*, *Weekend* and *Slumber Party* – are on their way from Lightning and his tril-

"I think this desire to write a teenage book – to want to get into the teenage mind – is half the problem. I think that they're intelligent people, but that they're just a little bit younger"

ogy, *Final Friends*, is likely to see publication next year. Add to those titles the three books he has in his mind, and it is unlikely that we will be able to forget the name of Christopher Pike for the foreseeable future.



AT HOME WITH . . . JAMES HERBERT

In the first of a gate-crashing series, Dave Hughes pries into the personal life of Britain's best-selling horror writer.



James Herbert doing what everyone does at home—reads *The Catcher in the Rye*, of course. Photo by James Sewell

Author of a dozen best-sellers, including *The Rats* and *The Fog* (of which more than one million copies have been sold in the UK alone) and the forthcoming novel, *Creed*, James Herbert seems like a good subject to kick off this series of informal interviews with genre personalities.

I met him, not strictly at home, but at his apartment in the Queensgate area of West London. His Brighton home is being extended 'so I can keep my guitars plugged in all the time!' and he is staying alternately in London and at a friend's Sussex cottage which, he quips, is 'magic'.

When I arrived James was as relaxed as ever, sitting in his luxurious living-room and wearing jeans, desert boots and a suede waistcoat. He's busy working on his new book, which concerns Joe Creed, a paparazzo photographer, and three feature films – not to mention the publicity for the re-issue of *The Fog* and the launch of *Haunted* in paperback – yet he expends time and enthusiasm showing us around the seven rooms of his city residence.

The apartment is carpeted throughout in the uniform horror-writer cream deep pile (both Clive Barker and Brian Lumley share James' taste in carpets). What is it about that colour, I ask? Is it so that everyone can see that the floors aren't soaked in blood? 'It was here when we moved in,' he demurs. 'The

place was bare, but painted . . . I love the colour, but it's terrible for picking up the dirt.' All that said, James is having his Brighton home recarpetted in a similar colour. 'I like white,' he says. 'My study will probably be all white. I like to clear my mind, you know, like Klein in *Sepulchre*, who had this big white room. I like white around me, so I've got no real distractions.'

SECURITY CONSCIOUS

James Herbert's considerable wealth (he recently earned \$2 million for two books) is hardly in evidence, aside from the

"I think there's nothing more boring than going back over old ground. I mean, it's lovely to talk about yourself, but it can get monotonous!"

high-security video and audio entryphone system which give some clue as to the other inhabitants of the building. The furniture is luxurious but unpretentious and the apartment has the air of a second home: it is unbelievably tidy for someone as busy as James (who is 'Jim' when he's at home), and the study is virtually empty, with no typewriter or computer on show. The simple two-piece 'phone rings infrequently and the uncharacteristic confidence with which he answers it shows that he knows everyone who has the number.

Jim's wife, Eileen, a youthful-looking woman who, incredibly, has three children (all girls), pops in and out, organising his schedule of meetings, photographic shoots, launch parties and dinner engagements (not to mention coffee for myself and the photographer). James talks little about his personal life, although casual remarks about 'Gordon the chauffeur' and the architects working on his real home in Sussex give an indication that he and his family live fairly comfortably: 'I always wrote to feed my children. Now

they need clothing as well!' is, he says, his glib answer to questions about money.

THE PERFECTIONIST

I ask him if **FEAR** writer Stephen Jones' forthcoming book will be a revealing biography of James the author. 'It's more of a scrapbook than a biography. It's reviews – good and bad – articles and anecdotes and so on.' How does he feel about doing it? 'I hate it, I'm not looking forward to it at all. But then, Steve's gonna do all the hard work. I'm just gonna give him files and things and say 'get on with it'. I think there's nothing more boring than going back over old ground. I mean, it's lovely to talk about yourself, but it can get monotonous!'

But James confesses to an enjoyment of reading about other writers, mentioning Stephen King and Ramsey Campbell as particular favourites. 'Steve says the things that I would say if I was articulate enough!' he jokes. He hopes that his new book will shake off the label he has worn constantly of 'the guy who wrote *The Rats!*' and tells of how he recently tagged along with paparazzo Richard Young while researching *Creed* and was spotted by another publisher, who surmised that he'd done a book on rats, a book on slugs, and now he was doing one on photographers! 'But life's too short to bear grudges,' he says, philosophically.

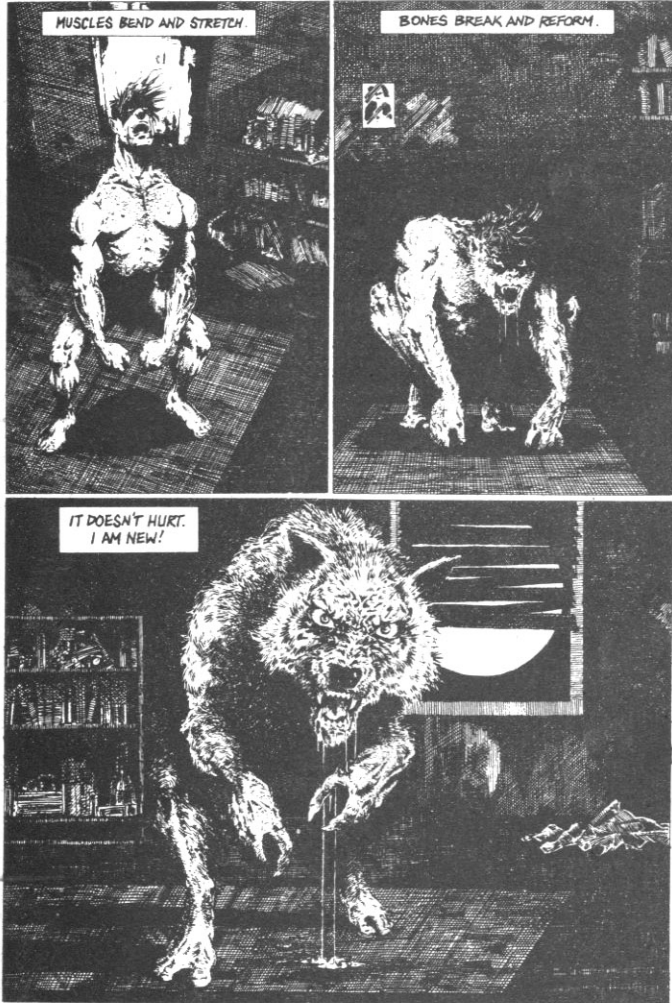
James Herbert's renowned perfectionism pervades his home; and his obsessive attention to detail has led to some problems for his publishers. He recently scrapped the whole print run of the new edition of *The Fog* simply because the word 'climactic' was misspelt 'climatic'. He plays a major role in the design and layout of the covers of both hardback and paperback editions of his books, not to mention the advertisements and point-of-sale items. 'There's much more onus on the writer today,' he says. 'It isn't just writing books any more.'

Nevertheless, he intends to keep on 'writing books', determined to stay ahead, at least in this country. With the *Haunted* paperback due in next month and the publication of *Creed* early next year, it could be that James Herbert won't be spending much time 'at home' in the immediate future.

COMING SOON: AT HOME WITH . . . CLIVE BARKER

METAMORPHOSIS

Superheroes are out, dark humour and fantasy are in, as the demand for adult-orientated horror comics explodes. FEAR's Philip Nutman talks to Steve Niles whose American publishing company, Arcane, has put the meat back into the market.



A beginner's guide to lycanthropy. Dark forces from the dawn of time take effect in *The Rose*: story by Steve Niles, art by Elman Brown

Over the past three years numerous new, independent comic publishers, small press printers and art houses have sprung up like mushrooms, dotting the neat lawn of corporate publishing in a home-grown explosion of diversity. Most of the publications, specifically the comics, are

black-and-white and many, like *Death Rattle* and *Fantaco's Goreshriek*, have been horror-fantasy related, delving into strange backwaters wherein the content is often refreshing in comparison with that of the mass market mainstream. Eclecticism, it seems, is the order of the day.

Arcane Comix, of Washington DC, certainly fit the bill to a T with *Fly in My Eye*, their recently-published anthology, a truly strange smorgasbord of the dark side of human imagination.

'I wanted a strange, very eclectic selection of images, comic stories, short fiction, what-have-you,' confesses editor/publisher Steve Niles. Subtitled *An Anthology of Unparalleled Confusion*, which is both true and honest, the book contains short fiction from Cyberpunk John Shirley and horror critic Douglas E Winter and art from John Bolton, Bryan Talbot, Steve Bissette, Ted McKeever and Clive Barker. Other contributors include Matt Howarth (best known for his work in *Heavy Metal* magazine), Elman Brown, Edward Griffen, Brian Clark and Dan Steffan. The word 'diverse' is barely adequate to describe *Fly in My Eye's* grab-bag presentation of words and images, a selection which Niles concedes is very personal.

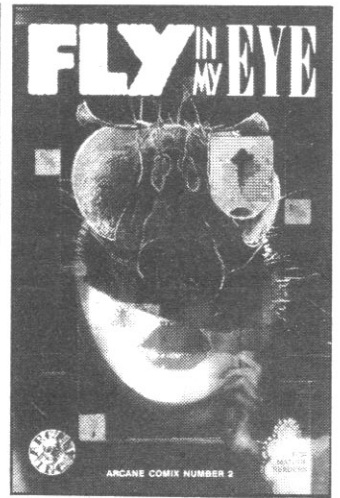
'I've bought every comic and anthology I could get my hands

"In horror, nearly everyone gets off on this 'I'm just an ordinary guy writing horror' routine . . . but there's a tremendous amount of us out here who aren't so ordinary and who are dealing with a lot of personal demons"

on since the days of EC and their classic stories,' he explains, 'and have never been really satisfied, I always thought there were a lot of other ways to go.'

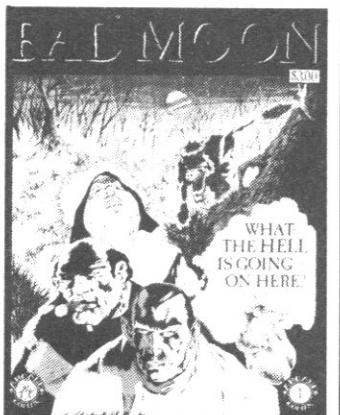
FLY IN MY EYE

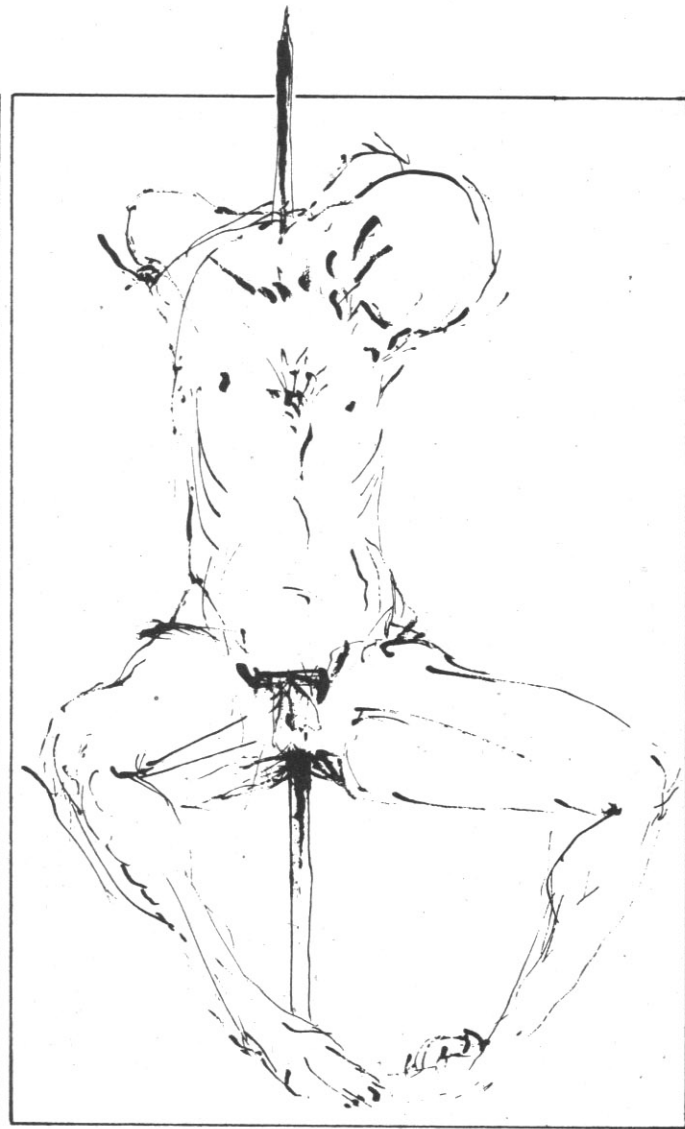
Steve Niles' own anthology was the result of a question and several 'phone calls. 'I just wanted to see what would happen if I called up as many people as possible - and even if they only had one idea I'd take it,' Niles, a musician and former rock performer, continues. 'Horror involves much more than was done in the EC tradition - having someone do something wrong then horribly kill them - there are images, ideas, philosophies, so many different things, so many different ways to present them. Horror in comics has always been limited; I didn't want to think that way. The idea with *Fly in My Eye* is to collect together as many elements as I can twice a year.



Basically, I'm trying to put together something that makes me happy.'

Arcane evolved from the humblest of origins, a curious little self-published comic called *Bad Moon*, written by Niles and illustrated by Brian Clark. '*Bad Moon* was just something me and my friends played around with,' Niles recalls. 'We never expected it to generate any real attention. By the time it finished, though, I'd swung deals with Clive Barker, John Bolton and a whole range of other people. Thank God it got lost in the shuffle, it was really underground and sold 2,500 copies.' *Bad Moon* started as a whim and was Niles' first foray into the visual medium, intended only as a xerox work to be sold for a dime around Washington while its author played with Grey Matter, the band he's been involved with for several years. 'It was a personal thing,' he admits. 'I just took the publishing thing one step at a time, then one more step. Now I find myself doing it full-time and we have over two years' worth of projects in the works.'





RAWHEAD REX

As *Fly in My Eye* hit specialist bookstores, Arcane began selling the first of a series of art portfolios, in this case a handsomely produced set of Barker's cover art from *Books of Blood*, a limited, signed edition that has almost sold out. Future portfolios include black-and-white collections from John Bolton, Ted McKeever and Peter Kuper and, on the graphic novel front, further Barker adaptations are in the works. Steve Bissette has written and is currently illustrating a comics version of *Rawhead Rex*, while Bolton is working on *The Yattering and Jack* with Erik Saltzgaber (Bissette and Bolton are also contributing to Epic Comics' forthcoming *Hellraiser* anthology). Further to this, Arcane will release graphic versions of three of Barker's plays, including *Frankenstein in Love* and *The Secret Life of Cartoons*.

Arcane's involvement with Barker proved to be the next big step in establishing it as a small publishing house to watch, though prior to that Niles struck gold when he obtained permission from Richard Matheson to adapt his classic novel, *I Am Legend*.

'I wrote to Matheson because I was curious to see how authors would respond to the idea of having a book adapted into the comics medium. *I Am Legend* is one of my favourite books and I feel they really screwed it up the two times they turned it into a movie,' he opines, referring to *The Last Man on Earth* (1962) with Vincent Price and *The Omega Man* (1971) with Charlton Heston. 'Brian Clark also rates it as his favourite book and we agreed we wanted to see it done properly. Well, a month later, Matheson replied saying 'sure, go ahead'.

'Brian started out doing the art but we realised it wasn't working out. Brian likes to draw monsters' – see *Invisible Friend* in *Fly in My Eye*, for example – and *I Am Legend* is not that kind of story. Brian likes to exaggerate horror. The Matheson novel is basically a very calm story. Visually, it's a suburban situation; even when the vampires come out they are really just ugly middle-class people. It never builds to the point of horror that Brian wanted. So he pulled out about eight months into the project – it was a mutual agreement.'

I AM LEGEND

Niles went back to Richard Matheson with Clark's artwork, 'and he agreed it wasn't right'. Arcane's main man then submitted three artists' portfolios to the author to find the right man for the job. Matheson sub-

sequently chose Elman Brown, whose work is well represented in *Fly in My Eye*, and gave the delayed project his full seal of approval after seeing a selection of Brown's character samples. 'The only thing he didn't feel was right was the way we were depicting Robert Neville; he felt we'd made him a little too fat,' he explains, referring to the book's main character.

The adaptation will be released later this year and will run, according to Niles, to almost 200 pages. 'We'll either release it as two 100-page graphic novels or as four regular comics. We're still debating the format, but,' Niles stresses, 'we're saving virtually every word, with the exception of the direct narrative which you will

"I Am Legend is one of my favourite books and I feel they really screwed it up the two times they turned it into a movie"

be seeing. This is something I believe very strongly in. All too often when people adapt books into comics they go the classic illustrated route, which is basically cheating. I want people to read it. I'm hoping this will be a second chance for a new generation of horror fans to realise the importance of *I Am Legend*, just how much that book inspired Stephen King, George Romero, and just about everybody involved with horror these days. It was Matheson who, as King says, dragged the horror story from the Gothic castle to the suburbs of America in broad daylight. I'm really anxious to push that.'

All these projects promise much and, on the strength of *Fly*



in *My Eye*, will probably deliver. The anthology may not please everyone with its seemingly uncoordinated selection of material but Niles makes no apology for its misshapen form. 'The book is designed to be dipped into, not read cover to cover. I don't want people to read it then put it on their shelf and forget it; *Fly in My Eye* is meant to stimulate and entertain in those odd moments when you don't have much time to devote to reading.'

The book is a mixed bag but does contain some interesting works. Steve Bissette's portfolio



displays the various influences on his style; Ted McKeever's selection of illustrations contain some disturbing visions; the Barker selection is varied, and *The Rose*, an elegaic vignette about lycanthropy penned by Niles and drawn by Brown, indicates that the forthcoming *I Am Legend* project may be quite stunning.

THE FACE THAT MUST DIE

Niles appears sincere in his aim to produce 'a consistently adult level of horror comics and



associated art, defining a dark vision, if you will', and his open editorial criteria seem certain to attract many more talents to the Arcane imprint. 'Basically, if it feels good to me and the artist agrees, then we'll go with it,' he says.

Already earmarked for the second volume are contributions from Ramsey Campbell and artist, J K Potter. 'Ramsey has given me the rights to his autobiographical introduction to *The Face That Must Die*, to do it as an illustrated piece,' announces Niles. The introduction details Campbell's unusual upbringing and makes for truly disturbing reading. 'It should be a really hard-hitting work,' he states passionately. 'It's something I really like because,

"It was Matheson who, as King says, dragged the horror story from the Gothic castle to the suburbs of America in broad daylight"

in horror, nearly everyone gets off on this 'I'm just an ordinary guy writing horror' routine and I don't think that's true; there's a tremendous amount of us out here who aren't so ordinary and who are dealing with a lot of personal demons. Ramsey came out and stated that up front, which was tremendously honest of him. I don't claim to be an ordinary guy and I don't think the majority of people who are interested in horror are. I'm anxious to say my side and I think that's the perfect way to do it.'

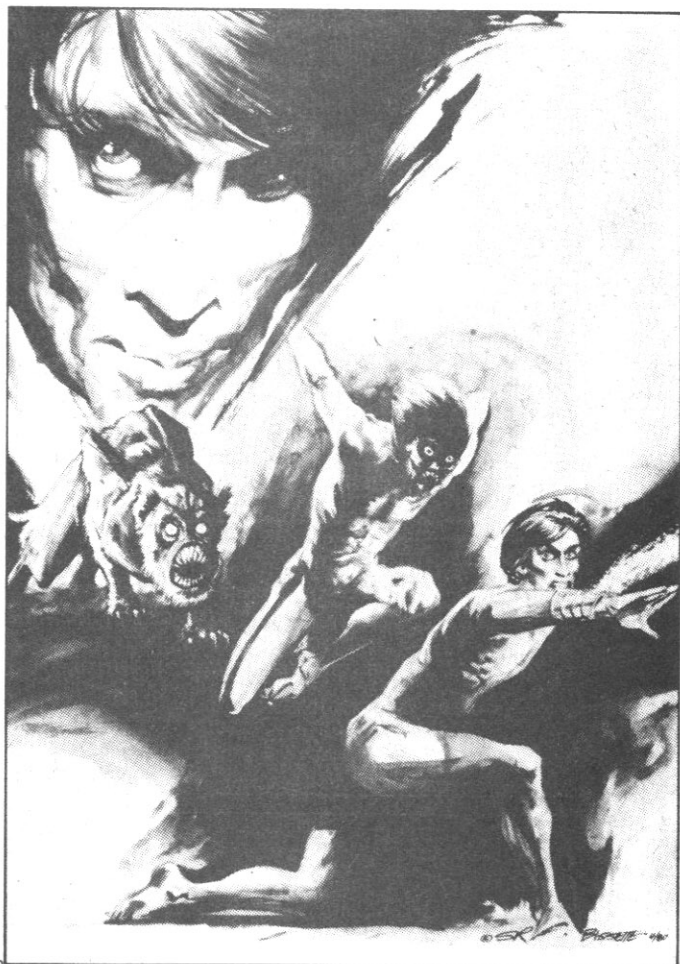
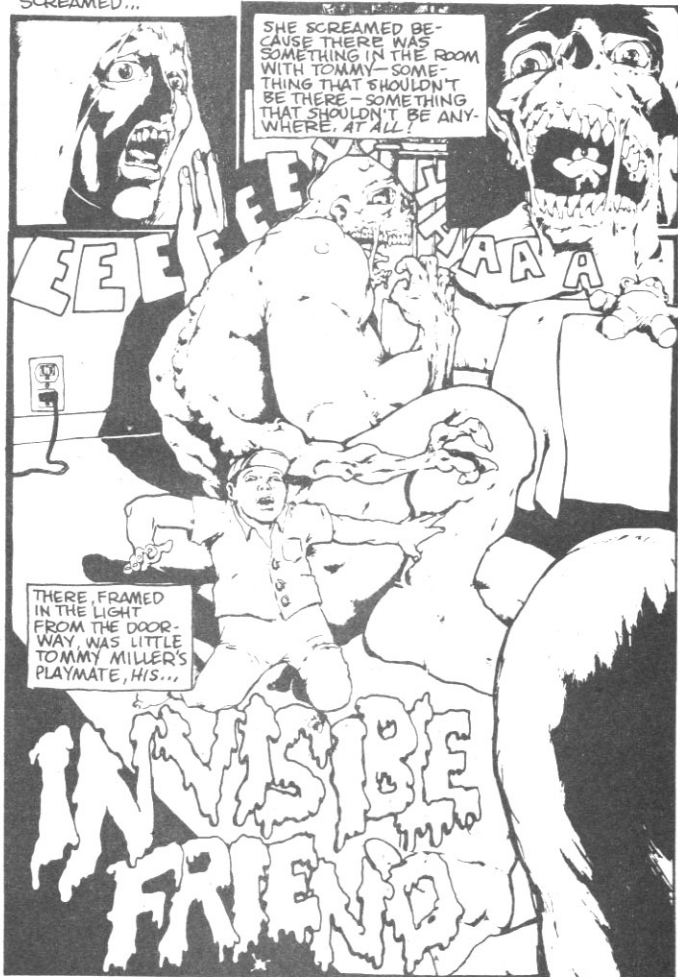
Whatever Niles' personal demons are up to, he is finding life increasingly busy, so much so that Arcane recently moved to larger premises, and the new address is printed below. From here Niles, aided by Gina Pala, will continue to define a dark vision. 'I think it's going to be interesting,' he says, modestly.

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Man on a Stick by Clive Barker (top left); drawing by Ted McKeever (far left); a spread from *Bad Moon* (left); drawing by Jeff Gaither (above); *Invisible Friend* story and art by Brian Clark (top right) and drawing by Steve Bissette (bottom right). All illustrations © Arcane Inc.

LOOKING INTO TOMMY'S ROOM, KATE DANIELLS SCREAMED...



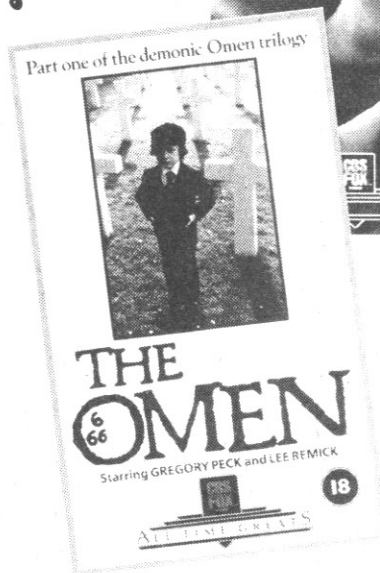
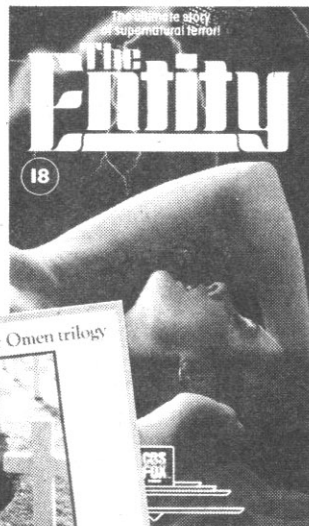
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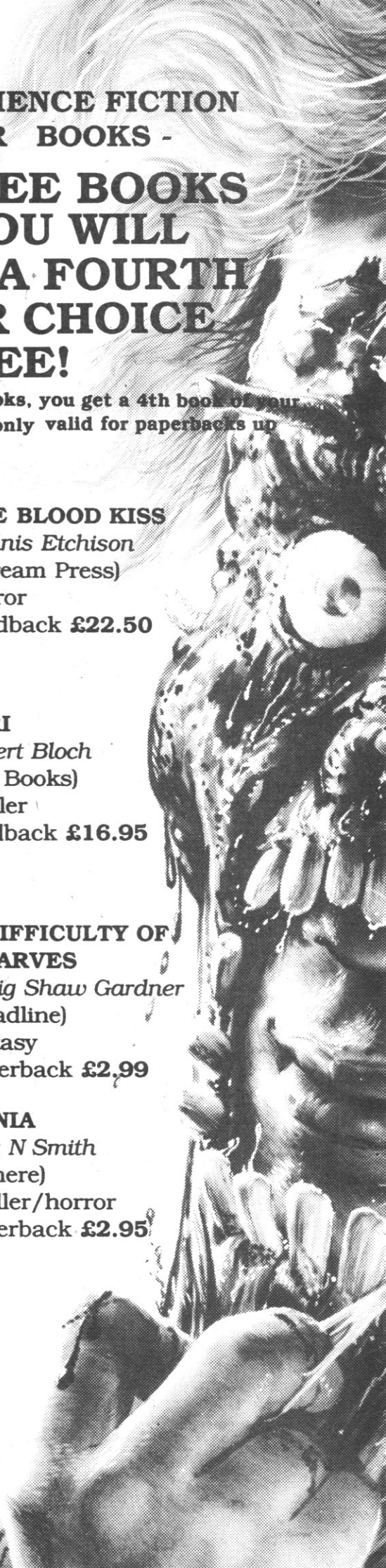
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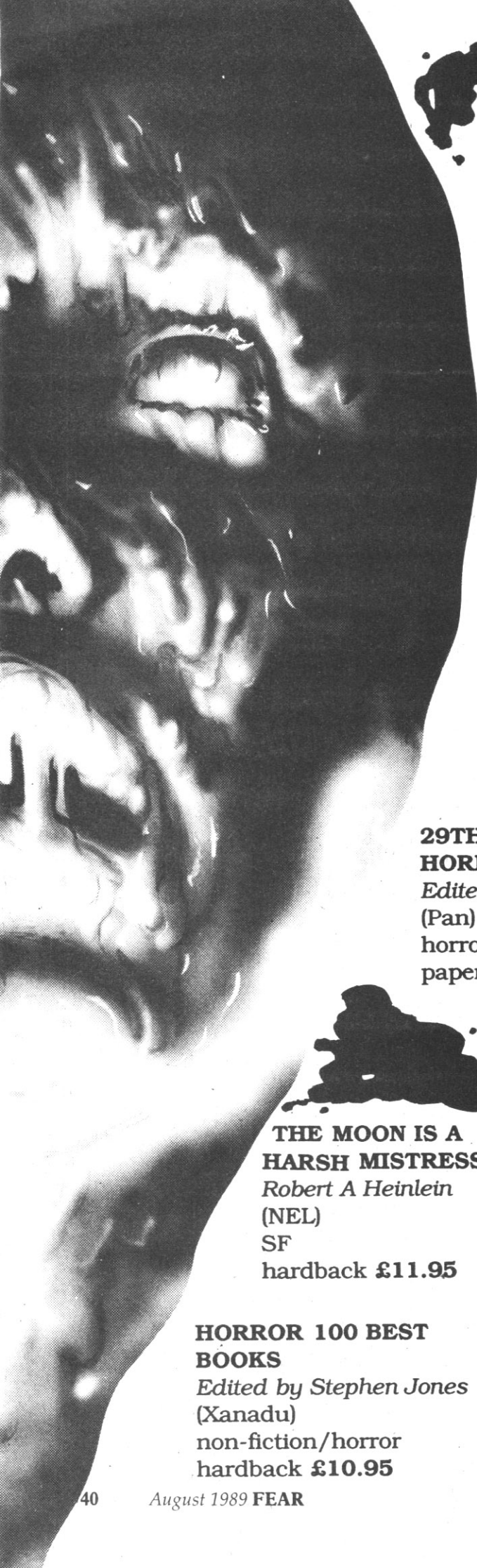
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Meanwhile, we kick off with an exclusive extract from Brian Lumley's terrifying new book *Necroscope III: The Source*.

So rub in that factor six, lie back and relax at your own risk, and get stuck in to fabulous FEAR fiction.

Just when you thought it was safe to go back on the beach . . .

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NECROSCOPE III:

BY BRIAN
LUMLEY

In the grimly foreboding depths of the Perchorsk Projekt, under the USSR's Ural Mountains, Major Chinghiz Khuv, KGB, had talked softly – and occasionally not so softly – to his captive, one Michael 'Jazz' Simmons, a British agent. Now Jazz remembers what Khuv told him:

'Now, a sort of anticlimax: Encounter Two was a wolf!

'It came through in much the same way as that other *Thing*, but by comparison it was so small, so usual, that it almost went unnoticed. But not quite. A soldier spotted it first, put a bullet into it the moment it came limping through the Gate. That stopped it, but not fatally. It was examined, but oh so cautiously, and found to be . . . well, a wolf!

'It was old, mangy, almost blind and close to starving. They saved its life, caged it, fed and cared for it and subjected it to every test in the book – because they weren't quite sure they could trust it, do you see?

'But . . . it *was* a wolf: in every respect a brother of creatures which even today hunt in the great forests of these parts. By the time it died, nine months ago of old age, the animal was quite tame.

'And so they thought: perhaps the world on the other side isn't so very different from this one after all. Or – perhaps this gateway we've opened leads to many worlds. Viktor Luchov thinks that as a physical phenomenon – or as a phenomenon of physics – it lies somewhere between a black hole and a white hole. Black holes sit out in the deeps of space and gobble up worlds, and not even light can escape from their fantastic gravitational attraction; white holes are the theoretical melting pots that give birth to galaxies. Both are gateways to and from other space-times. Likewise, our sphere of white light – but not nearly so violent! Which is why Luchov calls it a 'grey hole', a gateway in both directions!

'Myself, I've no interest in the 'holes' of advanced physics theory – I simply call it a monstrous threat! But that aside . . .

'You've seen Encounter Three and I've told you about it. As for Four: that was another anticlimax, but not quite so usual or acceptable as the wolf. It was a bat, order *Chiroptera*, genus *Desmodus*. Strangely, *Vampyrum* is the false vampire, while *Desmodus* and *Diphylla* are the true blood-suckers. This one had wingspread of point seven of a metre: quite a large one of its species, I'm told, but by no means a giant. It was seen coming well in advance, of course, and no chances were taken with it. As it emerged, in that selfsame moment, they shot it dead. But just as the wolf was a true wolf, so the bat was a true bat. Curiously, the vampire is a creature of South or Central America. Perhaps our grey hole was a gateway not only to other worlds but also to other parts of this world.

'Anyway, I was here by this time; the rest of this account is first hand. Oh, and I can show you film of the bat's emergence if you like. Not that you'll learn anything more than I've already told you, for it is exactly as I've described it. Ah, but the Fifth Encounter . . . that was something entirely different.'

At this juncture Jazz had noted how Vyotsky, behind his dark beard, had gone very pale again. He, too, had been present for that Fifth Encounter. 'Get it over with,' the big KGB Sergeant stood up, gulped down his drink and started to pace the floor. 'Tell him about it or show him the film, but get done with it.'

'Karl doesn't like it.' Khuv's comment was entirely superfluous, his smile cold and grim. 'But then, neither do I. Still, likes and dislikes change nothing. They can't alter the facts. Come, I'll show you the film.'

In a second small room Khuv had something of a study. There were bookshelves, a tiny desk, steel chairs, a modern projector and small screen. Vyotsky made no attempt to join Jazz and his senior officer but poured himself another drink and stayed behind in Khuv's living-room. Jazz knew, however, that that was the only way out of Khuv's quarters, and that only a few scant paces and a bit of flimsy doorpanelling separated him from the huge KGB bully.

Now, too, he had seen that his coming here had not been a spontaneous occurrence; Khuv had prepared himself in advance, all the Major had to do was dim the lights and roll the film. And, whatever Jazz had expected, it certainly *didn't* have a soundtrack, but it was professional in almost every way. At one side of the screen a dark, fuzzy, out-of-focus shadow proved to be the side of a Russian soldier with a glinting Kalashnikov braced against his thigh. Centre screen was the sphere of white light or 'Gate', as Jazz now thought of it, and imposed on its dazzling surface was the image . . . a man!

The camera then zoomed in, turning the entire screen white and therefore that much less dazzling, with the image of the man central. Seeming to look directly into the camera, he came head on. But his movements were so painfully slow that each pace took long seconds, and Jazz had found himself wondering if he'd ever get here. At which point Khuv had warned:

'See how the picture clears? A sure sign that he's about to come through. But if I were you I wouldn't wait for that. Study him now, while you can!' And, obligingly, the camera had closed on the man's face.

The forehead was sloped and the skull shaved except for a central lock of hair like a thick black stripe on the pale, almost grey flesh. Swept back like a mane and tied in a knot, the lock bobbed at the back of the man's neck. His eyes were small and close together, and very startling. They glared out from under thick black eyebrows that met in a tangle across the bridge of a squat or flattened nose. The ears were slightly pointed and had large lobes; they lay flat to the head above hollow, almost gaunt cheeks. The lips were red and fleshy, in a mouth slanted to the left and set with a sort of permanent sneer or snarl. The man's chin was pointed, made to look even more so by a

"Centre screen was the sphere of white light or 'Gate', as Jazz now thought of it, and imposed on its dazzling surface was the image . . . a man!"

THE SOURCE



BRIAN LUMLEY is the internationally acclaimed author of *Demogorgon* and *The Burrowers Beneath*. He is, however, best known for his *Necroscope* series of books, the next of which, *The Source*, is published by Grafton paperbacks in August. It's bound to be a best-seller on both sides of the Atlantic, we knew you'd want to read it first, so here's an exclusive taste of the terrors to come . . .

small black beard waxed to a point. But the face's main feature was that pair of small, glaring eyes. Jazz had looked at them again: red as blood, they'd gleamed in deep black orbits.

As if sensing Jazz's needs, the camera then drew back to show the entire man again. He wore a short pelmet of cloth about his loins, sandals on his feet, a large ring of golden metal in his right ear. His right hand was gloved in a gauntlet heavy with spikes, blades and hooks – an incredibly cruel, murderous weapon.

After that, Jazz only had sufficient time to note the man's leanness, the ripple of his fine-toned muscles, and his wolf's lope of a walk before he stepped out of the sphere onto the walkway – and then everything had speeded up!

The British agent came back to the present, gripped the edge of his bed and drew himself into a sitting position. He swung his feet to the floor and put his back to the metal wall. The wall was cool but not cold; through it, Jazz could feel the life of the subterranean complex, the nervous, irregular coursing of its

"The left side of the soldier's head caved in and the hooks of the gauntlet caught in the broken bones of his skull"

frightened blood. It was like being below deck in a big ship, where the throb of the engines comes right through the floor and walls and bulkheads. And, just as he'd be aware of the life in a ship, so he was aware of the terror in this place.

There were men down there in that unnatural cavern in the heart of the mountain, men with guns. Some of them had seen for themselves, and others had been shown on films like the one Jazz had seen, what could come through the Gate they guarded. Little wonder the Perchorsk Projekt was afraid!

He gave a small shiver, then a grim chuckle. He'd caught the Projekt's fever: its symptom was this shivering, even when it was warm. He'd seen them all doing it, and now he did it too.

Jazz gave himself a mental shake, forced himself to return to the film Khuv had shown him . . .

The man came right out through the 'wall' of the sphere onto the walkway. Half-shuttering his red eyes (Jazz supposed in shock), he shouted an astonished denial in a language the British agent halfway understood or felt he should understand, then fell into a defensive crouch. And at that the film had seemed to come alive.

Before, the soundtrack had been muted: the occasional low cough, whispers of nervous conversation, feet shuffling in the background, and now and then the springs of weapons being eased or tested and the unmistakable metallic clatter of magazines slapped into housings. But all of it seemed dull and a little out of tune, like the first few minutes of a film in a cinema, where your ears are still tuned to the street and haven't yet grown accustomed to the new medium of wall-to-wall sound.

Now, however, the sound was very much tied to the film. Khuv's voice, shouting: 'Take him alive! Don't shoot him! I'll court-martial the first man who pulls a trigger! He's only a man, can't you see? Go in and capture him!'

Figures in combat uniforms ran past the camera, caused the cameraman and therefore the film to jiggle a little, burst into view on the screen and almost blotted out the picture. Having been ordered not to shoot, they carried their weapons awkwardly, seemed not to know what to do with them. Jazz could understand that: they'd been told that hideous death lurked in the sphere, but this seemed to be just a man. How many of them would it take to cow just one man? With an assortment of weapons at their fingertips, they must feel like men swatting midges with mallets! But, on the other hand, some damned weird things had come out of that sphere, and they knew that too.

The man from the sphere saw them coming, straightened up. His red eyes were now wholly accustomed to the light. He stood waiting for the soldiers and Jazz thought: *This lad has to be six-and-a-half feet if he's an inch! Yes, and I'd bet he can look after himself too.*

Certainly he would have won his bet!

The walkway was maybe ten feet wide. The first two soliders approached the near-naked man from the sphere on both sides, and that was a mistake. Shouting at him to put his hands up in the air and come forward, the fastest of the two reached him, and made as if to prod him with the snout of his Kalashnikov rifle. With astonishing speed, the intruder came to life: he batted the barrel of the gun aside with his left hand, swung the weapon he wore on his right hand shatteringly against the soldier's head.

The left side of the soldier's head caved in and the hooks of the gauntlet caught in the broken bones of his skull. The intruder held him upright for a moment, flopping uselessly like a speared fish. But it was all nervous reaction, for the blow must have killed him instantly. Then the man from the Gate snarled and jerked his hand back, freeing it, and at the same time shouldered his victim from the walkway. The soldier's body toppled out of sight.

The second soldier paused and looked back, his face bloodless where the camera caught his indecision. His comrades were hot on his heels, outraged, eager to bring this unknown warrior down. Made brave by their numbers, he faced the intruder again and swung his rifle, butt first, towards his face. The man grinned like a wolf and ducked easily under the blow, at the same time swinging his gauntlet in a deadly arc. It tore out the soldier's throat in a scarlet welter and knocked him sideways. He went sprawling, got to his knees – and the intruder brought his weapon down on top of his head, caving in his fur hat, skull and all!

The rest of the combat-suited figures were surging all around the warrior, clubbing with their rifles and kicking at him with booted feet. He slipped and went down under their massed weight, howling his hatred and fury. The yelling of the soldiers was an uproar, over which Jazz had recognised Khuv's voice shouting: 'Hold him down but don't kill him! We want him alive – *alive*, do you hear?'

Then Khuv himself had come into view, advancing onto the walkway and waving his arms frantically over his head. 'Pin him down,' he yelled, 'but don't beat him to a pulp! We want him . . . in one piece!' The final three words were an expression of Khuv's astonishment, his disbelief. And, watching the film, Jazz had been able to see why, had understood the change in Khuv's voice, had almost been able to sympathise with him.

For the strange warrior had quite genuinely slipped when he went down – possibly in blood – and that was the *only* reason he'd gone down. Five or six soldiers crowded him, hampered by their weapons and desperate not to come in range of that terrible mincing-machine he wore on his right hand, and they weren't even a match for him. One by one they'd rear up and back, clutching torn throats or mangled faces; two of them went flying over the rim of the walkway, plunging sixty feet to the basin-like magmas floor; another, hamstrung as he turned away, was kicked almost contemptuously into empty air by the warrior – who finally stood gory and unfettered, and *alone*, on the red-slimed boards of the walkway. Then he had seen Khuv, and nothing between them but four or five swift paces across the planking.

'Flame-thrower squad!' Khuv's voice was hoarse, almost a whisper in the sudden, awed silence of the place. 'To me – *quickly!*' He hadn't looked back, dared not for a moment take his eyes off the menacing man from the sphere.

But the warrior had heard him speak. He cocked his head on one side and narrowed his red eyes at Khuv. Perhaps he took the KGB Major's words for challenge. He answered: a short, harshly barked sentence – probably a question – in a language which once again Jazz had felt he should understand, a question which ended in the word 'Wamphyri?' He took two paces forward, repeated the enigmatic, vaguely familiar words of the sentence. And this time the last word, 'Wamphyri?', was spoken with more emphasis, threateningly and with something of fierce pride.

Khuv went down on one knee and cocked an ugly, long-barrelled, automatic pistol. He pointed it waveringly at the warrior, using his free hand to beckon men urgently forward from behind him. 'Flame-thrower squad!' he croaked. There was no spittle in his throat, nor in Jazz's throat, by the time the film had reached this point.

And then the warrior loped forward again, only this time he hadn't looked like stopping; the look on his face and the way he held his deadly gauntlet at the ready spoke volumes for his intentions. The clatter of booted feet sounded and figures darkened the sides of the screen where men hurried forward, but Khuv wasn't waiting, his own orders about the use of weapons forgotten now – so much hot air. He held his

automatic in both trembling hands, fired point-blank, twice, at the menacing human death-machine from the other side.

His first shot took the warrior in the right shoulder, under the clavicle. A dark blotch blossomed there like an ugly flower in the moment that he was thrown backwards, sent sprawling on the boards. The second shot apparently missed him entirely. He sat up, touched the hole in his slumped shoulder, stared in open astonishment at the blood on his hand. But pain didn't seem to have registered at all – not yet. When it did, a second later . . .

The warrior's howl wasn't a human sound at all. It was something far more primal than that. It came from night-dark caverns in an alien world beyond strange boundaries of space and time. And it was shocking and frightening to match the man himself.

He would have hurled himself at Khuv, indeed he crouched down and made ready to do so, but the three-man flame-thrower squad was in the way. The machine they handled wasn't the small man-pack variety that can be carried on one man's back; it was a weighty thing consisting of a fuel tank on a motorised trolley which one man controlled while another walked alongside with the flame-projector. The third member of the squad held a large flexible asbestos shield, fragile protection against blow-back.

The man from the sphere, wounded though he was, smashed his gauntlet weapon through the asbestos shield and almost succeeded in knocking it from the keeper's hands. Before he could withdraw the gauntlet, which seemed to be caught, Khuv shouted: 'Show him your fire! But only *show* it to him – don't burn him!'

Perhaps they were a little too eager: a jet of flame lashed out, lapped at the warrior's side. He screamed his rage and terror and turned away. And when the fire was snuffed out at its source, chemical flames still leapt up the man's body from his side, burning away his beard, eyebrows, and setting fire to the single lock of black hair on his head.

He began to blister, screamed his agony and beat at the flames with his left hand. Then he snatched the asbestos shield from the soldier who held it and hurled

it at the squad. Before they could recover from this, he turned and staggered, still smoking, back toward the shiny white sphere.

'Stop him!' Khuv shouted. 'Shoot him – in the legs! Don't let him go back!' He began firing, and the man jerked and staggered as bullets smashed into the back of his naked thighs and lower legs. He had almost reached his objective when a lucky shot hit him behind the right knee and knocked him down. But he was close enough to the sphere to try hurling himself into it. Except . . .

It threw him back! It was as if he'd tried to dive through a brick wall.

At that moment, watching the film, Jazz had known – all those who had been present had known, and everyone who'd seen the film since – that the Gate was a mantrap. Like a pitcherplant, it allowed its victims access, then denied them egress. Once through the Gate, the creatures from the other side were stuck here. And Jazz had wondered: *Would it be the same for someone going through from this side?* Except, of course, there was no way anyone was ever going to find out – was there?



'Now he has to come quietly!' Khuv was jubilant. As the firing ceased he ran down the walkway towards the flame-thrower squad and stood behind them, watching the pitiful antics of the man from the Gate. Jazz had found himself feeling sorry for the weird visitor, but the moment didn't last long.

The man sat up, shook himself dazedly, and reached out a hand towards the shining sphere. His hand met resistance, could not proceed. He got to his knees and turned to face his tormentors. His scarlet eyes opened wide and glared his hatred at them; he *missed* at them, spat his contempt onto the walkway. Even with great yellow blisters bursting and seeping their fluid all down his right side, crippled and - helpless? - still he defied them.

Khuv stepped to the fore and pointed at the gauntlet on the warrior's right hand. 'Take it off!' He made the unmistakable gestures. 'Get rid of it - now!'

The man looked at his gauntlet and, incredibly, struggled to his feet. Khuv backed away, aimed his gun. 'Take that bloody thing off your hand!' he demanded.

But the man from the sphere simply smiled. He looked at Khuv's gun, at the flame-projector nozzle pointed directly at him, and smiled a twisted smile. It was a strange expression, combining triumph with unbearable irony, even sardonic sadness or melancholy. But never a sign of fear. 'Wamphyri,' the man thumbed his chest, lifting his head in pride. Then . . . he laid back his head and literally howled the word: 'Wamphyri!'

As the echoes of that cry died away, he thrust his face forward and glared once more at the men on the walkway. There was that in his look which said: 'Do your worst. You are nothing. You *know* nothing!'

'The gauntlet!' Khuv cried again, pointing. He fired a shot in the air for emphasis, then aimed at the warrior's heart. But in the next moment he inhaled sharply, audibly, and let his air out in a gasp.

Standing there on the walkway, swaying a little from side to side, the man from the sphere had opened his jaws, opened them impossibly wide. A forked tongue, scarlet, lashed in the cavern of his mouth. The gape of his jaws expanded more yet; they visibly *elongated*, making a sound like tearing sailcloth. And because all else was total silence and the rest of the tableau was frozen, the sight and sounds of his metamorphosis were completely vivid.

Jazz had held his breath as he watched; and now, in his cell, he held it again at the very memory of what he'd seen.

The warrior's fleshy lips had rolled back, stretching until they split, spurting blood and revealing crimson gums and jagged, dripping teeth. The entire mouth had resembled nothing so much as the yawning muzzle of a rabid wolf - but the rest of the face had been as bad, if not worse! The squat, flattened nose had grown broader, developed convoluted ridges like the snout of a bat, whose oval nostrils were shiny-black flaring pits in the dark, wrinkled leather. The ears, previously flat to the head, had sprouted patches of coarse hair, growing upward and outward to form scarlet-veined and nervously mobile shapes like fleshy conches; and, in this respect too, the effect was bat-like. Or perhaps demonic.

For, certainly, hell was written in those outlines, was lined in the nightmarish expression of that face: a visage which was part bat, part wolf, and all horror! And still the change was incomplete.

The eyes, which before were small and deep-sunken, had now grown as large as gorged leeches until they bulged crimson in their sockets. And the *teeth* . . . the teeth gave a new meaning to nightmare. For growing and curving up through the lacerated ribbons of the creature's gums, those bone daggers had so torn his mouth that it filled to overflowing with his own blood; and his teeth snarled

through the blood like the awesome fanges of some primal carnivore.

As for the rest of his body, that had remained mercifully anthropomorphic; but through all of his metamorphosis his ravaged trunk and legs had taken on the dull gleam of lead, and every inch of his body had vibrated with an incredible palsy.

Finally it was done. And at last the man, or *thing*, from the sphere reached out its arms and took one more, stumbling, step forward. With that last, lurching step forward in Khuv's direction, the creature gurgled: 'Wamphyri!'

Khuv had thought the thing was human, and he'd scarcely had time to recover from the shock of his error. His nerves, legs, voice all almost failed him. And that would have been a fatal malfunction. But, in the last moment, he stepped back out of range and croaked: 'Burn him - it! God, burn the whore's bastard to hell!'

That was all the man with the hose was waiting for; he needed no further urging, and it required only the pressure of his forefinger on the trigger. A yellow jet of flame with a searing white core roared out from the nozzle, broadened, enveloped the horror from the Gate. For long seconds the squad hosed the Thing down with chemical fire, and it simply stood there. Then the shape in the heart of the fire crumpled, seemed to melt down into itself, collapsed into a sitting position.

'Stop!' Khuv covered his face with a handkerchief. The roaring stream of fire continued for a second or two then hissed into silence as it was shut off at source. But the alien warrior continued to burn. Fire leapt up from him, rising six or seven feet above the black oval core which was his melting head, and then turned to foul, stinking smoke. Jazz hadn't been able to smell it, but still he'd known how it must have stank.

The flames burned lower, hissing and crackling, and the slumped shape shrank as its juices bubbled and boiled. Something that might have been a long, tapering arm rose up from the tarry remains in the fire, undulated like a crippled cobra in the clouds of smoke and began a violent shuddering which ceased when it collapsed back into the mess on the burning walkway.

'One more burst,' said Khuv, and the squad obliged. And in a very short space of time it was finished . . .

Then the film had been at an end and the screen flickered with white light, but Jazz and Khuv had continued to sit and stare as the scenes burned in their minds. Only after the last inch of film clattered from its free-spinning reel had Khuv moved, reaching to switch off the projector and turn up the lights.

After that . . . it had been time for another drink. And rarely in Jazz's life had alcohol been more welcome . . .

"The entire mouth had resembled nothing so much as the yawning muzzle of a rabid wolf - but the rest of the face had been as bad, if not worse!"



FISH BAIT

BY LOUISE HAMILTON

Twelve ugly white fish with wide jaws and lashing tails. They churned the water, jockeying for vantage points as she dropped in neatly cut slivers of meat

Twelve of them stared back at her through the thick glass of the tank which he'd placed on a shelf by the sink. Twelve ugly white fish with wide jaws and lashing tails. They churned the water, jockeying for vantage points as she dropped in neatly cut slivers of meat.

She shuddered, hatred for her husband distorting her features into a shrewish mask.

When she'd married Henry, it had been somewhat unusual amongst her circle of female friends to be the wife of a prominent professor of marine biology. She'd enjoyed being 'different' in a neighbourhood thick with bank clerks and accountants. However, as the years passed, the novelty wore off. Her revulsion for her husband and his fish grew. With each new thermostatically heated tank introduced into the house, her loathing increased. He even looks like a fish, she thought. A fat, pompous goldfish, with his carrot hair, bulbous eyes and sloppy mouth.

It had been a week ago when he'd brought in this new tank.

'Oh Henry, not another one!' She'd followed him as he carried it into the kitchen. 'Does it have to be in here?'

'Only for a short time, Lydia, my dear. Just until I can find room elsewhere.' He stacked her saucepans inside one another to make room on the shelf, jamming their lids tightly into the surrounding space.

She was annoyed. 'My pans are going to be difficult to get at now.' She eyed them sulkily. 'I'll have to lift them all down just to get one.'

'Don't make a mountain out of a molehill, Lydia.' His slack mouth tightened. 'I've told you, it won't be for long.'

He gave the outside of the tank a brisk rub with a duster, thinking as he did so, what an unreasonable woman he'd been unfortunate enough to marry. A little more discretion before plunging into matrimony and he might now have a wife like his laboratory assistant, Miss Pinhorn. Now there was a woman. Devoted to him, spending hours on research for his text books, and, most admirable of all, sharing with him a passion for the fish that had become his life study.

Lydia didn't know about Miss Pinhorn. Not that she would have cared if she had. Even sex with Henry had its piscine slant. He slithered rapidly over her with clammy limbs and a wet mouth, leaving her unsatisfied and nauseated.

At first she'd been dazzled by his 'intellect', but had swiftly learned it was a carefully practised pose for impressing lesser mortals, like herself. Her realisation of his inflated ego and the subservience he demanded from those around him, came too late.

Every morning she was expected to do a tour of his tanks, checking the temperature, polishing the glass, and dropping in the prescribed food which ranged from ants' eggs to frog intestines, and

now.... animal flesh for these latest monstrosities.

Resentment coiled itself into a small hard knot in her chest. She still had the tanks in Henry's study to attend to. She always left then until last, because despite the nausea she felt looking at the grotesque scaly faces and weird shapes, there was one tank that intrigued her.

It looked as though it was empty. It was only when she'd mentioned this to Henry and he'd supplied her with a magnifying glass, that she could make out the minute, cotton-thread eels, hundreds of them.

'Fascinating species, found in the waters of South America,' he informed her, tapping the stem of his pipe against the side of the tank. 'Quite nasty though... for men that is... if they chance to swim in a river without adequate protection.' He laughed loudly, returning his ridiculously ornate pipe to moist lips and sucking contentedly.

'Why, what do they do?' Lydia looked at him, listening as she always did to the gurgling of his saliva in the pipe stem.

'Not very nice, my dear, but interesting. Very interesting.' He took up his lecturing pose, standing with legs apart and gently swaying. Lydia knew she was to have a detailed account, whether she wanted it or not.

He cleared his throat. 'The waters there are full of this particular species. Little blighters enter the body through the urethra tube and lay their eggs to hatch in the bladder. Temperature of ninety-eight point four degrees _ just right for breeding.' He paused, enjoying her look of incredulity. 'I assure you, Lydia, that is exactly what they do. Damned uncomfortable death I would say when they're fully formed and try to escape.' He roared with laughter again. 'One is always advised to wear a condom. Just to be on the safe side, you know.'

Lydia had been appalled by this information, but it had stuck in her memory. She wondered if Henry was pulling her leg, but a couple of hours spent in the library convinced her that he wasn't.

She drew in her breath sharply as she now entered the study and stared at the tank of eels. She'd fantasised about her plan before, but this morning it formed with clarity, raising her adrenalin to exciting levels.

Afraid that her new-found courage might fail, she acted quickly. It wasn't difficult to find a spare heater amongst Henry's equipment and with a little effort she fitted it to the cold water tank in the loft without much disturbance to the lagging. She waited patiently for it to register. I'm not such an idiot as he thinks, she told herself as she rushed downstairs, found her largest jug and returned to the study.

Fighting sudden apprehension, she plunged it into the virescent water. Trembling with excitement, she re-climbed the loft ladder, steadying the jug with its precious contents. With one swift movement, she emptied it into the tank, shaking it thoroughly so as not to leave behind one tiny creature.

Her task completed, she went downstairs and made herself a cup of coffee. A half smile played around the corners of her mouth. Henry always had a bath when he came home in the evening. A pleasantly warm bath. Much more invigorating than a hot one, he always told her. She imagined his flabby white flesh, hairy and freckled, lowering itself into its lethal cradle.

She drained her cup and congratulated herself on her practical mindedness. She blessed the day

she'd bought her book club's special offer *The A to Z of Plumbing*. It had been a present for Henry, but it had taught her a lot. She'd learned for instance that the cold water supply in the kitchen came from the mains, so she didn't have to worry about the eels getting into that. The only thing she had to beware of was taking a bath herself, but that wouldn't matter for a few days _ just until Henry got thoroughly infected. She would then drain the tank, disinfect and refill it. Nobody would be any the wiser. In the meantime, she'd make do with washing herself in the kitchen.

Two or three times during the day she checked the temperature of the tank. It remained accurate and she wished the hours would pass more quickly. For the first time in her marriage, she longed for her husband to come home.

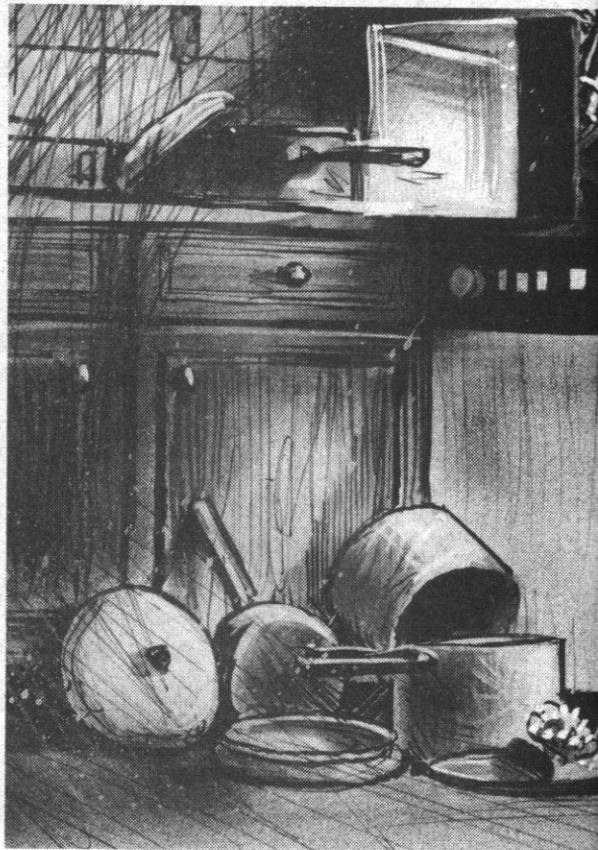
Storm clouds darkened the late afternoon sky as Lydia finished peeling the potatoes and switched on the waste disposal unit fitted into the sink. She watched the peel descend quickly into the big black hole and grind up noisily. Suddenly the motor gave a shudder and stopped. Darned thing, Lydia cursed. It was always doing that.

Irritably, she turned off the tap. There must be a blockage, she thought, peering through the water into the hole. Probably a bit of potato had caught in the mechanism. If it could just be dislodged...

Unfortunately for Lydia, her mind on other things made her careless. As her finger located the offending potato piece and poked at it, the roar of the motor and the searing pain in her hand warned her, too late, that she hadn't switched off the unit.

Nearly fainting with agony, her free hand searched wildly on the wall for the switch. Groping blindly she found it, but not before the pans, balanced precariously on top of one another, came crashing down, their lids flying in all directions.

As far as her trapped hand would allow, she



Trembling with excitement, she re-climbed the loft ladder, steadying the jug with its precious contents

pulled back in horror as the shelf shuddered. Henry's fish tank on its narrow and inadequate footing, jumped a few inches, teetered, and likewise crashed onto the draining board, its contents showering into the sink.

Panicstricken, Lydia tried to wrench her hand free, but it wouldn't budge. Two sharp blades had the forefinger caught between them forcing her arm rigid in the opening and stopping the flow of water which was turning from pale pink to red.

Willing herself to be calm and think clearly she watched the fish dart around her forearm in a sort of frenzy. She felt sorry that the fall had frightened them so much. Provided she could free her hand, she may be able to catch them and put them back in the tank before Henry got home. It wasn't broken. At least that was something.

Her finger didn't hurt so much now. It would probably only be a nasty gash round the sides. If only she could dislodge it. She waggled it cautiously, but it remained firmly imprisoned. She'd just have to free herself before Henry came in. He'd be absolutely furious about his fish.

She stared through the kitchen window and saw the angry sky and the occasional flash of lightning as the storm grew closer. She didn't like it. It gave her a sense of foreboding. She felt like a trapped animal. Her heart began to pound and her mouth went dry.

Not caring about any further damage or pain she caused, she braced herself against the sink with her free hand, and gave a sharp tug. The quick movement produced a red hot burning sensation in the region of her elbow, just below water level. Then another, and another, lower this time.

The storm was now overhead and fork lighting cracked across the sky, illuminating the darkening kitchen.

Lydia felt perspiration stand out on her

forehead as she leaned forward and squinted into the water. She began to shiver and a half sob tore from her throat as she bent closer. It couldn't be... Surely she was imagining it in the half light... Surely they couldn't be... ?

The white fish stood out clearly in their crimson pool. One by one, as if taking turns, they darted at her, sinking tiny pointed teeth into her skin and hanging on until the flesh broke away. At each new stab of pain, the water darkened. Minute bits of tissue floated to the surface to be caught rapidly in vicious jaws.

Screaming, Lydia dragged on the arm at the same time trying to beat off the fish with her left hand, but a dozen voracious piranha were not to be put off. They clung. Lydia lost consciousness and fell forward, the murky water lapping over her head and shoulders.

There was no sound in the kitchen now except for a rumble of distant thunder and an intensified splashing in the sink.

Henry turned his key in the lock and let himself into the house. He'd stayed on at college until the weather cleared, so was later than usual.

Funny there are no lights on, he thought. Maybe the storm had cut off the electricity. Well, it's been restored now, he muttered, flooding the hall with light and hanging his coat in the closet. Stupid woman's probably still looking for a torch.

'Lydia!' he shouted. 'I'm home.'

Receiving no reply, he walked to the kitchen and switched on the light.

Henry was in no way squeamish, but his florid face paled and he clutched at the doorway for support. He took in the situation at a glance as his eyes moved to his fish tank, now empty and lying on its side. He had the grace to feel compassion as he looked at his wife's sodden blouse floating loosely over her shoulders which, released from some of their weight, bobbed up and down in the slowly ebbing water.

Recovering himself quickly, his attention became rivetted on the distended bodies of his fish, inert and gorged to death. Gently he lifted out each one and laid them, side by side, on a clean tea towel. 'She never had any idea of their rarity,' he mumbled. 'Never appreciated anything. Careless bitch.'

It wasn't difficult getting Lydia out of the sink. She pulled out easily without the fleshy folds that had once been neatly distributed over the upper part of her torso. With a gurgle, the sink emptied. He dropped her onto the floor and threw a tablecloth over her. Without emotion, he telephoned the police.

An ashen faced inspector had the body removed, wrote 'accidental death' in his notes and overdid the commiserations. It was all over within a couple of hours and Henry was alone in the house.

He lit his pipe and looked at his dead fish. Miss Pinhorn was going to be very interested, he suddenly thought. It was not every day that one had piranha fish to dissect. Why, he'd be able to write a whole new chapter into his latest text book. He began to feel excited. He'd ring her. Yes, that's what he'd do. Ask her round to discuss the possibilities. But first, he thought, noticing the stains on his hands and shirt-cuffs, he must have a bath — a nice warm bath.

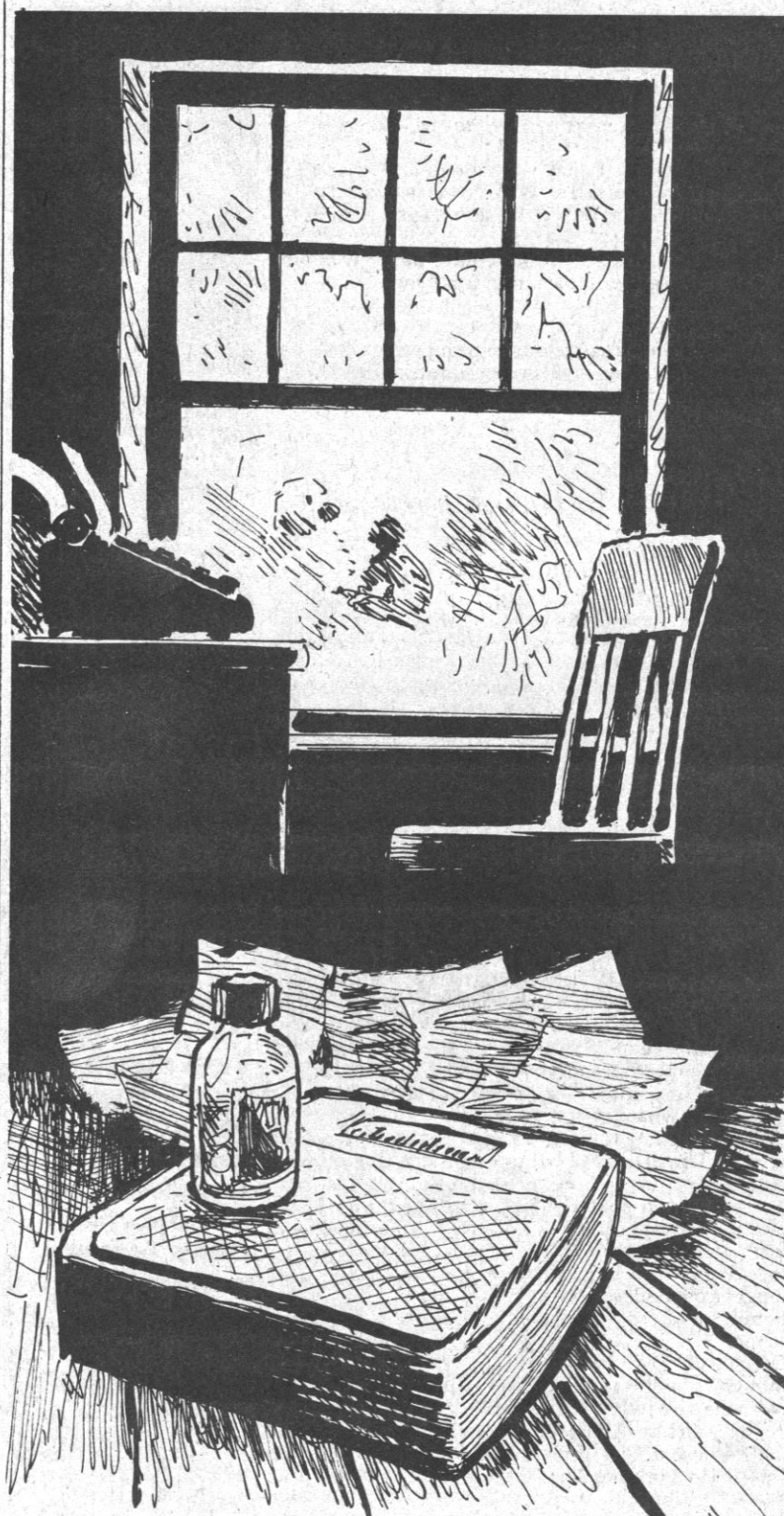
Whistling happily, Henry went upstairs and turned on the taps.



LOUISE HAMILTON is the pen name of Marjorie Smith, and *Fish Bait* is her grimly humorous dissection of marital misery — with a twist of horror thrown in. Smith is the winner of the 1983 and 1984 Writer Magazine short story competitions and is published in numerous British, Australian and American magazines, including Short Story International.

Two sharp blades had the forefinger caught between them forcing her arm rigid in the opening and stopping the flow of water which was turning from pale pink to red





VITAMIN Y

By Wayne Dean-Richards

I Bandellion
Nr Little Heedle
24th April

saw your advertisement in the newspaper last night. I always scan the small ads. You see all kinds of interesting things there. Only last week I saw an ad that read: *Man Seeks Wife*. I wonder if he received any offers? And if he did, if anything came of them? If I thought it would work out, I think I'd put in such an ad myself, ha, ha!

Forgive me, I digress. The subject of this communication is not some other ad, but yours. I'm very interested in your course and would be grateful if you could send me details of fees, enrolment, etc.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully
Mr S Fellows

Bandellion
Nr Little Heedle
27th April

Thank you for your letter of 26th April. Your course seems very interesting – and reasonably priced. I wish to enrol. Find enclosed a cheque.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfull
Mr S Fellows

Bandellion
Nr Little Heedle
2nd May

Thank you for the first instalment of the course, which I received this morning. The weighty plop of the envelope on the hall mat made my heart pound with excitement. I tore it open – it was a most attractively styled package, I must say – and raced through the contents.

Then paused . . .

The disclosures I am being asked to make are very personal. Of what possible significance could such information be?

The fact that I ask this question must make it apparent that I am a reticent man. Since my mother passed away some years ago, I have lived alone. My private income, whilst hardly vast in these days of continually spiralling costs, has delivered me of the need to pursue a career. This, in addition to my physical appearance, has led to me spending a great deal of my life alone. I have no friends to speak of, and seldom see my family. (Mother and father were both only children; consequently I have only 'distant' relatives.)

Then I thought: why shouldn't I disclose personal information? No harm can come of it, I have nothing to hide.

I have decided to do everything I can to help you help me. I am determined to get results. So I shall give you the information you have requested.

I was a fat baby and a fat schoolboy; I am a fat man, which is why I am engaged on your course. I was fat because I was spoiled and spoiled because I was fat. My father died when I was seven. The money from his business – plus a substantial insurance payment, in addition to money bequeathed to my mother by her parents, all of which eventually became my inheritance – allowed my mother and I to live in virtual seclusion. (Even now Bandellion is linked to Little Heedle only by a winding gravel track.) Under these circumstances, after father's death, I became the focus of my mother's life. Like an exotic pet she fed me, arranged my clothes, my hair, everything.

Already fat, it was not surprising that I grew rapidly fatter, my eyes lost amidst an overabundance of soft white flesh, my limbs becoming thick and

cumbersome.

Despite this, I remained blissfully unaware of my physical appearance. The bubble of my ignorance was burst unceremoniously on my first day at school. 'Fatty,' the other children called me, a chant that rose in volume as they encircled me. They all seemed so thin, arms and legs little thicker than my pudgy fingers. 'Fatty, fatty, fatty,' they shouted, laughing. My eyes brimmed with tears, hot and salty. Determined not to cry, I blinked them back. Then someone prodded me. Hard. And the tears gave way to a burning anger that coloured my cheeks.

The circle of children widened, quiet and expectant now. A fair-haired boy with a runny nose stepped forward. 'Fatso,' he said and stabbed me in the belly with his index finger.

Something inside me snapped and my anger burst free. Grunting something inaudible, I gave chase.

I chased the fair-haired boy all around the red-brick, Victorian yard whilst, delighted by the spectacle of my lumbering form, the other children stood laughing.

In no time at all I grew breathless and had to stop running. My lungs hurt, my mouth tasted bloody, sharp pains lanced through my sides. Placing my hands on my hips I sucked in air, so cold it burned my throat.

Barely winded, the fair-haired boy approached me. 'You're too fat to run,' he said. Exhausted by my physical exertion and struck by the truth of his statement, I was unable to reply. Without warning, he punched me and my nose spat blood. 'Fatty,' he said, by way of justification, and strolled over to join the other children. I stared at my blood glistening darkly on the ground.

When I told mother, she was outraged. I remember her polishing her spectacles, her mouth pinched into an angry line, as she assured me that she would find a better school.

It did not take long for me to discover that a change of school is significant only architecturally; that if the treatment by my contemporaries were to be altered it was I who needed to change. Simply, I needed to eat less and exercise more. But by this time my father was dead and mother's grief had metamorphosed into an obsession with my welfare. When I suggested that I might skip a meal or two, her eyes grew wide. Her lips trembled with emotion as she explained that if I were to miss a meal I would certainly die. Still vivid is the image her words evoked in my mind, of my father - the summation of my understanding of death - lying in his coffin, his flesh withered. 'You must eat,' mother told me. So I ate and grew fatter - a condition mother referred to as 'well built.'

By the age of fourteen it was obvious to everyone but my mother that I was a lot more than well built. 'It's puppy fat,' she told me, 'you'll grow out of it.' And I might have, had I been allowed to expend physical energy through means other than eating. At one point I was even offered a place on the school rugby team. 'Nobody will be able to get past you, Fellows,' the captain of the team told me, neither complimentary nor insulting. The idea of being a representative of the school and useful addition to a sporting group excited me enormously. But mother was horrified. 'You'll hurt yourself,' she shrieked. I assured her I wouldn't, but she only shook her head in disbelief and began to cry, her tears darkening the antimacassars draped over the arms of her favourite chair. 'All right,' I deferred, 'I won't play.' Mother smiled, her tears gone so suddenly they might never have existed, and rewarded me with a fresh cream cake.

This was the pattern of my life until mother died. Since her death I have tried literally hundreds of diet and exercise programmes. Obviously, none of them has proved successful. Ironically, I usually finish the programmes fatter and in poorer physical condition

than when I started them, and curse myself for being weak-willed. My body has, effectively, been 'trained' to be fat and inactive, which is why I have so far failed to achieve my goal of being lean and fit. To say I am undaunted would be to lie. Yet I have not abandoned hope. This new course will be *the* one, I keep telling myself.

As instructed, I have weighed and measured myself. The results are as follows: weight 215lbs; height 5' 8"; chest 46"; waist 48"; age 34. (Though I look older.)

I sincerely hope the information I have given will help. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours

Stanley Fellow

P.S. I thought I'd better start signing myself Stanley: Now that you know so much about me there's no point being formal is there?

Bandellion
Nr Little Heedle
5th June

I have completed the first month of the course. I am sitting looking out at a gorgeous, sunny morning. I feel wonderful.

Every morning, exactly as prescribed, I take a Vitamin Y capsule. I hadn't previously heard of this vitamin, but it certainly seems to be working.

I exercise for an hour each morning and then again at night.

Already I've lost twelve pounds.

I look forward to receiving my next three months' course of Vitamin Y and the Advanced Training Programme.

Yours

Stanley

Bandellion
Nr Little Heedle
5th September

The last three months have literally fled by. And, well, I'll give you my current statistics because they speak for themselves: weight 167lbs; chest 40"; waist 35". I'm thrilled by these results and by my current level of fitness. For the first time in my life I know what it's like to be fit. I exercise for six hours every day and experience only minimal fatigue. This, I feel, is due to the fact that - as you specified - I have greatly increased my intake of supplements, particularly 'you know what.'

Before writing this letter I tried on some of my old clothes. It was hard to believe that they'd once been tight.

I've decided that I'm going to walk into Little Heedle to post this letter. For years I've relied upon Mrs Hulme - my cleaner - to go into the village for me. But I'm no longer ashamed of being seen, no longer ashamed of the way I look. In fact I'm actually hoping to bump into someone with whom I went to school. The fair-haired boy I told you about perhaps. Of course, he'll be overweight and terribly unfit, though I won't remark on that. The expression on his face when he recognises me will be revenge enough.

That's all I have time for now, as I am about to begin the second of my three training sessions. I look forward to receiving the next six months of the course.

Yours

Stanley

Bandellion
Nr Little Heedle
6th January

My six months isn't up yet, I know, but I had to write. You see, something strange is happening.

My mother looked young, people were always saying so; until the last year of her life when the cancer made her face sharp as a whippet's and deepened the lines around her eyes and mouth. I expected my



WAYNE DEAN-RICHARDS is a 27-year-old writer from Tividale, Birmingham. He has three short stories, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, *The Yearning* and *If the Eye Offends Thee*, in the process of being published in the States but *Vitamin Y* marks this new author's first contribution to FEAR. He hopes it will 'provoke a shiver or a nervous giggle' - and we think you will certainly agree that it does.

"My lungs hurt, my mouth tasted bloody, sharp pains lanced through my sides"

Bandellion
Nr Little Heedle
21st January

weight loss to affect my own features similarly but, looking in the mirror on my thirty-fifth birthday on December 12, I noted that the opposite appeared to be true for the lines around my eyes and mouth seemed fainter.

Attributing this impression to the birthday wine I'd drunk, I put it out of my mind.

Over the Christmas period I allowed myself a measure of over-indulgence, eating chocolate puddings and watching old films on television, expecting to put on weight as a result, and my face to bear the mark of too many late nights.

But this was not the case. Over Christmas I continued to lose weight as steadily as if I were still training and, studying the mirror closely, saw that the lines on my face, faint before, had grown even less noticeable. In my belly something stirred... Something cold. Something that gave to my tongue the taste of fear.

Swallowing this fear, I now sit down calmly and rationally to write to you. What shall I do?

Yours
Stanley

Bandellion
Nr Little Heedle
13th January

It's because of the Christmas holiday isn't it? A day after Mrs Hulme took my last letter I realised that you were probably on your Christmas vacation, that's why I haven't heard from you.

By now, I calculate, you will have returned and I am writing to impress on you how important it is that you contact me immediately. The lines on my face have continued to fade! And the few grey hairs I had seem to have gone!

I anticipate hearing from you any day now.
Yours expectantly
Stanley

Bandellion
Nr Little Heedle
16th January

It's snowing hard. The gardens are white-carpeted. Like a mocking finger the frozen sun-dial points at the house. I am sitting inside and, although the heating is full on, I am cold. Colder than I have ever been in my life before. Colder because my fatty insulation has gone. I'm down to 120lbs - and still losing weight. Whatever it is that is happening to me is gaining momentum. My face is completely line free. My chest is smooth and narrow. My pubic hair is thinning.

I have stopped training. I am taking no supplements. I am eating like mad. Or rather I'm trying to eat like mad. Trying because my penchant for gluttony seems to have vanished. Cream cakes, once both the love and bane of my life, now sicken me.

My anxiety is growing. I don't know what to do. Why haven't you been in touch? I need your help. Please write immediately.

Yours urgently
Stanley

Bandellion
Nr Little Heedle
19th January

The weather is appalling. Snow is still falling, an icy north wind is blowing hard. The sun-dial is little more than a rounded mound of white.

I am due to see the doctor this evening. I intend asking him to have Vitamin Y analysed for I am convinced that it is not, as you told me, 'a little known vitamin', rather it is a powerful drug... with side effects, which is why you have refused to get in touch with me.

Yours
Stanley

I expect my last letter made you laugh. For you would have anticipated the doctor's response; of that I have no doubt.

On examining me, Dr Slominski looked shocked. Over-anxious, I garbled an explanation and gave him some of the Vitamin Y capsules, telling him to have them analysed immediately. He patted me on the shoulder, as mother used to do. 'It will take a little time,' he said, slipping the Vitamin Y capsules into his pocket, 'The tests on you are our first priority.' Knowing that trying logically to explain the illogical was pointless, I was silent and listened as Dr Slominski told me that he believed I was suffering from an extreme and unusual form of anorexia. I felt like screaming: *I'm not just losing weight, I'm getting younger.* Instead I nodded, as the doctor arranged to visit me at home as soon as the results of the tests came through, then left his office hurriedly.

You anticipated this didn't you? But I don't think you will have predicted my next move. I'm coming to see you. That's right. Till the day after tomorrow.

Yours
Stanley

Bandellion
Nr Little Heedle
23rd January

I expected an office, not a grubby little shop laden with dust, its windows plastered with posters for right-wing rallies. I saw the pile of letters just inside the door. They were covered with dust too. Who are you? Where are you?

I spoke to the man with the liver-spotted hands whose shop is next to yours, asking him who and where you were. 'What do you want him for, son?' he asked, making my insides tremble. I made up a reason and he told me the mail is collected once a month, by whom he doesn't know. He has never seen you, he told me.

I am writing this letter in the hope that a mail collection is due. Please disregard what I wrote before. I didn't mean it. I'm sorry I went to see the doctor. I know he can't help me. It's your help I need. Please, please, please get in touch.
Stanley

29th January

I'm immobilised by the weather. Snowing again. Hard. I'm cold. Can't get warm.

I have continued to lose weight. I now weigh under 100lbs. None of my clothes fit me and I'm getting younger every day. Voice high-pitched, body hair all gone.

I've locked all the doors, though I wasn't able to reach the upper bolts. I turned off all the lights and left notes for Mrs Hulme and Dr Slominski. Watched them come and go away. I couldn't have let them see me.

Now I'm alone again. Sitting watching the snow fall against the windows. Shivering because I'm cold and afraid.

The process is gaining momentum. It's beginning to affect my mind. Please help me.
Stanley

28th

Snow deep. I'm cold. Can't think propaly any more. Please.
Stanley

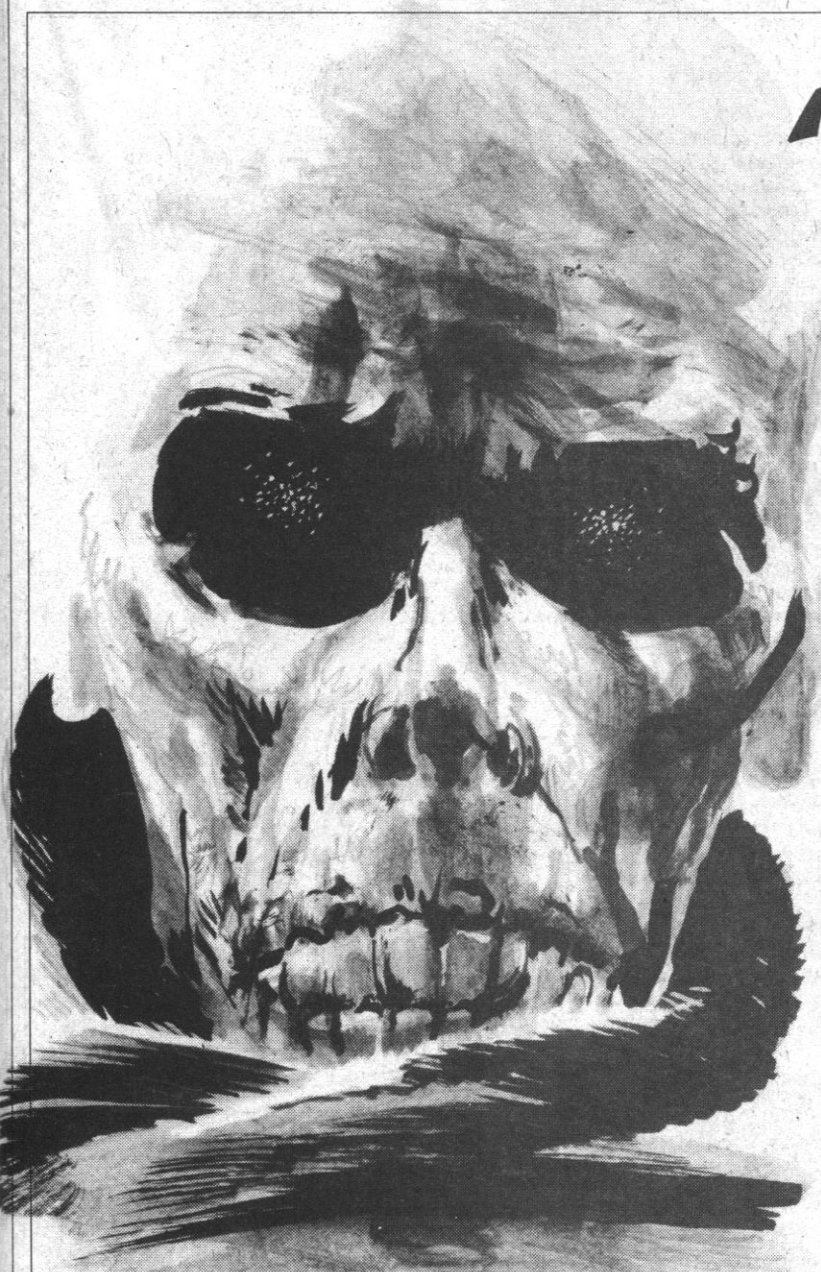
30th

Help Stanlee. Please help Stanlee.

2nd

Bilt a snow man today. carrott noze. im hungree. nuthink to ete. hungree. want mommee. WANT MOMMEE. WANT MOMMEE. STANLEE WANT MOMMEE...

"I am sitting inside and, although the heating is full on, I am cold. Colder than I have ever been in my life before"



DEATH CAME CLAD IN BLACK

By Mathew Cage

I defend myself to those who now accuse me.' Death stood in the middle of the courtroom. An imposing figure dressed in black. Around him an angry crowd of spectators hissed and booed. Unashamed, he held his head up high. What he had done he had done for love — for the betterment of Mankind.

'Again' he said, 'I defend myself to all who now accuse me.'

'I accuse you!'

Death turned, curious to see what had spoken. From the edge of the crowd Grimalkin stepped forward. He moved into the centre of the room. Death sighed. He had not expected this.

A hush spread throughout the courtroom. All manner of demons were present, but none had anticipated the arrival of Grimalkin; second in command to Lucifer himself. He had come in the guise of a man-boy. A beautiful naked boy with golden skin and innocent eyes. It was a form which contradicted everything that was hidden beneath it.

'You had no right to do what you did.' Grimalkin stated. 'You have committed an act of the highest treason. An act that no punishment will ever befit.' He turned to face the crowd. As one they moved back, afraid Grimalkin would be angered by their presence here. It was a strict rule of Hell that only the judges and jurors attend the trials of those who were not Lucifer's servants. But this crime was so horrendous, so extraordinary, even by their standards, that nearly three thousand demons had turned up to witness events. And they were not all of the lower classes. A great many major devils had also arrived, though they were trying to conceal themselves amongst the subordinates.

Of course, Grimalkin knew they were there. But he wasn't the least interested in them. It was Death who interested him. Death, who had never served Heaven or Hell, yet had served the purpose of both for as long as time itself. In a way it was lucky the Underworld had found him first. If the angels had captured him, his fate would surely have been worse than whatever they would do to him.

Three times the Archangel Gabriel had dared to come to their gateway, only to be refused access. That Gabriel had been sent at all was a sign of how badly Death was wanted in the Upper Realms.

A punishment would have to be decided. If Death was not given sentence a war would certainly follow. And it had been too many years since Heaven and Hell were at war with one another. It was something Lucifer would not allow.

Grimalkin turned to Death. 'Before I pass sentence, I must hear your plea — and your reason for committing this most unforgivable crime.'

Slowly Death drew back the hood of his cloak. If they were to condemn him, they would do so to his face. Grimalkin was fast. Even before Death had pulled the hood beyond the top of his skull, Grimalkin turned away. Others in the crowd were not so lucky. Death's searing eyes touched theirs, the brilliant black of his pupils burning deep into them. At least forty of the demons at the front were killed instantly. Others, who were older and stronger, survived; their insides shrivelled up, bone turned to jelly, but they did not die.

The main throng were smart and, like Grimalkin, had turned away the moment Death reached for his hood. No one moved to help the injured or the dead. They remained motionless, staring away. Grimalkin could feel the pain of his

dying minions. He quickly stifled a sob.

'Replace your hood!' he bellowed.

Death did not answer. He merely stared at the back of Grimalkin's blond head.

'I will not stand trial unless I am accused to my face.'

Grimalkin gritted his teeth. He pointed at a lower demon at the front of the crowd, touching it without moving. 'Step forward' he ordered.

The demon moved from the crowd, its eyes watching only the floor. It was a small thing, four feet tall with the torso of a fly and the legs of a goat. It had four spindly arms, two of which were wrapped around its trembling body.

'Yes, master,' it whispered. Grimalkin placed his hand on its shoulder.

'Death must be accused by a member of our order. He will give his plea and then you must accuse him. When you have spoken the accusation aloud you must look upon his face. Do you understand?'

The creature snivelled. 'Must I be so close?'

Grimalkin growled and the insect-animal cringed.

'I have given an order, lower one.'

Sighing, the demon shuffled around Grimalkin until it could see the soft ebb of Death's cloak.

'Give your plea,' said Grimalkin.

'I plead not guilty — by reason of insanity,' answered Death. The little fly creature shifted from one foot to the other, clearly agitated.

'I accuse you,' it said and slowly raised its head. Its eyes met Death's and it gasped. Standing so close, the pupils were beautiful; strange and wonderful lights burned within them, like fireflies beckoning it in. The demon was stupified; it had expected pain, an agonising instant death. Instead it was pulled inside a power so beautiful, a light so bright and all expansive, that it wished it could stop and tell the others: this is no killer, no murderer of man. This is salvation.

Death smiled at it, a smiling skull that was a parody of life. His voice echoed inside the demon's head, unheard by any other.

'This is what happens when I call. This is the way the mortals receive me.' Then the demon died, lost in a haze of shapeless, glistening shadows, all beheld in the eyes of Death.

Grimalkin heard the body fall. 'Replace your hood now,' he said. Death obeyed, pulling his cloak around his head, looking out through the half-envisioned blackness with which he had always viewed the world.

'You may turn around. It is safe now, I am hidden.'

Hesitating, Grimalkin slowly turned; for the first time in his long life he felt afraid. He sighed with relief. 'You have been accused,' he said. 'We will listen to your reasons.'

Death walked away from

Grimalkin. He seemed to glide, the cloak floating below his ankles, rising and falling like a summer wave. The chair for criminals was made out of human skulls and Death sat on it, voicing his distaste.

'Begin,' demanded Grimalkin.

Death looked out at the eager-eyed demons who watched with expectant faces and dilated eyes. He sighed. To think that it had all come to this; tens of thousands of years, serving only himself, yielding neither to Heaven nor to Hell so that he alone could help the race of Man. After all his years of tender sympathy for mortals,

to be hunted by the Higher and Lower Realms for his most compassionate act ever.

'What I did, I did with love. My only defence is that I was temporarily insane. I have watched for millenia the struggles of the planet Earth. I have observed the life upon it and the lives within it, yet I have never chosen to serve any particular kind. My weakness has always been for Man.'

His voice trembled and he reached inside his hood. The crowd gasped, making him smile. 'I will not reveal myself,' he assured them. 'I wished merely to dry my eyes.'

Grimalkin let out a long breath of air. 'Continue,' he said.

'I have always loved Man above all else. When he was sick, I was there to heal him. When he was dying, I was there to comfort him. And when he was in anguish, when in despair he took his own life, I was there to hold his hand and let him know it was not all in vain. For these weaknesses I condemn myself. But Man is such a beautiful species — so full of promise. Unlike you, or even those who live in the Realm above, he can find solace in the simplest of things. To him the whispering of a sea-breeze is like a haunting melody. He is thrown into ecstasy by the way shadows float across the moon. For him a candle burning in a darkened room is often sublime. Man

'I plead not guilty — by reason of insanity.'



'Then your punishment will befit your crime. As you profess to love them so much, I will send you into the limbo you have created. You must go into the Dark Chamber and look inside the Grey Mirror. Your punishment is to join the race to whom you think you have given eternal peace.'

Death grinned triumphantly. This was no punishment — it was a privilege to join those he had sent inside himself. To be with them forever, in peace, and witness for all time the beauty of man as no other creature could.

'I gladly accept your punishment.'

'Very well. Go forward. Draw back the curtain and attend your fate.'

Grimalkin dispersed the crowd and slowly followed Death. He did not enter the Dark Chamber. He would wait until he heard the body fall. He wondered how Death could be so stupid, so blinded by his own beliefs of right and wrong that he could not perceive the harm he had done. Did not understand the meaning of his own purpose in life — that he was there merely for the few. The ones who had no right of entry into the higher or lower realms. Death was limbo. Heaven was the only true paradise. Hell was for the eternally lost.

The agreement had been made millenia ago; and because of it the wars had stopped. He wondered, now, how Lucifer and God would keep from each others' throats, now that man was no more. Now that Earth was no more.

A great mushroom cloud, beautiful and all-consuming, veiled the atmosphere where the planet Earth should have been. Although man had made the weapon it had never been a part of his destiny to use it. Either one of Heaven or Hell would have made sure of that. But they had not counted on the misguided ego of Death.

A heavy thud pulled Grimalkin from his thoughts. He drew back the curtain at the entrance to the Dark Chamber.

Death's cloak lay crumpled beneath the Grey Mirror. The skull and bones of the body were gone, dissolved into dust. Death had gone inside himself.

Grimalkin picked up the cloak. Gabriel could have it back; take it back to his master. As for him, he had his own master to confront. He hoped Lucifer was in a good mood and that he had passed sentence wisely. He folded the cloak in his hands and moved down to the lower chambers.

here were no walls or boundaries, no light or dark. A grey, swirling fog stilled the air, nullifying thought and reason. There were millions in this world, all with the same look in their faces. The same blank, empty smiles. The same dead eyes. Peace — yes. Even happiness, though it was not understood. They were like shadows now, these humans he had loved so much. They could not think. They did not listen any more for the voice of the wind, or look for the soft halo around a midnight star. And, because they did not see or listen, these beauties no longer existed.

The world was shapeless and grey. Many times in his thousands of years Death had yearned to be a part of mankind, to truly touch their beautiful souls — souls that were now his. And for the first time he understood the meaning of the word regret.

He put his head in his hands and wept. They were shadows now, these people, only shadows. And — he should have known — shadows do not feel.

MATHEW CAGE is no newcomer to **FEAR**. His *The Last Flight* appeared in issue six, and he continues his preoccupation with Death in this current offering.

'Then your punishment will befit your crime...'

has an empathy with nature that we will never have. No other species understands these things — not devils, nor angels.

Devils hate such things, will not look for or acknowledge life as anything more than a curse they must live through. Angels accept life, but they see it only as a part of growth before moving on to other things. For them it is something to learn from, but they do not understand what it is to learn. Only man has that capacity. And so I admonish myself. I have foolishly loved these weak creatures. But, of late, man has grown more and more like you.'

Although Grimalkin could not see the face of Death, he felt his eyes burning him with contempt. He looked away. Death was boring him with this useless talk of love. But even Death had a right to defend himself.

'Go on.'

'I have lived among them for too long — seen too much of their beauty and their pain. I could not bear it. I could not watch them mutilate one another any longer. If you would only look into my eyes, Grimalkin, you would see the joys I can offer. I can take away pain. You could join me, live inside my heart, and then you would understand why I did what I had to do.'

Grimalkin scoffed. 'That is not the way of the world, Death. There is no salvation in your heart. Perhaps there is joy, of a sort. But it is a shapeless, undefinable joy. Do you not understand? What you take, you take forever. There is no true salvation for those you look upon, no way of ever relieving the souls you have seduced.'

'At least they are at peace.'

Grimalkin sighed. Perhaps Death truly had gone insane. Before this, he had always known to take only a select few, the ones that had no right to better or worse fates. Mankind's future belonged to Lucifer and to God. Death had committed the unforgivable crime; he had intervened in the laws of nature.

'Speak out your crime,' Grimalkin said. Beyond the blackness of his hood, Death smiled, his voice full of emotion.

'I have saved them.'



Biceps bulged, the huge arms strangleholding the victim's pulsing neck. Hooker opened his popcorned mouth anticipating the outcome. The eyes of the victim strained from their sockets, telegraphing fear of death as pressure was applied upon the neck, pushing it back, back, back, back... When the neck snapped it made Hooker shudder, reminding him of the time the man had broken a boy's back. He had watched the video a hundred times, freezing it at the moment of victory, the moment of death. Absorbing the look of hatred on the face of the World Achilles Champion, Mike Pupunha, Hooker saw the Prince of Darkness, his bloodied smile betraying flesh-ripping teeth. Hooker switched off the video. Time to sleep. Tomorrow he would see his hero. Tomorrow he would join the line.

The line zigzagged its way along the sidewalk toward the stadium, stretching for over a mile. Hooker had run all the way from the subway. Panting, he joined its end, his sweat-stained tee shirt proclaiming: 'Pupunha Spits Them Out!'

'Man, we ain't gonna get in,' said a salami-smelling teenager.

'I'm getting in,' said Hooker.

'Yeah? Well, this here line is over a mile long and some of these assholes have been here all night.'

THE LINE

By Brian Mills

'I'm getting in,' repeated Hooker, moving out of line.

Setting a fast pace, Hooker began walking along it, shoulders hunched, hands tucked into Levis, jaw jutting out, a lick of hair bobbing above blond eyebrows. A whiff of hot pretzels teased his nostrils, his stomach rumbled. No time to stop. Had to get in. He passed people sleeping, reading paperbacks, eating mustard dripping hotdogs, guzzling coke. Snippets of conversation buzzed his ears.

'...Thought Nash had a chance in the quarters, but the Animal was too strong.'

'Jeez, did you see the way he ripped his throat? Thought he was gonna eat him.'

'Yeah, Animal sure likes the taste of blood.'

'You want some of this pecan pie?'

'If we don't get in, I'm gonna bust someone's head.'

Halfway along the line, Hooker saw what he was looking for. The scalper was fat, his belly flopping over his pants. He had a wad of tickets in his hand. He peered at Hooker beneath a crimson baseball cap.

'Wanna ticket?'

'How much?'

'Two grand.'

'Screw you!'

'You wanna ticket or don't ya?'

'I ain't got that much bread.' The scalper began to turn away. Hooker thought about smashing the scalper's face. Thought about it, but knew such action would result in him winding up dead.

'Twelve.'

'You ain't got twelve.'

'So, I'll get it.'

'Fifteen hundred and it's yours.'

Hooker continued walking the line, wondering where he was going to get the money. Then he saw Clarence Leek standing in line, about a hundred down from the front, and Hooker knew his worries were over.

'Hey, I thought you'd be at the front.'

'Hi, Hookie,' said a freckled face that looked as if it had been drawn for the funnies. 'I've been in line since two. This ain't a bad position, Hookie.'

'Guess it'll have to do,' said Hooker, taking his place in line with Clarence.

What the hell you doing? Get back to the end!' Hooker turned to look at the offended party. He was tall, burly. All beef and no brain, he thought. Other voices joined the protest.

'Look, my buddy here ain't seeing the final, just saved a place for me. Ain't that right, Clarence?'

'What?'

'These guys have been standing here all night, so you'd better move out before they get real mad.'

'He said he wanted to see the final,' said a beanpole Swede.

'Yeah, that's what I told 'em, Hookie.'

'So he does. And so he shall. And he gets a better seat than any of us: in front of a TV, an icebox full of beer, corn crackers, apple pie, and a sexy little number named Dolores Deharty. She's at my place, Clarence, waiting for you to show.'

'Me and Dolores?'

'She's crazy! She's got the hots for you! So get your ass moving!'

'Me and Dolores,' mumbled Clarence, moving out of line. Hooker watched him as he suddenly broke into a run. Clarence believed anything he told him. Why Dolores couldn't stand the little wimp, thought Hooker, but she would play him

along, knowing Hooker had sent him, and once she had suffered enough of him, she would kick his ass out of there. The line moved forward. Stopped.

'Says here that they're running out of opponents for the Animal,' said Beanpole, reading The New York Post.

'Let's see that,' said Hooker, snatching the paper away from him. He scanned the newspaper article. 'They're bullshitting. The Polack will come through. And the Kraut.'

'You think the Polack will beat the Animal?'

'No one will beat the Animal. The Polack's Achilles is his left eye, can't see too well. Pupunha will suck it out like boiled candy.'

'Suck out the eye,' repeated Beanpole.

'look at this list of his recent victims: Lima, crushed windpipe; Morgan, severed arm; Obutee, fatal abdominal injuries...'

'Don't remember that fight,' said Beanpole.

'Pupunha chewed the guy's balls off. Blood gushed like oil. Yeah, I can still hear him screaming.' Hooker closed his eyes, a smile enlivened his face. 'Beautiful.'

'What a way to die,' said Beanpole.

'It was that or the Big Needle. The way it was, he gave a good show. Anyway, he was up for doing in his old lady and kid, so who cares a shit?'

'What did they hang on the Animal? He's been fighting so long, I've forgotten.'

'He blew a couple of families away with a Kalashnikov. Now as World Achilles Champion, he's killed more people than he murdered, 'cept now it's legit. Crazy, ain't it?'

'If I had to face the Needle or the Animal, I'd choose the Needle.'

'That's what I like about it.'

'What?'

'You don't get a choice.'

A dot matrix sign rolled the scheduled programme. Pupunha had three matches: against The Headache, a Puerto Rican rapist; against The Eye, a Polish poisoner and...an unnamed contender. Loud speakers crackled into life. 'Gates are closing. Gates are closing. There are no more tickets. All tickets sold. All tickets sold.'

Gates are closing! What had been a mumble of voices became a roar. What had been patience became intolerance. The line was broken. They stormed the gates, but the gates were solid steel and pummelled fists became bloodied bones. And when they realised that they were not going to get in...they turned on each other.

Hooker had his back to the wall when the punches came. He parried a few but some found their mark. He grabbed the wrist of the one whose fist had hit him in the belly, pulling him so that his face was inches from his own. Then Hooker sunk his teeth into his nose with all the strength his jaws could muster, pulling, tugging, while the man screamed and tried to break the hold. But Hooker wouldn't let go. Then came the ripping sound of flesh, the crunching of bone, and as the face fell away from his jaws, he saw the shocked expression in the eyes that now looked out from above a blood spurting cavity. The man was yelling, crying, as Hooker spat out bone and tissue. A fist missed his head, smashing with a shattering thud into the brick wall. The thrower was a long-haired youth who had now fallen to the ground. Hooker stamped on the broken hand, grinding it under his foot, savouring the agonised scream. A knife lunged at him. Missed. He grabbed the hand, twisting it back toward the assailant's neck. As

Hooker thought about smashing the scalper's face. Thought about it, but knew such actions would result in him winding up dead



Hooker stamped on the broken hand, savouring the agonised scream, aware they were shouting for the 'kill'

they struggled, Hooker was aware that everyone was watching him, they were shouting for the 'kill'. All that cheering made him feel good. He pressed the knife into the man's neck, into the jugular. Blood sprayed his face. Exalted, tasting blood, he laughed at the roaring crowd. Then he saw the police. Their guns pointing at him. And the gates opened. And they motioned Hooker to go through the gates. And the crowd moaned and catcalled. For them the show was over. For Hooker it was about to begin.

'Look, all I wanted to see was Pupunha,' explained Hooker to one of the gum-chewing cops escorting him down some stairs.

'You'll see him,' said the cop, taking him through swing doors and along a corridor. 'But first you've gotta clean up.'

'Yeah, that would be nice,' said Hooker. He felt sweaty, blood-sticky, his mouth was sore. 'Those guys were trying to kill me. I was defending myself for chrissakes.'

'In here,' said the cop, shoving him into a bathroom. 'When you've finished, press the red button.' The cop left, leaving Hooker gazing at yellow tiles. Stripping off his clothes, he took a shower, the warm water tingling his body. Felt good. Pushed his head under the spray. Yeah, real good, he thought. He spat blood, watching the red phlegm slide down the plughole. Why didn't they handcuff him? What did they mean, he would see the Champ? He dried himself with a towel embla-

zoned with the word 'Achilles'. He stepped into a hot air cubicle. Could taste blood. Had swallowed a lot. Probably would get Aids. Twenty years ago it would have killed him. Now, no sweat, he thought, this was the twenty-first century, they had found a cure. He suddenly realised his clothes had gone, disappeared. He pressed the button.

The button activated a row of TV monitors in a control room, illuminating the faces of Lindy Lopez, tournament referee; Jim Degras, research and program co-ordinator; Gus Hamfatter, promoter of Achilles and the most powerful man in the game. There were three rows of TV monitors. The first row showed the line, the second showed the fight, and the third showed Hooker. He was standing in a mirrored room, examining himself for cuts. He spat blood. Opened his mouth. Stuck out his tongue. Bleeding. Degras pushed a switch, closing the door behind Hooker and opening another in front of him. Hooker entered.

'What's he staring at?' asked Lopez, adjusting her microphone.

'The fight,' said a squeaky voice belonging to Degras. 'He's watching the fight,' he repeated, wiping his sweaty face. 'We've got a wall-screen TV in there.' They looked at the monitor showing the fight. Pupunha was piledriving a man's mushy head into the ground.

'He likes that,' said Hamfatter, chewing his cigar.

'He ain't seen nothing yet, has he, Mr



Hamfatter?’

‘Jim, my boy, that was only the first course,’ said Hamfatter, laughing so much that a button flew off his jacket. Men with body bags were picking up the remains of Pupunha’s victim.

‘Mike Pupunha wins in one minute fifty three,’ announced Lopez, the only woman referee in the game. Her delicate delivery contrasted with the visual image of violence. The incongruity was intended and depicted in the posters displayed around the stadium: a rose growing out of an empty eye socket.

‘Let’s have the data on this asshole,’ said Hamfatter. Degras keyed in the instructions and biographical details appeared on a monitor over a frozen image of Hooker.

Name:	James Luther Hooker.
Born:	Hoboken, New Jersey, April 13, 1988.
Height:	5ft. 10ins.
Weight:	160 lbs.
Hair:	Blond.
Eyes:	Blue.
Marital	Status: Single.
Occupation:	Trucker.
Criminal Charge:	Murder.
Achilles:	Lacerated Tongue.

‘Looks like we’ve got a hotdog with everything,’ said Hamfatter.

‘Ladies and gentlemen, the next contender for

the World Achilles Championship is Jerzy Cybulsky — The Eye.’ Lopez switched off the mike and relaxed. ‘This I’ve got to see,’ she said.

‘So have they,’ said Hamfatter, checking the monitors that showed the line. Turning to Debras, he said, ‘Let ‘em in.’ Debras picked up a phone and ordered the gates to be opened.

Once again the line was moving.

Engrossed with watching the wall-screen, Hooker didn’t hear the steps of the armed guards behind him.

‘Move it!’ said the first guard, who looked like a body builder and sounded like a squirt. Hooker turned to face his tormentors.

‘Move it to where?’

‘In there,’ said the guard, motioning with his gun toward another door that had opened. Hooker surveyed the five guards, their automatic weapons, their emotionless faces, and moved through into a tunnel. Ahead of him, he could see blue sky. Could hear voices. Cheering. Yelling. Screaming. A monitor hung from the ceiling. Close-up of someone being carried out. Hooker barely recognised the Polack; the left side of his face had been peeled back like a banana skin. Gun barrels prodded him, pushing him forward to meet his hero.

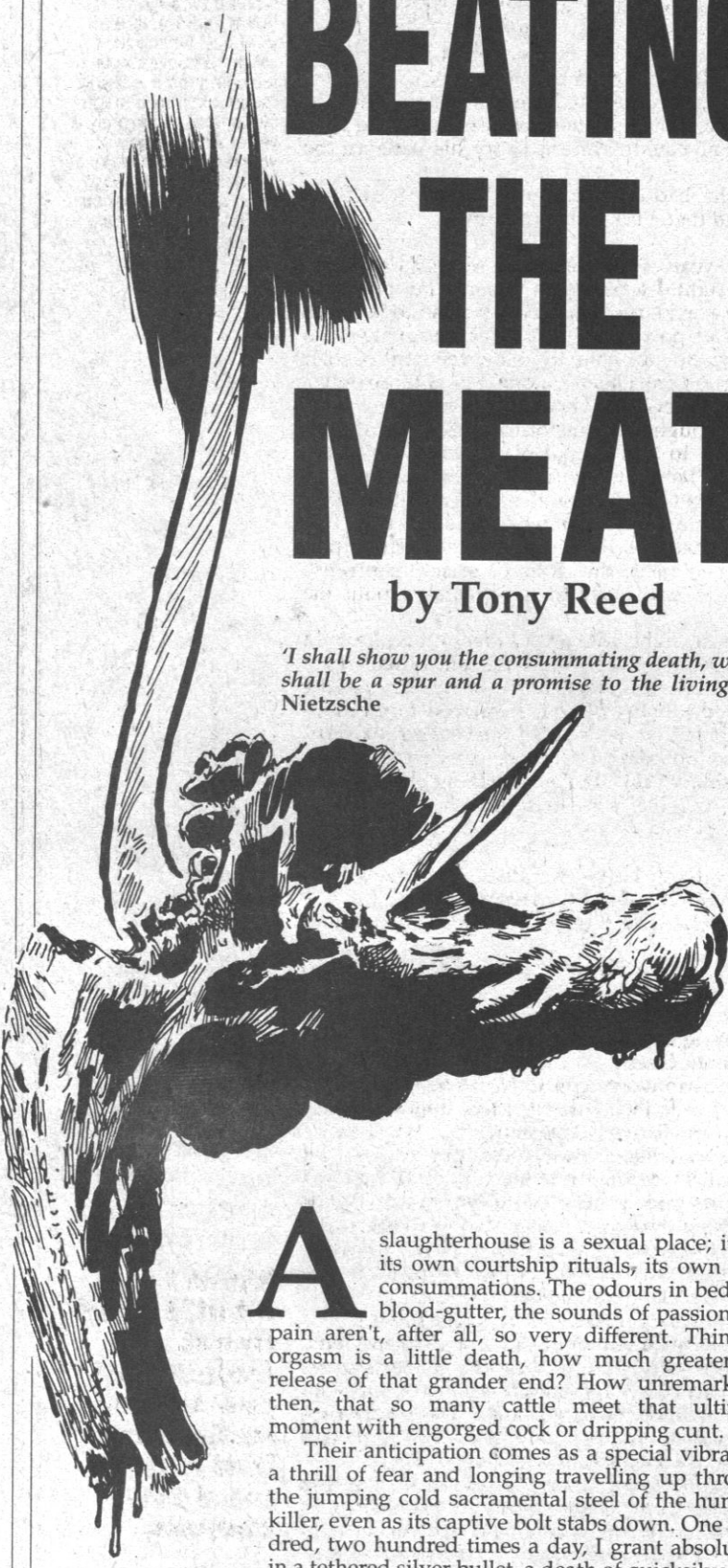
The three rows of monitors showed the same gory close-up of Pupunha: the green static hair, the wild red eyes, the big bionic mouth chewing a blood-soaked tongue.

Stripping off his clothes, he took a shower, the warm water tingling his body. He spat blood, watching the red phlegm slide down the plughole

BEATING THE MEAT

by Tony Reed

'I shall show you the consummating death, which shall be a spur and a promise to the living.' — Nietzsche



A slaughterhouse is a sexual place; it has its own courtship rituals, its own dark consummations. The odours in bed and blood-gutter, the sounds of passion and pain aren't, after all, so very different. Think: If orgasm is a little death, how much greater the release of that grander end? How unremarkable then, that so many cattle meet that ultimate moment with engorged cock or dripping cunt.

Their anticipation comes as a special vibration, a thrill of fear and longing travelling up through the jumping cold sacramental steel of the humane killer, even as its captive bolt stabs down. One hundred, two hundred times a day, I grant absolution in a tethered silver bullet, a death of quicksilver fire in my hand, punching a message of eternity into the skulls of shivering beasts.

Their eyes roll in their orbits, in supplication or distress; their legs buckle and they kneel, lowing or

squealing in voices made suddenly human. They die. Hear that sound once, and you will never forget it, a crying which imprints itself on the deepest recesses of your heart. A cry of outrage and acceptance. The sound of your death in violence. And I am the one who grants it. The slaughterman.

Born to the work: inherited from my father, anticipated from my youth. Brought up with the flat copper scent of gore in my nostrils, the taste of juice-oozing flesh stuffing my mouth. Childhood was an education in the thousand secret cuts of bleeding, gutting, and filleting. And an education, too, in the keener cuts, which go deeper, and are felt not at all...

Scene from a pre-school day. I wait for Father by the front gate, at the limit of my permitted world, hopping with impatience and the futile desire to see beyond the low (not low enough!) brick wall, down this quiet suburban road to where he must first appear.

From behind curtains, grey and indistinct, comes the policing voice of Mother, irritation without threat, a nuisance only which might drown out the first faint indicators of his return.

'Richard? Richard! Don't you dare open that gate now, do you hear? And stop hopping about so. You'll fall and muss your clothes. Richard, are you listening to me?'

I ignore her. For now, right now I can hear him, whistling randomly as he always does, exchanging greetings with the other stolid, solid inhabitants of our lower middle class neighborhood. It's soon after the War; rationing is still in force. And a man who can always lay his hand to a bit of beef for the right customer is one to be respected. My father.

'Hiya, tyke'

The iron clang of the gate is lost in the happy ring of his voice. In one swooping motion his young, strong right hand has swept me up to the scary heights of his shoulder.

'Let's go and see your mum.'

Laughing, gushing the inconsequential effluvia of a child's day, I duck with practised ease as we pass the lintel of the door. As usual, his free left hand holds a parcel of brown paper and string. It is wet. Seeping blood.

Often, as he reached out to ruffle my blond hair, passing down our house's long hallways, or as I sat and played at his feet before the sitting room fire on late winter afternoons, I would see in his hands cracked rivers and gullies, threads and knots of dried black blood, etching the lines of his palms; fatal lines that no amount of hand-scrubbing could totally efface.

At night, I would dream of licking them clean.

'Paul, I tell you there's something wrong with him. I mean really wrong. I think we're out of our depth here. He needs specialist help.'

'May, for Christ sake, are you trying to tell me that my son — our son — needs a psychiatrist. Just because he's been in a playground scrap?'

'Oh, God, this wasn't just a scrap, Paul. Jonathan's parents are considering legal action. Miss Parks said it took her and two male teachers to get Richard off him. And I saw Jonathan at the hospital, Paul. That boy might lose his ear! This is serious.'

'Well I taught him to stand up for himself, didn't I? And wasn't that other boy bigger? And hasn't he been tormenting Richard for weeks? The way I see it, he pushed his luck once to often, and

Richard pushed back. And as for the fight, well, it's easy to lose control in the heat of the moment, go a bit further than you intended...'

That's ridiculous and you know it. Yes, Jonathan had been teasing him, Miss Parks said so. But she also said he hadn't done anything today. The attack was completely unprovoked. Cold-blooded. And if she hadn't gone back after class, Jonathan would have been alone with him. God knows how far it would have gone...'

'You make it sound like Richard is some kind of monster...'

'Well? Isn't he? What about when he was five, and blinded Snowy?'

'An accident. He was trying to feed her, poking that stick into the hutch. A stupid kids' accident.'

'And the neighbours' dog? And that cat? We almost got taken to court that time, too...'

'Alright, alright. There's no point in carrying on like this. You're obviously upset. I think they were accidents; you don't. Fair enough. What does that prove? That kids are cruel? Hardly news, is it? Perfectly normal for his age. It's a phase they go through. When I was a kid, I used to eat worms, can you believe it? So does that make me a psychopath? Does a fight in the playground make our son a maniac? I've spanked him and sent him to bed, played the heavy father to the hilt, and tomorrow I'll go round and square it with Jonathan's parents. There's no permanent harm done, just a few stitches and one big shock. Maybe he'll pick on somebody his own size next time, eh? We'll talk to the teachers too if you like. It'll be okay, really...Now, c'mere, and let me play the heavy father with you, mmm?'

'You really used to eat worms? That's disgusting...'

'Yeah, and so's this...'

'Owww, Paul, stop it...'

Giggles from behind the living room door. I turn, and make my way back upstairs to my bedroom, thinking about Mummy.

Something will have to be done...

Later. There is unspoken war between us now. She suspects that it was me who loosened the stair rods, me she should blame for her fall, her broken leg. She's right.

I remember how ridiculous she looked, sprawled at the foot of the stairs; a broken doll. In unconsciousness her skin beneath the make up was parchment white, stretched taut, a mask. Her right leg twisted beneath her, its new joint blossoming mid shin between knee and ankle, resplendent in its gory beauty. I remember the colours of it. Red-smearred white for the splintered bone, jutting jagged through the darkening, bruised purple flesh of her calf. Her stocking had torn round the break, caught perhaps on the ragged bone-edge, and had sprung back to form an irregular oval round the wound, framing the gaudy colours there in muted grey — a study in contrast, offset by the pallor of the surrounding, undamaged flesh. Surprisingly little blood. It looked, on the whole, like a poorly-dressed leg of mutton.

I had watched her for as long as I could. Eventually, as she began to display signs of stirring, I let rip my carefully-rehearsed shriek of horror, and rushed into the back garden.

'Mrs Murray, Mrs Murray. Come quick. Mummy's hurt herself!'

It was, the doctor said, a bad break. Mother would never walk without a cane again. Nor, as the

slowly-knitted bones robbed her of half an inch of length, without a black and clumsy cripples boot.

Yet she could say nothing to Father. What would he think of her, believing that her own son, a mere child, had tried to kill her? Besides, in her newly altered condition, Mummy was no longer as marketable a piece of merchandise as she had been before. She couldn't afford to try his patience too far.

So she hadn't died. But Mummy feared me now. And that, I learnt, was better...

It was a year of lessons. After Mother's accident, and the fight, I learned not to show my power so nakedly. Maybe it would even seem strange to call what I had power. After all, there are many who are not willing, or able, to follow the herd of their fellows; who are, like me, alone. But of those only a few, a very few, can choose their loneliness; can, simply through the transformational force of their will, travel to that special place where the cattle-pen divide between the imagining of an act and its execution is abolished, and where, untethered by the suffocating charade of morality, one is truly free to experience the limits of sensation. But, from within their pens, the cattle of society can sense that power, and defer to it...Jonathan taught me this.

After the fight, whenever I met his eye, I would see fear. And daily, I would see him ridiculed for the torn and misshapen lump of his ear. As the weeks and months passed, I watched him diminish, marginalised, persecuted for bearing my terrible gift of mutilation. To take something strong, and make it weak. To take something shapely, and twist it; to make something which moved, still. This was power.

For my tenth birthday, Father gave me a jack-knife. Mother shrieked, predictably.

'You can't give him that thing. He'll cut himself.'

She meant: he'll cut others. Father just grinned through her protests.

'May, the boy's old enough to learn knives now. He'll be alright.'

I kept the blade.

And set to work with it. No ordinary knife, of course. A four inch curving edge, hollow ground daily on my Father's whetstone. The finest Swiss steel, it sliced like a lovers' kiss, like a tongue of cold flame. I tempered it in the guts of the rabbits I trapped in snares of my own design. Not shaped or balanced for throwing, I nevertheless developed a scything throw which could bring down a bird on the wing. In two pieces. Daily, I would oil and work at its locking mechanism, until I could open it with a snap of the hand, slick as a flick knife.

Driven by an impulse I didn't understand then, after every kill I would glide the blade into the spongy pad of my thumb, mixing my blood with that of the kill on the bare wood of the handle, rubbing both deep into the grain, until, with time and use, it assumed a dark brown, silken sheen.

In my fourteenth year, I acquired, for the first time, a popularity of sorts with my classmates. In biology class. When they would ask me to help them with the dissections they found so distasteful. Even the teacher was impressed with my professionalism as I flayed and dismembered the laboratory rats. Father was delighted.

'See,' he said 'It runs in the family. He's a natural for the business, that boy.'

TONY REED has worked for several years as a freelance journalist writing for a range of publications including technical and electronic music magazines, and is currently a writer with the pop weekly, *Melody Maker*. He has previously had short stories published in *Forum* and *Mister* magazines.

When I was a kid, I used to eat worms, can you believe it? So does that make me a psychopath?

Perhaps it was this that persuaded him. In the event, shortly afterwards he arranged for me to go with him to work. To see my first official kill.

I approached the great day with all the ill-concealed excitement of a Catholic approaching confirmation; laying out my scrupulously-clean 'old clothes' a good three days before the event, enduring with better than usual grace Mother's tedious caveats, and on that last, sleepless night, offering up no less than three rabbits to the God Of The Knife.

The morning dawned bright and clear, just as I knew it would have to. I luxuriated in the unusual pattern of it, rising an hour before my usual time (and on a school day, too) to share with my father his habitual breakfast of strong, near-black tea, fried eggs, and of course, bacon.

Everything seemed enhanced that day, colours brighter, sounds sharper, tastes keener. The yellow of the sun striking through the kitchen window, the red check of the table cloth; the man-smell of my Father, shaved, scrubbed pink, and enjoying his first smoke of the day. The dark, strong, scent of his hand-rolling tobacco seemed to blend with the skin-stripping tannin of the tea at the back of my throat, the salt tang of the bacon on my tongue in one almost unbearable pitch of sensation. He chose this moment to initiate me into the mystery of slaughter.

'...Now don't feel ashamed if what you see today makes you feel a bit ill. It smells a lot down there, and some of the things you're going to see aren't pretty. When your Grandad took me for the first time, I was as sick as a dog, I don't mind admitting. Couldn't touch meat for a week. But you get over it. And never forget, son, that behind all the blood and guts there's an art, and a very special one at that. These people who like their bit of bacon for breakfast and a joint on Sunday — they don't want to know where it comes from, don't want to imagine what it was like when it was a whole animal, or the things that have happened to it so they can have it sitting there on the plate. So that's what they pay us for. Not just to slaughter their food for them, but to carry their guilt about it too...

'We're magicians son, turning one thing into another. And we're artists, too. Killing can be a messy business. An ox, a cow, is a lot of weight, and just before the end, they know what's going to happen. If they can, they'll fight. I've seen a man go under the hooves of a frightened beast and come up again looking like one of his own joints. So it's important to do it right. A clean kill, a quick kill. For us, and in a way, for the animals too. We owe them that at least. That dignity. Because we're in it together, the killers and the killed, against the folk who just want their Sunday roast and no worries. Our little secret. Besides...'

He said pragmatically, reaching for his coat.
'Too much fear spoils the meat.'

Father's was a progressive abattoir, one of the first to install humane killers; hardly out of place amongst the neighbouring light industrial units, the holding pens discreetly hidden from view round the back. There was a lot of machinery: hoists, hooks, aerial conveyors; hoses, pumps, grilles. It looked a lot like any production line. Only the stench, and the squealing of the animals, signalled its true function.

Ten animals were slaughtered at a time, each led into position in narrow stalls, screened from its neighbours by a corrugated iron divider. A sling

was fastened round its belly, and then tightly across its back. It was at this point that some instinctive thrill of unease would pass through all the animals, that they would begin to low frantically, and kick. Too late.

The killing began, my Father passing down the line with the bolt gun in hand, pausing by the head of each animal in turn. A dull report, that unearthly squealing, and on to the next. It took seconds, each carcass slumping in its sling, ready to be hoisted away, bled and gutted by gleaming silver machines and skilful hands.

My father reached the end of the line, turned, and looked at me. A blob of grey mater slid from the blunt end of the captive bolt.

'Alright, son?'

He looked at me quizzically. I nodded, white faced.

'That's my boy.'

As he turned away, grinning, I fumbled through the material of my trouser pocket for my penis, pulling at its sticky head; feeling the hot gob of semen drying on my abdomen.

That was decades ago. Father is dead now, victim of one of those careless accidents he warned me against, lungs crushed between a dying bullock and the pen wall. Mother followed soon after. I think, because she wanted to be sure of cheating me of the chance to arrange something for her myself...I live alone in the house they left me, eking out my days with these commonplace assassinations. For though I thought then that the simple thrill of execution would never pall, it has. A least in this workday way. And so...

...And so I return to the slaughterhouse by night. Pick out some beast which has about it the right quality of fear; and kill it. The old way. The good way. Feeling the recoil of it all the way up my arm as the coalhammer finds that precise, fragile point between its eyes...Eggshells in velvet. The beast sags, twitching, stunned, dying, but not yet dead, swinging in the hoist. And then...

Not for me the mundane perversions of the slow-eyed labourers, caught sometimes in the cold store, penises buried in animal vaginas that are yet warmer to them than their wives. I am beyond that. And so I carve for myself new orifices for pleasure, from the animal's dying flesh. The exquisite suck of its intestine. The rubbery slip of its liver. Or, through the multiple penetrations of blade and saw, the lacerating drag of splintered ribs, along the shaft of my penis, as I fuck it in its pumping heart. Tonight, I'm going back. But soon, very soon, I shall share this new eroticism with a woman. I know where she lives, and the instruments are prepared...

'Some kind of gangland killing? Witchcraft?'

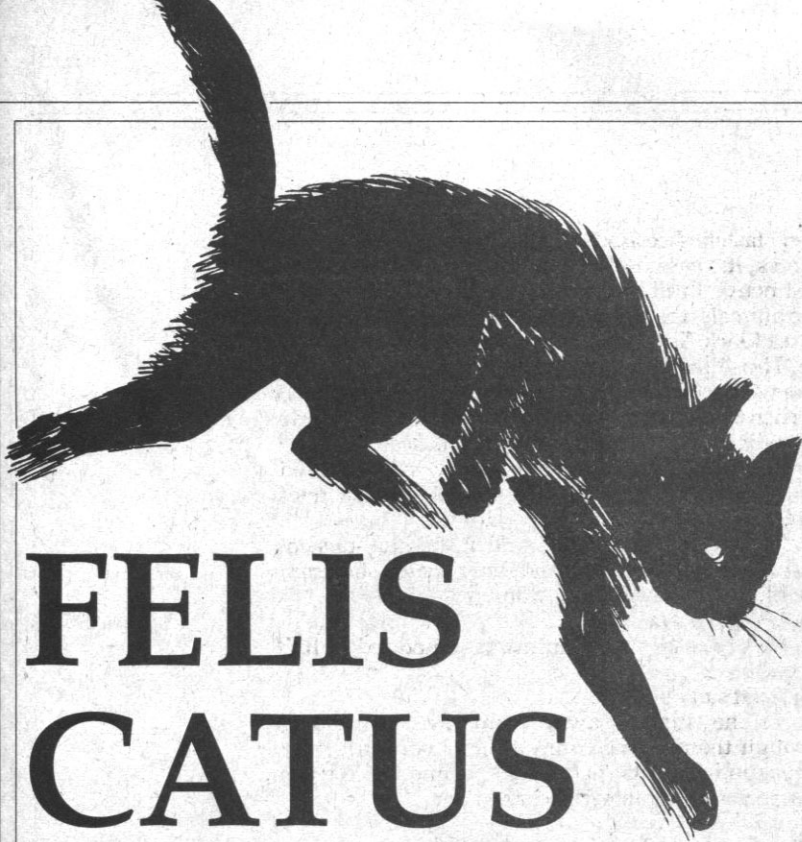
'Beats me. Nasty, though, eh?'

The two detectives looked at the naked, frozen body again, swinging stiffly from the meathook buried deep in its shoulderblades. Fist-sized holes punctured the fleshy parts of its thighs, the buttocks, abdomen, and chest. Crammed into each, an animal's amputated penis.

Below the crushed temples, Richard's eyes, mercifully, were shut. But his mouth was drawn back into a hideous grin. A rictus of fear. Or pleasure.

The other carcasses swung gently on their hooks.

And so I carve for myself new orifices for pleasure, from the animal's dying flesh. The exquisite suck of its intestine.



FELIS CATUS INCUBUS

BY
PAUL C. OTTAWAY

George Read peered over the top of his newspaper at the West Highland white terrier that stood in the sitting room doorway, its head expectantly tipped to one side.

'Want to go out, Bobbie?'

The dog whined excitedly and disappeared out into the hall. Easing his portly frame from the chair, George cast the paper onto the coffee table and glanced at the clock.

'It's time for *Gardeners World*, you know.'

Edith came out from behind her copy of *My Weekly*, still half absorbed in the latest serial. 'What dear?'

George repeated his reminder as he left the room.

Opening the back door he was greeted by a blast of cold air and huddled into his hand-knitted jumper. 'Hurry,' he told the dog. 'We can't have the door open too long tonight.'

When he returned into the sitting-room, Geoff Hamilton was just welcoming the viewers to another edition. He was standing in a garden that seemed to have fared no better than George's had this year. That, Edith had told him, was the good thing about the programme. It dealt with gardening from a very realistic point of view.

Five minutes later Bobbie was back, yelping in excitement, tail and ears erect.

'What is it?'

Another high-pitched yelp, and he was gone again. George hauled himself from the chair once more and called to the dog that he was coming. In the hall, he picked up the torch he kept on a shelf just inside the back door, then made his way out into the garden.

Bobbie stood on the path outside looking across the lawn towards the sloping field beyond the fence. He gave a deep growl, his hackles rising.

'What is it, old son?' asked George, removing spectacles that had quickly misted over in the cold.

'Probably just a fox.'

He shone the torch out over the fence and played the beam up and down the grassy slope beyond. 'I can't see...'

Suddenly something moved swiftly and silently from right to left through the beam. George tried to follow it, but was only in time to catch a glimpse of the creature as it leapt over the fence into the garden, emitting a spitting hiss. Bobbie set up an incessant barking but remained beside his master. George fumbled to replace his spectacles, not believing the evidence of his own eyes.

But there, standing in the full beam of his torch, was the unmistakable form of a huge cat. In the seconds that it took him to recognise this fact, the monster had bared its teeth and crouched down.

'Quick Bobbie, indoors!'

The terrier continued to bark and growl fiercely.

As George bent down to pick him up, the cat sprang. The man stumbled back indoors, dropping the torch as he slammed the door shut behind him. Bobbie leapt from his arms and resumed his fierce barking. From outside, George heard the frustrated howl of the beast as it raked its claws down the woodwork.

'Whatever's going on?' called Edith from the sitting-room.

'There's a bloody big cat out there!' George replied, as he bolted the back door.

'Whose is it?' Edith queried, only half aware of what her husband was saying.

George appeared in the sitting-room doorway, his hair untidy, his spectacles askew. 'It looked just like that Abyssinian from the farm over the hill. But it was as big as a lion.'

'Probably escaped from a safari park, dear.'

'What?' said George, readjusting his glasses.

'No, I didn't say it was a lion. It's that red-brown thing from the farm...'

'Goliath, dear.'

'Yes, Goliath. But he's grown. God knows what they've been feeding him.' Then over his shoulder:

'Quiet Bobbie!'

The Westie's barking stopped, though his gruff growls could still be heard from the hallway.

'Oh look, even Geoff had problems with slugs this year.'

'Eh?' George came further into the sitting-room to get a better look at the TV screen. Her view partially obscured, Edith leaned sideways over the sofa. 'I'm sure he's saying something interesting about hedgehogs. I wish I could see it.'

'Uh? Oh, sorry.' Her husband moved out of the way. 'I'll just make sure the front door's locked.' He stepped into the hallway.

Edith did not respond, her attention once more concentrated upon the television. From the hall George's voice echoed: 'Are all the windows closed?'

Edith frowned. Would she never be able to watch this programme in peace? Momentarily looking away from the set she caught sight of Bobbie coming back into the room and responded: 'All except the one in the spare room. I left it open to get rid of the paint smell.'

'What is it, old son?' asked George, removing spectacles that had quickly misted over in the cold. 'Probably just a fox'

As Geoff Hamilton handed over to Clay Jones, she heard her husband mumble something about that being all right as long as it didn't get on to the garage roof. Mr Jones began talking about the autumn colours of leaves, but his voice was drowned by a loud rumbling bang from outside.

George dashed back into the sitting-room, nearly tripping over Bobbie, who was hurrying noisily in the other direction. 'What was that?'

'It sounded like the garage roof.'

'Bloody 'ell! We'd better close that window. Come on!'

With a sigh of resignation, Edith left Gardeners World and followed her husband upstairs.

'What's this all about, dear?'

'That cat from the farm! I told you!'

Edith shook her grey-haired head as George led her into the spare room. 'But I don't understand why you're so excited about a little...'

'That's the problem,' said her husband, exasperation sounding in his voice. 'He's not little any more. Just look out of that window, if you don't believe me.'

Edith, resigned to playing out this charade, followed his instructions.

A loud scream brought George rapidly to her side. Goliath was crouched upon the garage roof, his green eyes blazing fiercely. With a spitting hiss he leapt at the window.

In a frantic attempt to pull it shut, the man was raked down his right arm by the vicious monster's claws. Staggering back, he shouted to his wife to hit it with something. But, as the paintbrush she chose as a weapon proved somewhat ineffective, she gave up and moved quickly towards the door. The cat dug its claws into the windowsill and pushed its head into the room.

'Out!' ordered the man, shoving his wife onto the landing and stumbling after her.

The Westie, having climbed to the landing, now tore towards the spare room, nearly tripping up his mistress.

George grabbed the dog and threw himself backwards slamming the door behind them. Seconds later, the panelling shuddered as the cat threw its full weight against it.

'Get that white chest of drawers. Quick!'

Edith ran into their bedroom. From behind the door George felt the Abyssinian rake its claws down the paintwork. 'Hurry up, woman!'

'I am a grandmother, you know,' Edith complained, as she dragged the empty chest of drawers across the landing. Then, seeing her husband leaning his weight against the door: 'I could do with a hand really.'

'I'm not letting go of this door until we've got something against it.'

From inside the spare room George heard the padding of large feet and then felt the panelling shudder once more as the monster sprang forward. Edith's disapproving glare turned into an expression of alarm. 'I'm doing the best I can.'

At last the piece of furniture was placed against the door and the two people stepped back. Bobbie calmed down a little. Edith, glancing at her husband's arm, exclaimed: 'You're bleeding, dear. We'd better get that seen to.'

As she turned towards the bathroom there came an angry howl from the spare room and a prolonged attack upon the door. The chest of drawers rocked dangerously.

'Quick! Your sewing machine table!'

'Do you know how much that cost?' Edith protested, as she followed her husband downstairs, the struggling terrier in her arms.

'Shut him in the sitting-room,' suggested George. 'I'll clear a way through.'

Pushing furniture left and right he struggled with the sewing machine table, dragging it out to the bottom of the stairs.

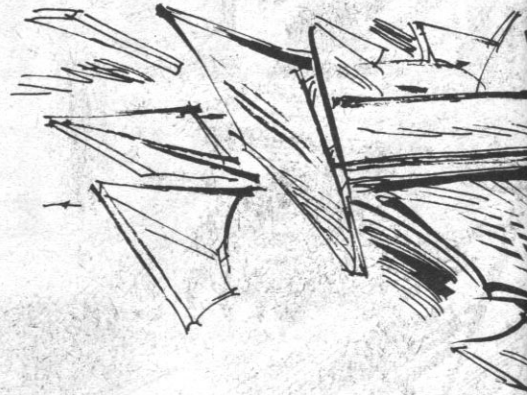
'Edith!'

Emerging from the sitting-room she said: 'Clay Jones was just saying...'

Another thud from upstairs prompted the reply 'Blow

Clay Jones! Give me a hand.'

With two pieces of furniture now stacked against the spare room door the couple returned



downstairs and relaxed a little. Edith attended to her husband's arm, telling him repeatedly that she couldn't understand it. George grumbled about the damage to the paintwork and worried about whether he would have time to finish the room now before their grandson came to stay.

'We ought to phone the police,' said Edith.

'And tell them what? That we're trapped in our own house by a giant cat? I can just imagine what they'd say.'

Another thud from upstairs caused them both to glance upwards.

'There's no way it'll get through that. We're safe until morning at least. My bet is it'll be gone by then anyway.'

Edith protested that she wasn't sleeping downstairs; that they ought to ring their son at least, if not the police, the RSPCA, or *someone*. She could not understand why he insisted upon doing absolutely nothing. George, however, was adamant that interfering with the beast would only make things worse. In its present situation, he pointed out, it could only escape one way, out of the window, and that surely was the best place for it to go.

This made Edith worry about what would happen in the morning when they came to leave the house. She was convinced it would be waiting for them. George responded to this by pointing out that cats generally hunt at night and that if it was Goliath's intention to eat that night he was not going to wait around until day break in the vain hope that they might throw themselves to him. He was much more likely to go out of the house the way he had come in and seek a meal elsewhere.

From outside, George heard the frustrated howl of the beast as it raked its claws down the woodwork

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PAUL C. OTTAWAY is twenty-eight years old and lives in Devizes, Wiltshire. He describes himself as an 'amateur author' and *Felis Catus Incubus* is his first attempt at short story writing. We hope you'll like it as much as we did.

With Edith convinced, the couple settled down to watch the end of the nine o'clock news, happy in the belief that they were now secure from attack. And, as John Kettley came on to tell them what the weather was likely to be the next day, they heard the garage roof bang again.

George smiled in satisfaction. 'Told you he'd go eventually.'

Edith glanced at Bobbie, curled up on his blanket on the sofa. 'Didn't even hear it. He's fast asleep.'

The weatherman finished and the catchy theme tune of *Casualty* started up. Edith put her magazine down. George began to doze.

With an almighty crash the sitting-room window shattered, the curtains billowed and Goliath bounded into the room. Edith screamed and George cried out as the cat sprang straight for his chest.

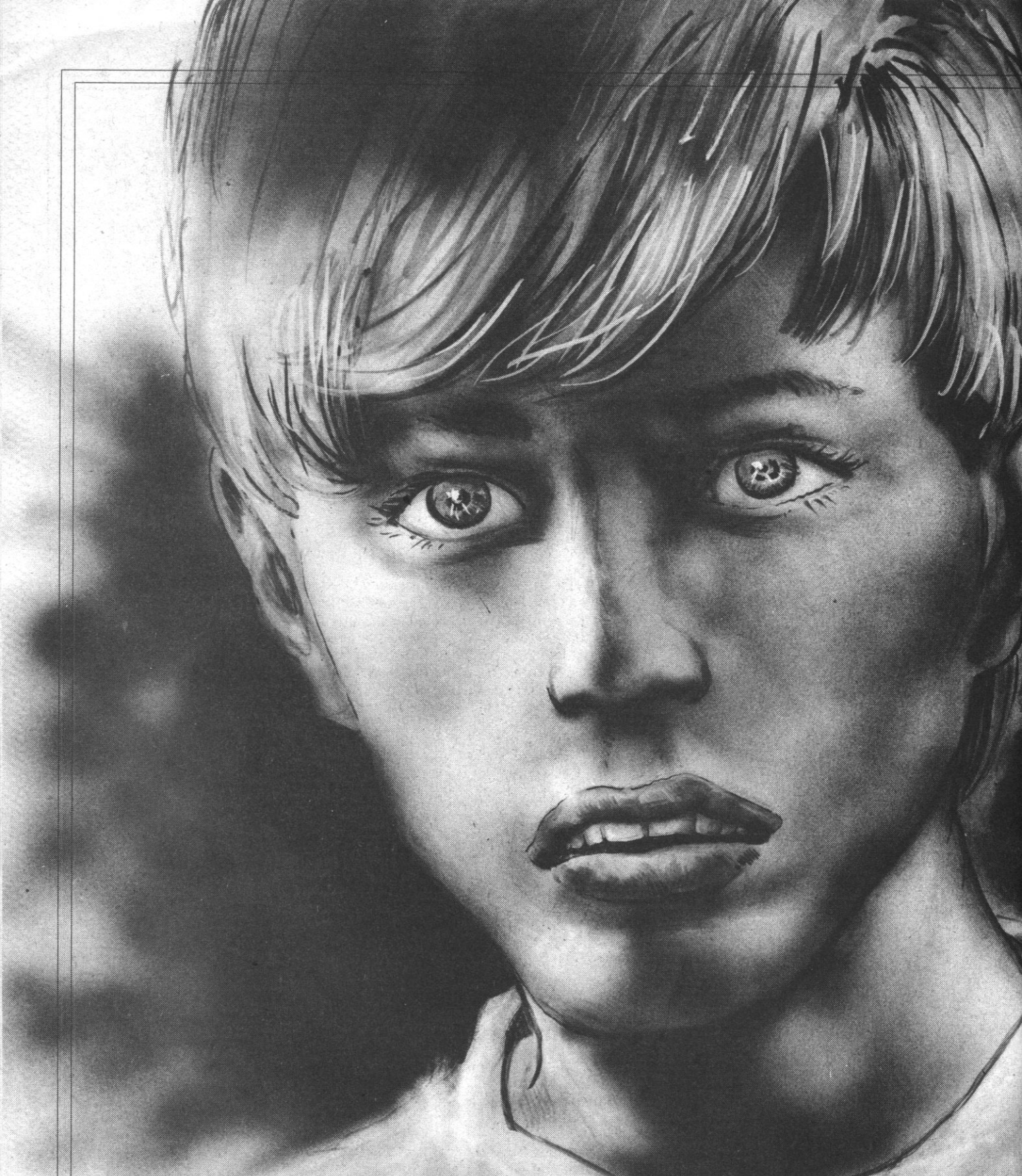
Bobbie sprang out of his doze and, with a shake of his head, looked in alarm at his master.

George put out his hand and stroked his head. 'All right, old son?'

Edith momentarily took her eyes away from the television. 'He looks like he had a bad dream.'

Goliath was crouched upon the garage roof, his green eyes blazing fiercely. With a spitting hiss he leapt at the window





The
Sensitive
By Anthony Bennett



rafters are open to the sky so when it rains the water pours down the stairs and collects in puddles on this floor. I don't mind the rain, though. Why should I? At least it doesn't hurt.

The sun hurts.

In deadly summer, when the sun's brilliance invades every corner of the house, I retreat into the cellar where it is dark and damp and safe. The cellar is my refuge from the blinding agony, my one true haven, my only sanctuary. Strange, then, that the mere thought of it should fill me with such unspeakable dread. Why, you ask? Because it reminds me of a tomb, that's why. Because the loneliness affects me badly down there, and solitude can be the worst kind of pain, believe me.

Just now the sky is iron grey, which allows me freedom enough to wander the house. Storm clouds filter the sun's rays and make them tolerable, thank God.

'Mind the broken glass.'

A boy's voice in the garden.

'Ow!'

And another. Visitors at last. It's been so long since anyone came to the house.

'What's up, stupid? Cut yourself?'

'No — stung my hand on a nettle.'

The stung boy sounds like a stranger to me, but the other is easy to recognise — his name is Philip and he has been to my tumbledown house several times. He thinks of it as his secret den (the way boys have done before him, and will continue to do after he has gone), and usually he comes here alone.

Philip doesn't know that I exist, of course. How could he? To his kind I am nothing: a shadow, a mist, a memory, that is all. If I stand before him, he looks straight through me. If I touch him, his only reaction is to shiver as if a cool draught has brushed his skin.

'In here,' says Philip.

He clambers in through the kitchen window — the only window on the ground floor not boarded up — while his friend watches nervously in the garden, rubbing his nettle-stung hand. The window was smashed long ago. Beneath it is a low, stone sink, which contains dirt, spiders' webs and broken glass. An elderly water-pump stands to one side, rusted rock solid. Philip places one foot expertly on the edge of the sink, rests his hand on the pump and leaps to the floor.

The boys appear to be perfect opposites. Philip is sturdy and weathered and has a mass of thick, black hair. His friend is pale and slender by comparison; his hair is milk-blond and his eyes are a diluted shade of blue.

Philip turns around. 'Come on, stupid. It's easy.'

The pale boy takes hold of the window frame, wary of the jagged teeth of remaining glass, and climbs awkwardly into the kitchen; he stumbles, almost falling off the edge of the sink. 'Bugger!' he says, quickly faking a smile and trying to make light of it. 'Nearly broke my neck then.' Surprisingly, his breath escapes as mist, and his smile evaporates. 'Oh, it's freezing in here...'

Philip shrugs. 'It feels all right to me.'

'Is this place safe? I mean, it's supposed to be derelict, isn't it? What if it collapses?' He rubs his goose-fleshed arms to try and warm himself.

'Scare-baby.'

'Who is?'

'You are. I knew you would be.'

The pale boy is too stricken to speak. He watches me as if he is witnessing an incarnation of the Grim Reaper himself

I live in an old house, all alone.

The house is wrecked beyond repair and stands in a garden of nettles and dying trees, neglected and almost forgotten on the outskirts of the town. The walls, sagging now, are blotched with damp and mould and cling jealously to their last tattered scraps of wallpaper. Weeds have burst through the rotten floorboards, and the

I watch all this from the kitchen door. The pale boy has his back to me, so I can't tell whether he is afraid or not, but he is clearly trembling and the back of his neck seems drained of blood.

'Look,' says Philip, pointing at the sink, where his name is etched crudely into the damp stone. I remember the day when he did that. He spent the best part of an afternoon scratching out the letters with an old pen-knife — the blade broke twice before he had finished the inscription. 'If you pass the test,' he explains, 'you can add your name under mine. That'll make you a founder member of my gang — you're not shaking, are you?'

'No, shivering... it's so cold. Can't you feel it?'

Judging by the look of disgust on Philip's face, he can't. He goes down on one knee and scours the floor with his fingers. Then he prises up a loose section of floorboard. 'The test,' he announces solemnly. 'I want you to shut your eyes, and keep them shut. If you open them you'll spoil everything.' The pale boy does as he is told, and Philip reaches into the dark gap under the floorboards, delving blindly up to his shoulder, fumbling through the dirt and dust until his fingers finally touch...

OH!... oh, please, no... not that...

Philip gets to his feet, holding before him the awful relic he has unearthed. He grins. It is a badly rotted human skull — a foul-smelling, dirt-encrusted, long-dead hunk of bone. He gives it a shake, and wood-lice tumble out and scatter in confusion on the floor.

'Hold out your hands,' he instructs.

The pale boy cups his hands together, eyes still shut.

Philip's grin intensifies. He drops the skull into the unsuspecting hands of the pale boy.

'Now. Open your eyes.'

The poor child jolts as though electricity has raked his body. 'Christ!' he cries. 'It's horrible!'

He clearly wants to throw the skull as far away as possible; but, remembering that his nerve is under test, he keeps a firm grip on it and tries to maintain a pretence of bravery. 'Is... is it real?' he asks, his voice wavering.

'Of course it's real,' says Philip. 'There's a whole skeleton down there, ribs and everything. I reckon it's a murder victim. Look, the neck's broken clean through. It's great, isn't it?'

The pale boy, even paler now, keeps his opinion to himself. 'Have I passed the test?' he asks.

'The test? Not yet. You've got to kiss it first.'

'What?'

'Kiss the skull.'

The pale boy rocks gently on his heels. 'I... I don't think...'

'You can't join my gang unless you do it.'

This is too gruesome for words. How could Philip have conceived of such a test? I had never suspected him of being so morbid and cruel. The pale boy has all my sympathy, and I enter the kitchen and drift in front of him. If only there were some way to communicate; some way to let him know that I share his revulsion. He appears to be transfixed by the skull: his eyes are wide, his cheeks are waxen and his frail hands are unsteady. The skull waits impassively for his lips — a fat beetle emerges from an eye socket and trips a strange dance over the aged bone.

'Go on, stupid,' urges Philip. 'Kiss it.'

The pale boy stands without moving for what feels like an age, then glances up, almost tearful in

his fear and shame.

'I can't...' he says quietly. 'I just can't. Look, I don't think I'd be much good in your gang anyway. I'd only —'

Suddenly, his gaze switches to me. The skull slips through his fingers and crashes to the floor. His face registers total shock — a shock which is shared by me. It seems impossible, but he is staring at me — actually *staring* — not through me, but at me. It can't be true... I shift to one side to see if he reacts, and to my astonishment he does.

Oh, how I've dreamed of this moment, how I've craved it, longed for it, prayed for it! My patience, which at times has worn pitifully thin, finally paid off. This pale, unsuspecting creature, this child with the rarest of souls, is a Sensitive — he has the ability to see where others are blind, and his unusual gift has freed me of my isolation.

I drift towards the boy, radiating all the warmth and affection I can generate; but to my dismay he steps back and gives a low groan, a look of horror on his face. I pause. Something is wrong. Does he see me as a ghoul, perhaps? Please, pale friend, don't be afraid. You have nothing to fear from me. I can't help the way I look. All I crave is contact.

'What's up?' Philip asks. Even he is worried.

The pale boy is too stricken to speak. He watches me as if he is witnessing an incarnation of the Grim Reaper himself.

This is too cruel to bear. I simply want to reassure him, to make him comprehend that my intentions are benign — but how? How can I contact him? I would give everything just to reach out and take his hand.

I move forward again, more cautiously this time, trying desperately not to cause alarm, but something deep inside the boy snaps — panic drives a girlish scream out of his lungs, and he turns and scrambles madly out of the window. He cracks his knee on the window frame and cuts his fingers on the jagged scraps of glass, but knows nothing of the pain.

Panic, like an infection, spreads to Philip, and he chases the pale boy out of the window, also clambering frantically, not having the slightest idea what he is running away from him.

The boys thrash through the tangled garden and head for the safety of their homes. In a moment they are lost from sight.

If only I could follow...

With their passing, the house dies once more.

Silence prevails, a terrible silence which I would sell my soul to break — I long to yell my frustration out loud, to slam the doors, to kick the walls, to create a racket — but that, of course, is impossible. I am incapable of such things.

Now I am alone again.

And I wish I understood the reason why.

If I'm being punished, then I'm sorry but I've forgotten the crime. If I'm being tested, then I don't know what the test requires. But the torment goes on, year after dark and lonely year. This house remains my prison, and that putrid skeleton, that mouldering wreck of long-dead man, remains my keeper. And only when those earthly remains have been laid to rest will I be free of their bondage. Until that day, I feed only on hope.

One day, when he has overcome his fear, the pale boy might return. This much is certain — if he should return, or if another Sensitive should come in his place, I will be here.

I will always be here, all alone.

ANTHONY BENNETT is a writer from Spondon, near Derby. He describes his story, *The Sensitive*, as a short fantasy. With its baleful, morbid imagery and controlled narrative style, it is very much the kind of fiction that we want to promote in **FEAR**.

Now I am alone again. And I wish I understood the reason why

WHAT HAPPENED TO EDDIE

By A.E.B. Arkle



Of all the strange things which happened that year I feel the most shocking at the time was the change in his feet. Perhaps I should explain. It all started simply enough. My best friend and I, living in the compact city of Cardiff, in Wales, would meet most nights at our local pub. We would, in a friendly fashion, endeavour to beat each others' scores on the Pinball or Video Game machines and come back to my flat to play one of an assortment of games on my computer or watch some film on TV, while at the same time topping up our respective alcohol levels with a few cans of beer.

Eddie had always been a bit strange, he was

He found some grubby tome he claimed would be 'better' than the Necronomicon...

deeply into H.P. Lovecraft, Arthur Machen, Clark Ashton Smith and others of that ilk, but so was I to a lesser extent, being one who always enjoyed a good read. But Eddie used to get so intense and discourse ad infinitum about the book he was currently reading, unless you could distract him with tales of your latest highscore on one machine or another. But that was Eddie, he'd always been that way, and most people liked him anyway.

What changed him was a visit to a second-hand book shop on Llanbadarn Road. He had found some grubby tome that he claimed would be 'better' than the Necronomicon, the Unausprechlichen Kulten and the Prnakotic manuscripts all put together.

For about ten seconds I went into a blind panic thinking, 'Where can I go for a beer if Cthulhu puts his foot in the pub?!' Then I calmed down and started making placatory noises like 'Let's have a look at it then. I've never seen anything really REAL like that...' but he wouldn't let me — he became extremely secretive and hid the book under his jacket on the floor. I could look at it when we got back from the pub, which of course meant that we would have to go back to his place afterwards, rather than mine, which in turn meant no computer games, no TV, only his remarkably obscure record collection. Actually I shouldn't be too scathing about Eddie's records. If you looked hard enough you could have found anything from fourteenth century Gregorian Plainsong to the heaviest of Heavy Metal, or find Tibetan Bhon Po chanting or American Bluegrass. His was one of the most eclectic selections of records, and you could be sure of finding something to your taste — it was just a question of looking hard enough for it.

Anyway, we spent the rest of the evening in the pub, got ourselves pleasantly mellow in the process as usual, and went back to his flat, a gloriously Lovecraftian place at the top of a late Victorian three storey house, all pointy gables and wooden beams with about ten million layers of paint on, such as you would find in the student area of any university town.

Eddie made some coffee to go with the cans of ale we'd got, while I rooted around through his disks to find some music to listen to, settling on one of his Tangerine Dream albums. When we were both organised Eddie unwrapped the book.

It was old, very old. There was no title on the black leather cover, and it wasn't until I moved my head slightly that I spotted a curious design embossed on the front. It was difficult to make out what it was, but after tilting the book this way and that to catch the light Eddie found it was a circle containing a seven pointed star and an asymmetrical five pointed one, so we named it The Starbook for want of anything better.

We gently opened it up, the pages crackling with age like a packet of crisps, and I couldn't help but smile at the look of disappointment on his face when he saw that it was entirely hand-written in some kind of code. Still, it was nice to think that we did have something special, even if we didn't know what to do with it. Then Eddie had what seemed a brilliant idea, at the time.

'Your computer!' he said.

There was I thinking we were dealing with something dating back eons and he suddenly introduces twentieth century technology.

'But it's simple,' he continued, 'if it is related to the Mythos then we already know one of the phrases, don't we?'

'Do we?'

'Of course we do! It's in the books! —'

'Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'naghtagn', and we also know that it means 'In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming', so all we have to do is type in the book, then make the computer look for a pattern of symbols that fit. Once it's done that it can work out the rest, no trouble!'

'Eddie,' I said 'What does the keyboard on Pooter look like?'

'Well, it's got numbers and letters and...'

'Precisely! So how do you propose typing this in!?' I said pointing at the incomprehensible mish-mash of symbols on the open page in front of us.

He looked so crestfallen that out of the goodness of my heart and the stupidity of my head I resolved to help him.

Promising I'd think about it I wandered off home, my mind full of flowcharts and algorithms that might somehow solve the puzzle that was The Starbook.

It took a couple of days for me to organise even a rough approach to the problem, but then I was able to give him an idea of the plan of attack. It was one of those simple solutions that make you think 'So obvious! Why didn't I think of that before?' All we had to do was this....

'But it will take some time to complete. We'll have to redefine a whole new character set in a separate section of RAM, assigning each one to one of the symbols on Pooter's keyboard. Then we can type in the whole of the text from The Starbook and do a bubble search for any phrase that corresponds to the Cthulhu sentence. Once we've done that we'll know how to transliterate most of the syllables and work out the rest for ourselves.'

Eddie was O.K. at playing computer games but not so hot at programming.

'What I mean is we'll have to copy every symbol in the book onto graph paper and convert it into Binary code, allocate each symbol to one of the letters on the keyboard, then make it search through the entire text for a pattern which fits the Cthulhu phrase. Once we've done that we will have most of the symbols deciphered. We should be able to work out the rest without too much difficulty. Get your graph paper out,' I said, 'and help copy out these signs, and make sure that they all fit into an eight by eight square.'

II

It took a few days, but eventually we had all the symbols from the book reduced to a form which the computer could cope with, and spent a happy evening typing in the new character set, Eddie with his arm round my shoulders 'helping'. Well, that's what he thought, and I didn't mind. We were still like brothers then. Of course, everything's changed since.

Once we had the new set of characters programmed into the computer, we had the even more tedious task of typing in the text itself. Trying to remember that the letter G is in fact the key to press if you want to print something that looks like a strangled ant is not easy. After about a fortnight we had the whole of the text of the Starbook saved onto disk, went to the pub early and became extremely wobbly.

Next day I devised a programme that would search through the text to find the Cthulhu phrase and reassign it back to the normal alphabet. I made

sure the printer was on line and set the programme running. Bearing in mind the maxim that a watched pot never boils I decided to migrate to the pub and just leave Pooter to do its thing. Eddie turned up, and when I told him we were going to get some results at last he got himself so excited I practically had to peel him off the ceiling and explain that we might have to do some serious waiting for any results. But he was so thrilled about the possibilities he beat me on the Pinball machine and I had to thrash him on the arcade game just to prove I was still in the running.

We got back to my place but still no result. We ate our Southern Fried Chicken, and getting sleepy I said I was going to bed. Eddie decided he would sit and watch the computer until something happened.

That was the last time I saw him as he used to be.

Next morning it wasn't until I was half way through my ritual of coffee, cigarette and The One O'clock News, (when I say morning I'm referring to my circadian morning which is about midday.)

When I noticed that the computer and printer had been switched off. Eddie had obviously been diligent and made the place secure before taking the printout of the Starbook home with him. Good old Eddie.

I was expecting to see him in the pub that night but he didn't turn up. I was used to his wandering off and not being seen for several days. It's just that he would give at least a vague hint as to where he was going. But this time nothing. I waited four days then I started to worry.

III

I worried for twenty-four hours and then decided that I had to find out where he was. I went round to his flat and rang the bell. I had to wait a long time. Then suddenly the door opened and there was Eddie.

'Thank God you've come,' he said, 'everything's gone so weird. Go upstairs, I need to talk to you.' I started on up while Eddie slammed the front door shut and ran past me up the stairs, as if afraid of something. I followed on at my usual sedate pace until I reached his flat. I saw him standing like a curious dog, head to one side as if listening for something. I heard nothing apart from the usual sussuration of any large conurbation.

'What's up Eddie? If you don't tell me what's wrong then I can't help you, can I?'

'What's wrong is me,' he said, 'I'm changing. It's that damned book. Since I read that printout I've been feeling more and more peculiar.' He unlaced his trainers and pulled them off, and then his socks.

I've never seen feet like those.

Where there used to be five digits there were now three. The outer two toes were linked by a web of skin and the nails were twisted about each other to form a single talon. The next pair of toes was the same, and the big toe was also enlarged to about three inches, including the great horny nail, while the skin was cracked and scaly in a roughly hexagonal pattern extending to just about his ankles. It looked for all the world like the skin of some kind of reptile, an alligator or crocodile perhaps. And a curious aroma started to fill the room, at once attractive in its musky spiceiness and grossly repellent in its strangeness.

'Eddie,' I said indistinctly, my hand over my mouth, trying not to throw up, 'you've got to get

those feet to a doctor!'

I realised that I was going to lose the battle with my digestive system and had to beat a hasty retreat to the bathroom. When I got back he had replaced his socks and shoes. He was once more standing in the middle of the room with that peculiar-listening expression on his face. He turned to me and said, 'A doctor? How many doctors do you know who can exorcise the servants of the Ancient Ones? No, Alex, I have unwittingly invoked Hassak'naa, servant of An'sirragalzubgal, that One imprisoned beneath the Nameless City in the tractless waste of the Arabian desert known as the Rub al'Khali Alhazred's Roba El Khaliye. For this is the Ancient One hinted at but never described in Derleth's The Keeper of the Key.'

His eyes took on a faraway look and his gestures became more expansive, more dramatic as he continued...

'Oh! Alex, I have dreamed such dreams as you could never imagine, of battles and conquest, of escape and recapture, of wars fought from one end of the Universe to the other, of whole galaxies destroyed. I have seen those who fight these wars, as they have fought these millenia past, the Ancient Ones and the Elder gods in eternal cosmic conflict.'

'Great Cthulhu, recently wounded by Professor Shrewsbury and General Holberg, regenerates as he lies deeply dreaming beneath the great Pacific depths. Now An'sirragalzubgal begins to awaken, in order to continue the battle for supremacy against the

Elder gods until Great Cthulhu be whole again.'

'Do you remember, in that narrative of Derleth's, how they found an icy wind that for half the night blew one way across the desert and for the other half returned? That is just his slumberous breathing, a once nightly exhalation and inhalation of the icy coldness of interstellar space!'

IV

After a while he calmed down a bit. I dried his tears and promised him I would stay by his side as long as I could, while the change took place. But I warned him that I didn't know how long I could cope.

'What about the book? If there's a way to conjure up what'sisname then maybe there's a way to send him back. Where've you put the printout? I'll look and see if I can't find something...'

'You can't. I've burnt it,' said Eddie. 'I tried to burn the Starbook as well but it wouldn't, so I threw it on a builder's skip down the road. I started to rise.'

'There's no point rushing off to dig it out again, they emptied it yesterday. I saw them from the window. It's that place about twenty yards down the road.'

Something occurred to me that Eddie obviously hadn't thought of. He'd thrown away the Starbook and destroyed the printout, but I still had the original text saved on disk, together with the programme to decipher it. I decided to say nothing and do some research when I got back home.

'So what can I do to help?' I said as calmly as I could, trying not to give away my plans.

'Bring me something to eat tomorrow. I can't walk as far as the shops any more. It hurts my feet too much.'

'O.K., no problem, what do you want me to get? Fish and chips or some burgers, or what?'

A.E.B. ARKLE (who also calls himself 'Arkle the Hat') has written one other piece of work for publication — a solo Fighting Fantasy adventure for *Warlock* magazine. This is his first short horror story.

'Eddie,' I said indistinctly, my hand over my mouth, trying not to throw up, 'you've got to get those feet to a doctor!'

I couldn't see Eddie, he was hiding somewhere. I knew he was there by that terrible odour which was now overpowering.

'No! Not cooked, just get me some raw meat. I tried eating cooked food yesterday, but it just made me feel ill. It has to be raw!' He had such a look in his eyes, I was near to tears myself. I gave him a big hug and reaffirmed my promise to stand by him while I was able.

I went home and set the program running again, and went to the pub early, too early in fact, with the net result that eventually I did burst into tears. And when friends asked me what was wrong I had to tell them it was just the beer getting to me.

They'd never have believed me if I'd told them.

V

When we were kicked out of the pub I staggered off home and settled down on the sofa, wrapped in a blanket, waiting for the sound of the printer to wake me. Despite the large consumption of alcohol, I knew I wouldn't sleep too deeply. I was too worried about Eddie. I kept reliving all the fun times we'd had together; the time we went to Yorkshire; Eddie playing the fool at a folk festival in Cheshire; that Christmas when I dragged him off to my parents' house in North Wales....

I drifted in and out of sleep when at about half past four in the morning I was brought back to reality by the sound of the printer buzzing and chattering. Still wrapped in my blanket I sat and waited until the printout was finished, then started to read...

'This is by way of being Ye.Studdies and furtherance of Ye.Callings Of Enok, as described by Ye Alchemist Rog. Bacon in his manuscript of cyphers, the which was taken by Ye Doctor John Dee, after much study with his helper Edw'd. Kelly, to be presented to ar 1 plac'd. in Ye.librarium of Ye.Holy Roman Emperor Rudolphus, being secundus of that name, at his court in Ye.City of Prague, and later discoursed upon by Ye.alchemist Johannes de Tepenez, while he was invited to study in that place, said manuscript being a dissertation on Ye.Calling and Invocation of those Forms and Spirits known to Men as Ye.Ones of Ancient Times, those such as Great Cthulhu Ye.Deepdreamer, as Azathoth, as Yog-Sothoth, as Hastur, as Lloigor, as Zhar, as Ithaqua Windwalker, as Nyarlathotep, as Shub-Niggurath Goatmother of the screaming hordes and as him whose True name is not known but was called An'tsirragalzubgal by the olden astronomers of the land of Akkad, he who dreams imprisoned beneath Ye.City of Irem in the vast desert of Arabie, he who's name doth mean God-Snake-Great-Abyss-Great in the near timelost Akkadian tongue: and of how also to Conjure their slaves and Servants: being set down by my hand being Will'm.Baxter in this Year Sixteen Hundred and Ten Anno Domini.'

I can repeat no more of what I read, for fear of what might happen. Eddie was right to destroy his copy of the printout for if anyone else was to read the formulae encrypted on those hellish pages they would be damned, a fact I now know too well!

In the morning I went to the supermarket and stocked up with a load of fresh meat, and having decided I would keep one of the sirloin steaks for myself, took the rest round to Eddie's. I rang the bell and waited.

After a while I rang the bell again.

Suddenly I heard Eddie's window open. His keys came flying out and landed beside me. I was used to his doing that occasionally, when he was deeply involved in something and couldn't be

bothered going all the way downstairs. I picked them up and was just about to open the front door when a horrible thought occurred to me. He'd done it this time not because he was unwilling to come down but because he was unable.

I quickly made my way upstairs and let myself in. His sitting room was dark and gloomy, the curtains drawn, a single table lamp burning in a corner. I couldn't see Eddie, he was hiding somewhere. I knew he was there by that terrible odour which was now overpowering. I had to dash across the room and reopen the window. When I was able to speak I said, 'Come on out Eddie, I've brought the food.' At first there was nothing, then from behind the settee crawled the creature he had become. With a curious dread I drew back the curtain to let some more light into the room, but he whimpered so piteously as he tried to cover those great staring black eyes with his claws that I returned the room to its former dimness. I think I had seen enough anyway.

How can I describe him? He was human, lizard and snake all in some kind of hideous amalgamation. Just as words can never describe the glory of a sunset, neither can they show the total strangeness of that which he had become. His hands for instance had gone the same way as his feet, so that I had to remove the clingfilm from the meat. But he was able to pick it up and cram it into that elongated toothful snout his mouth had become with the two pairs of projecting fangs at the front. He could still speak after a fashion, but his deeply forked tongue made his speech nearly incomprehensible. I had to get him to repeat nearly everything he said several times before I could understand what he was trying to say.

After he had seen off about four pounds of meat he sort of shook his head, so I put the rest in his fridge. Then I just sat and talked at him about all the good times we'd had. It was hard to keep cheerful, because every now and again he would break into that soul tearing whimper and hold his head with his claws. Also my feet had started to itch abominably, which made it difficult to concentrate. But I couldn't think of anything else to do, so I persevered.

After nightfall Eddie pointed at the window and said 'Shersherns!...owshen..shersherns!', so I drew back the curtains to reveal Algol Demonstar's baleful red glare. Eddie lurched upright, and balancing himself with his tail advanced towards me, then towering over me placed his massive claws upon my shoulders. 'Schchoor...schaay.vhy.schchoor!

Vvvrraayy.vvhee.chchaaarrngreee!

So saying he pushed me backwards towards the door and gently placed my hand over the light switch before returning to the window to gaze at the stars. I knew what he meant. During the final stage of the change he could get hungry, more hungry than a couple of pounds of sausages could satisfy. So there I stood, ready to blind him by turning on the lights before making my escape and slamming the door in front of him, should I need to.

Though at times when he turned towards me with great greenish globules of venom dripping from his fangs I was tempted to, I didn't because he would always give himself a kind of a shake and return to his rapturous study of the skies.

But I didn't have to wait too long.

One last time he turned to me and then said 'Ttschchiyyyme ghnnowww! Aaachhyechch...ffrrchyyennggch...' and then let

lose an unforgettable howl of anguish and loss, a hundred times worse than the sound of the loneliest wolf baying at the unreachable Moon. An awesome iridescence began to encompass his body. Sometimes I remember its colour as green sometimes as purple, but most of the time I cannot describe it at all except as unearthly. At first it just outlined the scales on his body then gradually expanded until he was totally engulfed in a glistening column of light. That hopeless wailing reached a crescendo before fading away as the pillar of light towered upwards then arched over and plunged deep into the bowels of the earth.

And Eddie was gone.

I started writing this several days ago, the night I first read my copy of the printout (which I have since destroyed, together with the computer disks). I pray in the Name of All That's Holy that the accursed Starbook is buried safely at the bottom of the council dump. But I have my doubts. That kind of Book has an inbuilt instinct to survive and calls to certain people and forces them to delve into its secrets. So if you should come across a blackbound book with a strange device of intertwined stars embossed upon it, then shun it for the sake of your very soul!

I cannot write much longer, those once familiar sounds of the city now seem strange and alien to me, and the change has reached my hands so that it is no longer comfortable to hold a pen. All I can do now is wait.

Wait until I am rejoined with my friend Eddie in the dreadful depths of the Arabian desert.....



He was human, lizard and snake all in some kind of hideous amalgamation.



A STORM IN THE WIND

BY
PHILLIP
ALTON
GARNER

Beginning a two part story of genetic mayhem...

Nature looks after nature. There is no creature alive on this planet that will contest that statement, bar one. Man.

It is Man who has taken what he considers to be nature and struggles to change and manipulate it to his own ends.

Nature looks after nature.

Nature is both cruel and kind. It brings happiness and sorrow to all its creatures. But to those who use and abuse it, it brings only DOOM!!

Professor M R Jenkins
Oxford University
England
May 1967

Heatherford Research, Ministry of Defence Plant,
near Oxford

17/2/87

22:47 He moved slowly along the corridor, sweeping at the dirt, his head swaying in time to the beat from his Walkman. He was taken by the music, oblivious to everything around him.

Suddenly the music stopped and the lights around him dimmed momentarily, then shone bright. Swearing quietly, he gave the headphones three sharp bangs with the flat of his hand. Nothing happened. The Walkman remained mute.

'God damn it,' he muttered. What the hell was wrong with it now. He began to unclip the machine from his belt when the opening door caught his eye. An icy wind blew gently from the room beyond.

'Hey. Who's there?' he asked, his voice faint. 'Who's there?' he whispered as the door opened fully, without a sound. Instinctively, he held out the brush in front of him and stepped forward, towards the doorway.

Something moved in front of him, something larger than a man and his eyes strained, to pick out the figure in the dim light of the room. He moved in slightly and as he did so the creature loomed into the light that shone from the passageway. 'Oh my God!' he moaned, dropping his brush as he staggered back from the door.

'Oh my Go...'

His scream cut short, and an unearthly silence filled the corridor, disturbed only by the dull thud of the janitor's body as it hit the cold tiled floor. His leg twitched once and then was still.

Without a sound, the door slowly closed.

23:16 'I really don't give a damn. Do I make myself clear?' he asked, stabbing his index finger into the chest of the security officer standing before him.

'Listen Baxter, if I had enough staff on this project then this wouldn't have happened,' he snapped. 'Anyway, you can hardly hold us responsible when it was your people who let...' One look from Baxter cut him short in mid-sentence.

'Keep your voice down,' Baxter whispered, 'or we're all in trouble.'

Thomas looked down at the floor, his eyes moved back to the body and he swallowed hard.

'Jesus Christ, what have you done?' he asked, 'What have you done?'

'Pull yourself together man. The police will be here any minute now. Has it been taken care of?'

'Yes. The project has been terminated on site. We have removed all trace of it and re-locked the door.'

'Good. Right, let's wait for the boys in blue,' he said and began to relax. He was confident that all had been taken care of. His only concern at the moment was the death of the janitor. But that was no problem. He knew a lot of people in prominent positions in the local hospitals. A few top doctors owed him a favour or two, or at least, could be persuaded that they did. Then, the janitor would have simply suffered a massive stroke, some sort of heart failure. After all, he thought, it happens to people of all ages these days.

He smiled and began to walk away, suddenly he stopped, his smile slipping away as he turned to face Thomas. 'Wait a minute. Did you say you had to re-lock the door?'

'Yeah. Why?'

'But the janitor hasn't got the security keys for this level!'

'No sir, the door was opened from the inside.'

'Oh God,' Baxter said unbelievably, 'they shouldn't be that far advanced!'

18/2/87

00:32 It moved slowly, crawling through the undergrowth, trying to escape the bright lights. Its mind soaked with ideas, thoughts that it had never experienced before and it craved for more.

Its feeding patterns were regular, but now the sense of freedom, the change of environment, meant a new feeding routine had to be found.

But first, it knew that it had to find shelter, away from them. Away from the bright lights. And the sack beneath its torso weighed heavily.

Soon it knew that the time had come and it lay down in the thickest bushes it could find, with the lights off in the distance. Too close, it thought, too close. But it knew that it could go no further. Not now, not just yet. It had work to do.

10:46 John Richards stood in the unloading bay; he

was hungover, and supervising the morning's shift, feeling like shit and wondering just how the hell he had let himself into this. The coffee had helped to settle his head and slowly the memory of the previous night crawled into his aching mind. Jake had phoned, late. It was about quarter to twelve and he had practically fallen down the stairs to answer it. He'd been drinking steadily all through the early evening and had fallen asleep at the foot of his bed. He had completely forgotten where he was and was half way down the stairs before everything came into focus. When he finally reached the phone Jake's rough voice spoke quietly. As the alcohol faded slightly in his mind he became aware of Jake asking if he could cover for him the next morning. He agreed without thinking and the line went dead. He had dropped the phone onto the rest and made his way back upstairs. Apart from his own dizziness and the feeling of nausea, something was wrong. Jake sounded ill in some way, his voice seemed drawn, exhausted. Then he was in his bed and the memory faded.

The morning came with the sound of the works' bleeper on his cabinet and with that the sickening recollection of his midnight promise.

Now he stood watching the workers unload the cages, passing them along the line to the waiting conveyor that would take them through and down to the basement. He read through the list he held in his hand, ticking off the items as they moved slowly along.

On the page in front of him he read list upon list of laboratory animals. Judging by the number of animals they were shipping in they must be restocking. He tapped the top of his pad as the cages were passed along like coffins. The number of cages puzzled him. What had happened to all the other lab animals?

He reached out and opened a filing cabinet and from that he took the record of deliveries made in the last two months. While trying to keep an eye on the current deliveries he read through the file then put it back, closing the draw. The same delivery made today had been made three times in the last four weeks. Jesus, that's about two hundred or so animals used up in four weeks, he thought. Just what the hell were they using them for?

As he marked off the crates he became aware of two men standing close by, drinking from steaming mugs of coffee. Gradually he found himself listening in on their conversation.

'Yeah, hell of a thing, it's all this junk food crap you know'

'But he was only about thirty...'

'Don't matter, clogs your heart up,' said the older of the two, 'Don't even know it's happening, could be feeling fine one minute and then flat on your back dead the next. Bloody junk food,' he added, spitting on the floor.

'David said that when they took him away he'd seen him'

'So what. Ain't you seen a dead body before!'

'No. I haven't. But that's not what I am on about, David said that he had seen him, seen his hair.'

'His hair. What about his hair?'

'It was grey. Grey hair. That janitor had black hair, didn't have no grey in it'

'You don't say, big deal!' Listen, man. David said he looked scared to death, scared to death in the Security area.'

The older man said nothing. He just stood there



PHILLIP ALTON GARNER

is not a professional writer, but tells us that he has been spurred on by reading FEAR since Issue One to put pen to paper and have a go at writing something himself. The result is this intriguing story which, because of its length, we're running in two parts.

'And what do they want with all them animals?' he asked, pointing a finger at the trucks. The older man looked at his colleague's finger. It was trembling

Suddenly its head came out, eyes opening up wide and glowing. It looked and it knew. The woman drew her breath and collapsed to the road

lookin' over John's shoulder. The other followed his gaze, watching the crates and cages being unloaded.

'And what do they want with all them animals?' he asked pointing a finger accusingly at the trucks. The older man looked at the cages and then back at his colleague's finger. It was trembling.

'I don't know son. I just don't know.'

The two of them moved away slowly. John turned to see them leave. He began to feel a little uneasy.

12:30 John had met Carol just before twelve for lunch in the canteen. He had been seeing Carol on a regular basis now for a few months and lunch had become a regular thing. After they had eaten, John left her in the canteen and made his way down to the ground floor, and from there into the basement. Leaving the stairs and the lift behind him, he began to walk down the corridor.

'You don't want to go down there, Mr. Richards.' John spun round. How the hell had anyone crept up behind him?

'I'm sorry sir, but this is a restricted area.'

'Since when?' demanded John.

'Yesterday. This level is now out of bounds for all staff unless cleared by Mr. Harrison. I'm sorry sir, but I shall have to ask you to leave.'

The guard looked at him, waiting for him to move.

'What's so special all of a sudden about this area? There's nothing down here.'

'Sorry sir, but I'm just following my orders,' the guard replied, stone-faced.

'What exactly happened down here to make it such a no go area?'

'I don't think I quite follow you sir,' he replied, 'Now if you'd like to come this way,' he added, putting his hand on his gun, held in its holster, 'and I'll lead you into an authorised area. Just what, for the record, are you doing down here anyway, sir?'

'Just taking a walk.' John snarled, pushing his way past him and back towards the lift. The guard watched him leave, then walked down to the end door, checking to make sure that it was still locked. He took the walkie-talkie from his belt, spoke a few words into it and walked back up the corridor...

19:34 'Come on, answer, God damn it!' John threw the phone down. He had been trying to reach Jake since six. 'Perhaps he's working shifts again,' Carol said.

'No, I've checked the work sheets today, and his name isn't down.'

'John, you know what Security is like here. They are always blocking off areas at a moment's notice.'

'Somebody died in that basement and all of a sudden it's a restricted area. There's something very odd going on here.'

The sound of an ambulance siren became suddenly louder as it came tearing up the main drive to the research building.

'What's that?' he asked moving over to the window.

The ambulance had turned off the drive onto the grass and shrubs at the side of the road.

'Come on let's take a look,' he said grabbing her arm. She rose to her feet and followed him out through the door and down to the driveway.

19:16 The weight was gone. It was glad. The sack

fell from its torso onto the grass. It looked down as four thoughts screamed at it, all hungry. It too was hungry.

Tearing branches and shrubs, it covered its work and then left, keeping away from the lights. A small bird landed on a branch nearby. It looked down at the bird and it knew, and the bird fell to the ground, dead. Not enough. Not near enough for its new needs.

It moved slowly to the edge of the bushes next to the main driveway, scanning through the foliage. A young woman came into view, walking towards the main gate. It pushed its head into the bushes, the branches shaking slightly, leaves falling to the ground. The woman stopped walking and looked into the bush. More leaves fell and the woman stepped closer, peering into the green darkness.

Suddenly, its head came out, its eyes opening up wide and glowing. It looked and it knew. The woman drew her breath and collapsed. Away in the distance it heard a cry and looked. A group of people came running to where the woman lay. It pulled back its head and withdrew to the depths of the bushes and back to its lair. The four thoughts fed and grew, as it did, hungry for more.

19:41 By the time Carol and John reached the ambulance, quite a crowd had gathered. John tried pushing his way through but failed to get further than a few feet. A body was lifted up on a stretcher towards the open ambulance door. A hand reached up out of the crowd and pulled at the sheet covering the body and a mass of grey hair fell into view. Some people a the front backed away as the head turned over, its eyes open in a never ending scream. A woman suddenly collapsed forcing the crowd back a few feet.

An ambulance man reached out and pulled the sheet back over the dead girl's face, closing the door behind him.

'Oh my God!' John murmured, pulling Carol away from the crowd.

'What's wrong?' she asked. Her view was blocked and she hadn't seen the body.

'Her hair. It's all grey!'

'John, who was it?'

'Judith. Judith Knight.'

'Oh Jesus, John. What's happening?'

'I don't know. But I'll find out, one way or the other.'

20:26 Baxter frowned at the report on his desk. 'This Knight girl. Why the hell did she have to have a bloody heart attack today for Christ's sake!'

'But her death has got nothing to do with the project,' Jake replied. 'It's just a coincidence.'

'I know, I know, Listen Jake, I don't want any of this getting around. What we are doing here is well over the heads of the government. If we perfect them there's no telling what we could use them for.'

'War,' Jake said coldly, 'That's what they are for Baxter, so don't give me any of your crap.'

'Jake, I know your views on this but you're a good man. A damn good genetic engineer. The best there is. You know the score. You also know about the education side.'

'It will never come to that, Baxter. What if the little accident the other night had turned out differently? What if the creature had gone on through the door? How many people could it have killed before we were able to contain it?'

'But it didn't get out. The creature that killed the janitor was destroyed. Any knowledge that it could have got from him could never be used by them. The project is still air-tight. They know only what we will have them know.'

'Listen to me,' Jake said, 'I've told you before. I'm sure that they know more than we can possibly tell. The men are working far too close.'

'But the screens are there. There is no way that any of them can get at the workers.'

'But sometimes, when I look at them. Well, it seems to me that they are studying us, not us them.'

'Your just gettin paranoid, Jake. You've been working long shifts.'

'I know when I need a rest, Baxter,' Jake snapped, 'And I don't need one now! I don't need to be told anything. Without me you're nothing. Without me all you'd have is a file full of figures and not those living creatures down there.'

'Oh yeah! and now we are on the subject. Just who the hell are we?'

'I've told you before. You don't need to know that. You get paid just the same as me.'

'Yeah. Well it stinks,' Jake said bluntly. 'Education. Crap! Jesus, I must have had shit in my eyes.'

'Jake, I don't want you to jeopardize this project. Now get out. Take a bit of fresh air. Relax. Have the rest of the night off,' Baxter said, running his hand through his thinning hair, 'Go home,' he added.

'Yeah, I'll do just that!' he said, and stormed past the Security guard. He needed some fresh air, and he needed it badly.

The guard watched him leave and then turned around to Baxter. 'Is Mr Roberts about to become a problem, sir?'

'No I don't think so. He's just a little over worked. But I do take notice of what you say. I'm sure that you will be able to handle Mr Roberts, should any problems develop.'

'Yes, sir. No problem at all.' The guard replied and smiled.

'Good. I knew that I could rely on you. You have done well in the past. But now to our present problems: Mr Richards,' he looked out through the window. 'I think that we will need to keep a very close eye on him. Don't you think? Accidents do happen. Make it good. Just like you have done before.'

'Don't worry, sir. There will be no problem.'

20:54 The phone rang four times before Jake picked up the receiver.

Jake?'

'Yeah. John. Is that you?'

'Jake, you sound half dead. Are you alright?'

'I'm fine.'

'Well you don't sound it. Why don't you come round for a drink? Say in about half an hour?'

'I don't know,' Jake said, rubbing his eyes. God, he was tired. Tired of everything.

'Listen Jake, I'll bring the car round. We'll go somewhere other than the staff bar tonight, perhaps we can go into town.'

'John, I really don't think I should. I might be needed here.'

'Don't give me any of that bullshit. That's the sort of excuse I've been using for years. Your talking to an old master here.'

Jake laughed. 'Yeah, I'm sorry. O.K. No bullshit. We'll go out, what the hell! But why tonight?'

'I've got to talk to you, Jake. something's going on here and I don't like it. I think it involves you.'

There was a silence from the other end of the phone. 'Jake?'

'Yeah, I'm still here. What do you mean by me being involved?' 'You've got Security clearance for the basement, haven't you?'

'I don't know what you're talking about.'

'Jake, I've seen the clearance sheets.'

'How the hell have you seen them?' Jake asked incredulously.

'I know Carol. She works for Baxter. Direct Secretary. I had her check them before I phoned.'

'John that's very dangerous. You don't understand just how big this thing is.'

'I really don't know anything, Jake. But I do know that there have been two deaths here in the last two days, and I don't want to see any more!'

'Two! What do you mean two?'

'Don't try bluffing me on this one.'

'Listen. You get over here as quick as you can. Don't say anything else on this line. It may be bugged.'

'Jake. Is it that big?'

'Yeah,' Jake said, and put the phone down. Sweat was beginning to form on his brow. John had mistaken the death of the woman as being somehow involved in all of this. He had to think it all over carefully. To tell John could endanger both John and himself, especially if John had been seen snooping around. Jake opened his wardrobe door and pulled out the revolver. Insurance, he thought, and sat down.

Just before John put the receiver down there was a barely audible second click.

21:04 It watched the man walking along the road, following carefully and quietly. It was adapting well, its clawed limbs cutting a path through the dense thicket. The figure paused and turned to look into the bushes, and the creature's head began to elongate out of the bush.

'John!' a voice cried out.

The man turned and walked down the road away from the bushes and the creature slunk back. Noises came from behind it, and it sniffed the air. Its huge head swayed from side to side and then it disappeared after them, the man forgotten.

21:06 'John!' she called, and he turned towards her, the movement and coldness from the bushes forgotten.

'Hi. Where are you going?' he asked.

'I called at your room. You were out. someone saw you walking this way,' Carol said, slightly out of breath. 'John, I think I've found out something that might interest you.'

'What's that?'

'This,' she said, pulling out a large sheet of paper from the bag that hung on her arm. 'These are plans for the latest developments that have taken place to the building. There's a new level, John. A level that doesn't exist?'

'What do you mean, doesn't exist?'

'According to what I've photocopied here, the building was completed in December 1985. Yet you look at it. It's still got the same twelve floors, hasn't it? You remember what happened in December that year? The radiation scare?' John nodded.

'Yeah, well, the building was practically shut down when the leak was checked out for nearly three weeks.'

It watched the man walking along the road, following carefully and quietly. It was adapting well, its clawed limbs cutting a path through the thicket

'Are you telling me that they closed the building down to make alterations?'

'Yes,' she replied, her eyes sparkling. 'They did.'

'But even if they did, they obviously didn't complete whatever they intended to, did they?'

'Oh yes they did, John. They didn't build. They dug. Dug a new basement. There's another level alright. A sub-level!'

'Jesus Christ, Carol! You'd better get in the car with me. We've got to see Jake.'

They climbed into the car and pulled off. Behind them, headlights flashed on, and a car started up. One of its occupants held a walkie-talkie.

21:02 The larger of the four moved slowly under the pile of leaves and twigs, its mandibles snapping at them, cutting them in two, and then throwing them aside. Its head emerged into cold evening air. Slowly, it freed its first pair of limbs and then the second. Using these it then pulled the rest of its glistening body free, its long hind legs twitched in the dimness of the light and slowly it began to rub them together. A noise so inhuman, sang through the air, so high the frequency and intense that no human could hear its beautiful empty song. It played on.

A small squirrel awoke, and made its way sleepily down the branches of a small tree. The creature stopped rubbing its legs, and the song abruptly ceased. It turned to face the little animal, and looked, and knew. The squirrel dropped dead and fell down onto the cold soil. The creature looked at it for a moment or two, and then a strange thought occurred to it that it had never felt before. It reached down and clasped the little body in its claw and slowly tightened, cutting the animal in two. Blood flew into the air as the two halves of the body fell to the ground. The creature clawed more carefully at one of the bleeding halves and lifted it up towards its mouth, dropping the body into its throat. Without pausing, it picked up the other half and dropped that in after the first. Row upon row of newly developed teeth in its throat slashed the little body into small tatters of flesh and broken bones, and they disappeared into the creature's bowels. It thought again, and the thought felt good. Teeth began to grow rapidly nearer its mouth.

Behind it, another creature lifted its head from the lair of twigs, its mouth open wide and its teeth bright. Behind that, a third moved restlessly.

21:16 From his living-room window Jake saw the black car pulling into the driveway. He backed away, pulling out the gun. 'Shit!' he murmured, and ran through the house and out into the garden, leaping over a neighbour's fence. At that moment, his back lane door burst open and two men, guns in hand, stormed up the garden path. Jake lay still, the garden fence partially covering him from sight.

One of the men reached the open back door of the house.

'He's gone!' he said turning around and looking into the gardens that lay next to Jake's house. Jake squeezed off two shots at the figure in the doorway. Both shots hit the man in the abdomen, throwing him back through the doorway and into the house. Blood sprayed the door. His partner spun around and fired wildly in the direction the shots had come from, into the fence. Jake rolled to the left, the bullets throwing up dirt where he had

lain. Jake fired again, missing wildly, and raised himself up to a better position. He quickly took aim, but the figure shot just before him and a fire burned deep in his thigh. His arm jerked high in the air and his finger pulled at the trigger. The top of the intruder's head disappeared in a shower of red and grey matter and his body fell sprawling to the ground, blood pumping from the exposed flesh. Jake screamed and fell, clutching his bleeding thigh, the pain excruciating, making him want to throw up.

Biting his teeth against the pain he hopped off through his neighbour's garden gate and into the lane. Behind him in the other houses, figures huddled in dark corners too afraid to look out of their windows, others ran to the phone and dialled 999.

Once in the lane, Jake half ran, half hopped down and onto the main road.

21:11 John accelerated slightly and looked anxiously into the rear view mirror. 'Do me a favour. Open the glove compartment.'

Carol leant forward and opened the compartment. 'Oh, Christ. A gun! What do you need a gun for!'

'Not me. You. I've got one in my pocket.'

'John, I've never fired a gun before in my life!' she moaned.

'Just point the damn thing, and pull the trigger! It's easy. Now take it out, but be careful, it's loaded,' he warned.

With both hands, she carefully lifted out the gun. 'Oh God,' she whispered.

'And by the way.'

'What,' she asked, looking up at him.

'We're being followed.'

21:55 All four creatures stood in a clearing. Around them lay tattered flesh and small bones of animals. They had grown three and a half feet in the last twenty minutes, and their bodies ached as they continued steadily to expand.

From the right a noise startled them and through the bushes came the creature. Their mother. She looked down at them and began to rub her hind legs together. Her music rose high into the skies. Her four children looked up and simultaneously burst into song. A song beautiful to those who could listen. A song of nature, twisted by man. A song that pulls on the very mind of all that can hear. A song that will control. A song of Death.

They all turned to face the building that lay away in the distance, bright and foreboding. They all thought, and the lights drained and dimmed, flickered and went off. The four smaller creatures swelled in size, their bodies twisting and enlarging. Within two minutes they stood the same height as their mother. The five stopped their thoughts and the lights flickered back to life. The four children raised their heads to the sky, opening their mouths, exposing their razor sharp teeth to the moon. Their fore claws thrashed at the night sky. A scream loud and terrible erupted from the bushes and suddenly the grounds were full of their song. And this time everyone could hear it, not only beast, but man.

Seconds later, they stopped and slowly moved off under the cover of the bushes and shrubs, up towards the buildings that lay ahead. There was so much to be learnt.

END OF PART I

The creature clawed at one of the bleeding halves and lifted it towards its mouth, dropping the body into its throat

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