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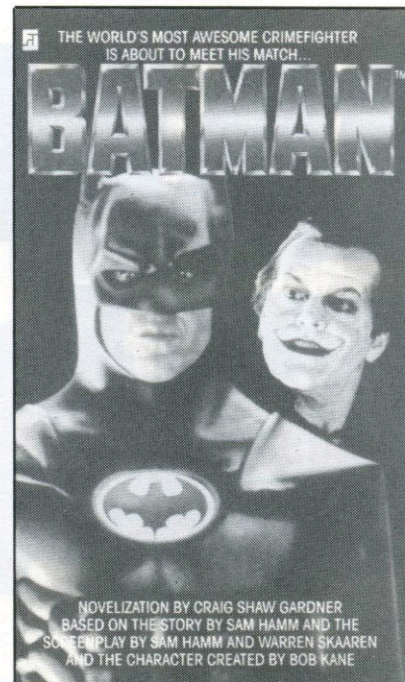
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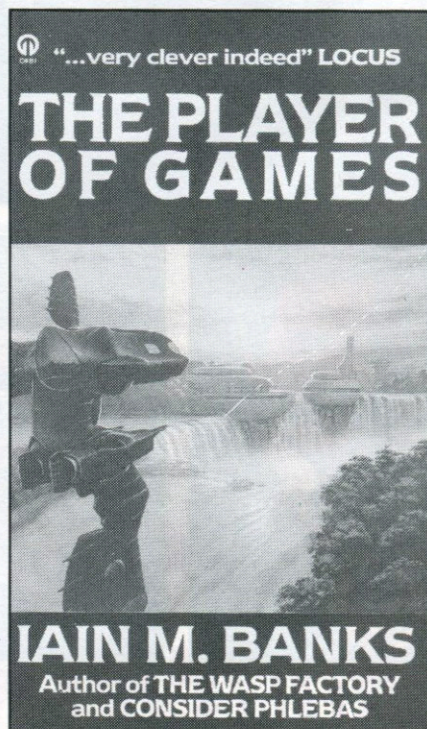


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ISSUE No.9 CONTENTS SEPTEMBER 1989

FEAR FICTION

42 NIGHT PLAGUE
In an extract from the third and final volume in Graham Masterton's chilling series, the forces of evil conspire with meteorological freaks and macabre medieval imagery to lure our heroes into a web of terror

50 EXTRA! EXTRA!
Eight brand new stories to horrify, excite and entrance you

PRO-FILES

8 MONKEY BUSINESS
Science and art collide in the finely crafted novels of Michael Stewart

17 BIG TROUBLE IN CHINATOWN
James Hong raids The Vineyard

18 THE BALL GAME
FX maestro Steve Patino pitches in with Phantasm II

28 THE MANY LIVES OF BATMAN
Alan Grant, the man behind the DC Comics Batman, offers his views on the different incarnations of the Caped Crusader

32 THE ONLY THING IT DOESN'T DO IS MOVE
FEAR explores the fantastic imagination of horror artist John Bolton

37 THE QUIET WOLF
Author and anthologist CL Grant sinks his teeth into the hype surrounding horror fiction

PHENOMENA

31 LIFE ON ANOTHER PLANET
FEAR visits the nation's premiere SF store

LOCATION SHOTS

20 THE MAINE MAN II
In the second half of his tour through Stephen King country Paddy McKillop winds up at the Stanley Hotel. Heeere's Johnny!

REVENANTS

6 NEWS
People, books, movies, videos and plays – all the latest information from Britain and the States

11 MOVIE MAINLINE
Film gossip and new releases

14 VIDEO VIBES
The latest rental releases reviewed

23 OFF THE SHELF
A look at the latest under hard, soft and limp cover

79 AMERICAN NIGHTMARES
Just a conventional month

80 RAISING THE DEAD
Hell – the mail!

82 FEARFUL WINNERS
Look and see if you won any of FEAR's fabulous July competitions

COMPETITIONS

12 PHANTASM II
Ten T-shirts and ten videos to be won

15 KING KONG LIVES!!
Win a furry monster

40 WHAT A BEAST!
Yes, and we've got 500 copies if you'd like one of your very own

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FEAR-9 "Our Bubble May Burst"

Sighs of satisfaction echo around the dank walls of this editorial office. Things are on the move, and I don't just mean tiny monsters that the staff pick up off the carpet and use as their staple diet.

No. But at last the most powerful publishers and book retailers in the land have woken up to the fact that fantasy, horror and SF are sufficiently 'in' to be almost acceptable. Hoardes of human beings are already picking up the books and watching the videos so it's only natural that the big boys should get some of the action.

And we welcome them with open arms. After all, if any company can spread the word about fantasy it's got to be the giant retail and distribution chain W H Smith. Their fantasy book promotion, called Realms of Fantastic Fiction, will draw the genre to the attention of many more readers and, hopefully, open the way for greater expansion. I for one would like to see even more fantasy novels top the charts.

Publishers such as Transworld and Random House can also help prise the jaws of the genres open so more people can look down its throat. As you may know, we are about to embark on an unprecedented quest to find new short story writing talent in our Prime Evil Competition with Transworld. The competition will officially be launched at the British Fantasy Convention in Birmingham during early October but, for those of you wondering if you have to attend to enter, never fear. All the info will be available in **FEAR** and at bookshops stocking the *Prime Evil* anthology.

The other big boom area in the fantasy genre is that of limited editions. Everybody seems to be involved with them and in the past year we've seen limiteds of James Herbert's *Haunted*, Clive Barker's *Weaveworld* and *Cabal* and, just recently, a new line from Random House.

These limiteds are becoming more popular and accessible, but herein lies a danger and warning which could be applied to the sudden massive expansion in the genres. Mentioning no names, I have heard that some limited editions are being

overprinted, which means that there are more books out there in dealerland than there should be. Tut-tut. Some of these books are often described as presentation copies which change hands and often come into the general pool of limiteds. Thus the description 'limited edition' no longer holds true and the market is damaged for everybody. The message? Always be careful when buying expensive editions. Go to a reputable dealer – you'll usually find them in our classifieds section at the back of the magazine – especially if you're a newcomer.

Sounds like scaremongering? Not really. The attitude which creates such situations could move into other areas of the market as it becomes more profitable in the UK.

You've no doubt heard of the bubble bursting. Don't provide the pin.

John Gilbert



FOWLER PROMO HITS THE ROOF

The publication of Christopher Fowler's *Roofworld* last year gained the author a strong cult following, with the hardback going out of print before its official publication date. The paperback is scheduled from Arrow on 21 September and the publishers are planning a unique promotional campaign, including a commercial to be screened nationwide in movie houses.

Arrow Publicity Director, Jane Douglas, says, 'We are so excited by this new young writer that we are promoting the book in a most innovative and dramatic way with what I believe is a publishing first – a massive cinema advertising campaign reaching 82 per cent of all cinema audiences'.



Roofworld cinema commercial. Photo: Frederick Rotkopf

The thirty-second ad, which may also be seen on television, was produced by Fowler's own company, The Creative Partnership, of which he is codirector, along with James Sturgeon. The Soho-based outfit specialises in movie trailers and has many to its credit including *Alien*, *The Last Emperor* and *The Living Daylights*.

Fowler's new novel *Prayerdevil* (originally *The Devil in London*) – a reworking of MR James' *Casting the Runes* – is published next summer. His collection, *The Bureau of Lost Souls*, appears in September.

Coming Soon in FEAR: An exclusive short story by Christopher Fowler.

Stan Nicholls

PHANTOM OF THE CASTLE

Congratulations to Castle Home Video, purveyors of *The Attic* and *The Cellar*, for expanding so much last year that they've taken on a new name and bigger premises.

The newly christened Castle Pictures has also picked up some big-name movies for release next year. Top of the shopping list, as far as we're concerned, is *The Phantom of the Opera*, starring Robert 'Freddy' Englund as the injured musician and Stephanie Lawrence as his paramour. It opens in the States during August and is set for a massive push in this country next year.

Castle has also captured the Edgar Allan Poe collection with such notables as Herbert Lom, in *The Mask of the Red Death*, and Donald Pleasance in *The Fall of*

the House of Usher. It will be joined by *The Sleeping Car*, starring David An American Werewolf in London Naughton, followed by Alex Lost Boys Winter in *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*.

More video and theatrical releases are promised, so it looks as if Castle Pictures has hit the big time.

THE LADY KILLERS

Exciting feminist developments from The Women's Press as they launch some new additions to their critically acclaimed science fiction list.

Top of the bill has to be Ursula K LeGuin's *The Language of the Night*, edited by Susan Woods. It's a collection of essays on sci-



ence fiction and fantasy which covers the political, moral and aesthetic aspects of her work and the genres in general.

Suzy McKee Charnas rereleases two of her fantasy classics, *Walk to the End of the World* and *Motherlines* under one cover. The former creates a horrific vision of a post-holocaust male dominated society while the latter deals with an Amazonian world.

A series of short stories from Rosaleen Love is provided in *The Total Devotion Machine and Other Stories*. A variety of contemporary and prehistoric creatures impinge upon human consciousness and conscience with devastating results.

More information about The Women's Press range can be obtained from The Women's Press, 34 Great Sutton Street, London, EC1V 0DX.

LIMITED LEGENDS

Publisher Random House has launched two series of SF, fantasy and horror limited editions.

Legend Limited Editions Number One is Jonathan Carroll's *Child Across the Sky*. Published one month before the trade version, it constitutes a world first edition, and is restricted to 250 signed and numbered copies. Bound in dark grey cloth with silver embossed title and edges, it comes in a slipcase and has a silk divider.

The first Century/Arrow limited edition – unlike Legend, an unnumbered series – is *The Bureau of Lost Souls*, by *Roofworld* author Christopher Fowler. As with the Carroll, this is a genuine first, and also has a signed print-run of 250. Both volumes retail for £35.00.

Random Century says there has been strong specialist dealer response to the titles, with the Carroll expected to go out of print almost immediately, and around seventy per cent of the Fowler pre-sold as of the beginning of July.

'It's a blast to be able to publish lovely books,' says Legend's Deborah Beale. 'I have heard from dealers that the limited edition market is depressed, with too many overpriced and overprinted titles appearing from houses who don't know how to publish SF.

'I had the opportunity to publish limited editions and realised that, providing we didn't put them out in too large a number and they had high production values, we could produce attractive volumes which would strongly appeal to collectors.'

The second Legend limited edition, due early 1990, is *The Blood of Roses* by Tanith Lee (see interview next month). The next from Century/Arrow is again by Christopher Fowler and is his new novel, *Prayerdevil*, which will appear in the summer.

The publishers say that they see their limited lines as 'designed to highlight writers whose work combines originality and entertainment,' and intend further titles at the end of the year and into 1991. All will be first editions. 'These will include something very special,' promises editor Beale.

Stan Nicholls

IF A PICTURE . . .

Book cover artwork is the first line of attack by publishers hungry for sales, but the artist tends almost to be ignored, with a simple credit on the back cover of the novel's flyleaf. Grafton Books, however, is about to change all that with the *Foss Poster Portfolio*, a collection of SF artwork by illustrator Chris Foss.

Foss's work has regularly appeared on book jackets and he is famed for his realisation work on the movies *Superman*, *Dune*, *Flash Gordon* and *Alien*. He is also working on a major French film project for which he will supervise the construction of models and sets. The ten-print, A2 portfolio will be availa-

ble in October, priced at £12.95.

Transworld is also on the portfolio trail, launching the *Josh Kirby Poster Book* to tie in with the release of *Wyrd Sisters* by Terry Pratchett. What's the connection? Well, Josh has illustrated all the Discworld novels and Pratchett's other books – *Truckers* is released in Sep-



tember, price £7.95, from Doubleday.

All those illustrations, together with portraits of Rincewind, Death, and The Luggage, appear in the collection which goes on sale on December 10.

REALMS OF FANTASTIC FICTION

WH Smith's Realms of Fantastic Fiction promotion (in which a certain fantasy, horror and science fiction magazine will be prominently featured) also includes a competition for a unique James Herbert fanpack.

To mark the publication of *Haunted*, James Herbert's new paperback, WH Smith are offering twenty winners the chance

to claim a *Haunted* watch, T-shirt, pen and car sticker, none of which are available by any other means . . .

Clive Barker also features in this campaign, as author of the introduction to the Realms of Fantastic Fiction leaflet, in which he stresses the universal importance of fantasy, horror and science fiction literature.

Richard Mabb, Sales and Promotions Manager for WH Smith, says that Barker's comments are reflected in the wide range of genre fiction available on the shelves: 'We offer something to suit all tastes, with a wide selection of fantasy and horror writing, from Clive Barker to Batman. We're absolutely delighted that we have two of the most important names in this field to introduce and round off our leaflet.'

If you want to find out more, or obtain details of how to enter the competition, then drop into your local branch of WH Smith between 15 August and 11 September and pick up a leaflet.

FREDDY KRUEGER: FOETAL ATTRACTION

The Freddy Krueger craze continues as the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series takes a startling turn.

A new nightmare begins another frightening cycle of terror with the world's number one horror host at the helm. The invincible Freddy wants revenge for Alice Johnson's devastating slaughter waged in her role as *The Dream Master* in the last nightmare film. But Freddy is weak, too weak to continue his killing spree against humanity and the deadly child murderer knows he must find access to the living world.

Alice Johnson, survivor of Part IV, is pregnant with boyfriend Dan's baby. While she contemplates the new life taking shape inside her, Freddy makes his comeback by entering the child's dreams. As you may have guessed, Freddy becomes the child. He wants what he can't have any more, real flesh and blood life, so that he can die again and be reborn as a more powerful force.

The story is fascinating and the special effects are excellent. The film's likely to be a blockbuster when it hits Britain next year. In the meantime, look out for *The Dream Master* on rental video from CBS/Fox at Christmas.

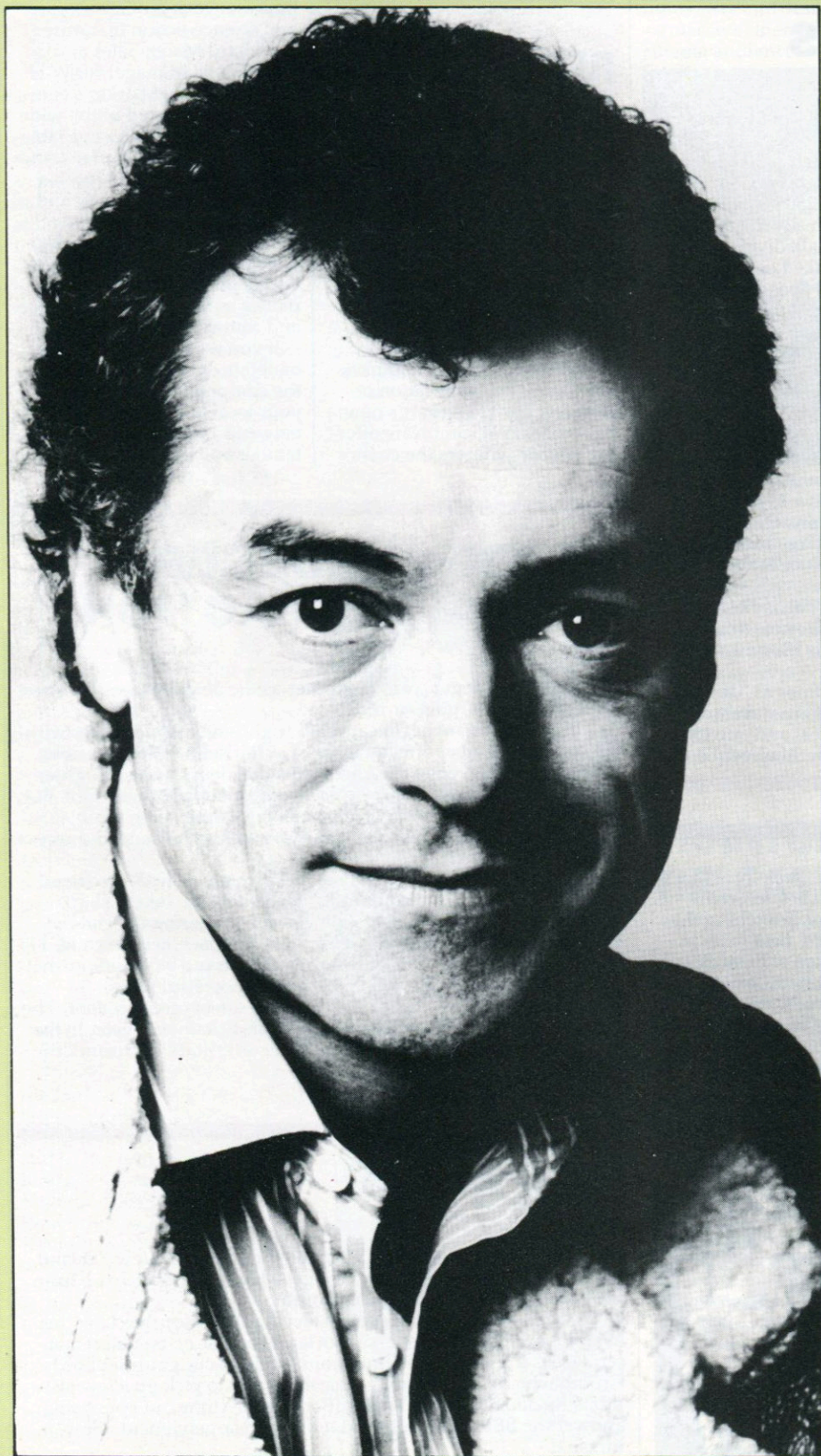
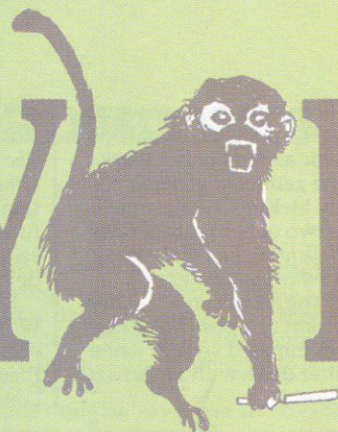
David Burdett

BAD NEWS

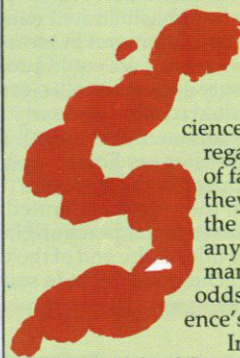
Bad Taste, the deliciously gory horror shocker from New Zealand horror director Peter Jackson, will get a big theatrical release from Blue Dolphin distribution next month.

The film, which will be released on video by Colourbox later this year, is bound for controversy, not least because of its subject matter. It tells the story of the infamous intergalactic gourmet Lord Crumb who drops in amongst earth society to pick up a few tasty titbits for alien fast food chains. Sounds anything but appetising, and yet the BBFC have allowed it through largely uncut. How unusual.

MONKEY B



Author Michael Stewart braves the unexplored and often dangerous frontiers of science in his brilliantly written thrillers. His latest book, *Grace*, is already a bestseller and the hugely successful movie version of his first novel, *Monkeyshines*, is about to hit the UK. John Gilbert puts the man under the microscope.



science has always been regarded as the antithesis of faith. Like oil and water they will not mix because the scientist cannot accept anything on trust and many theologians are at odds with some of science's viewpoints.

In his latest novel, however, Michael Stewart takes on those widely held conceptions. He holds that science is one big mystery and its students should be ready to have the faith to look forward for new discoveries. *Grace* tells the story of a young girl who suddenly has what appear to be visions of the Virgin Mary, accompanied by miracles of healing. The scientific community, in the shape of the girl's doctor, predictably will not believe in the supernatural event while the Church initially accepts it with an open mind.

Stewart explains: 'I see it as a conflict between reason and unreason. Science would look at religion as superstition and myth, magic, mystery . . . Areas outside the cool, rational tradition. The scientist could never say the Creed. He would say, as in *Grace*, how could Christ be male, because if this really is a virgin conception then the chromosome would have to be female.

'As a counter to that, the religious man would say this is the mystery itself. But what I find curious is that, taken at a further level, the conflict between unreason and science does actually break down and from the little I know about particle physics, at that level you almost can see God at work.



BUSINESS

Einstein has a wonderful quote about how God is at the root of all physics and science and I know many scientists who are deeply believing people.'

LUCKY SPARK

Does *he* have a concept of God? 'Yes, I do, although it obviously couldn't be of a bearded man in the sky. I think it's a force, and it could probably be a force that would one day be observed in some sort of precise instrument. There's a man called Sheldrake who wrote a book called *The Presence of the Past* and he uses the phrase 'morphic resonance'. It's quite a complex notion that's all to do with rhythm and vibration levels and the Greek concept of the Harmonies. I'm not sure I could write it on a blackboard but one does know sometimes that one is tun-

"The scientist . . . would say, as in Grace, how could Christ be male, because if this really is a virgin conception then the chromosome would have to be female"

ing into something and it's a power for good. Whether there is therefore a counter-resonance which is a power for evil and corruption . . . I think, probably yes.'

Stewart also believes that the intuitional, or tuning-in, process operates when he is writing a book. 'There is a lucky spark, there must be, but God knows how you find that spark. I tear my hair out, I read endlessly, I go down all kinds of *cul de sacs*. Finally, something happens, some ideas gels. In the case of *Monkeyshines* it so happened that I saw in a newspaper about a monkey trained to look after a quadriplegic and I thought this is really interesting. This is man and animal, man just being pure brain within a cabbage body and a monkey being pure brawn. And also the whole lovely interface between man and the other primates - which I explore in my next book.

The inspiration for *Grace* came about while he was driving through Patima in Portugal, a place which is associated with visionary experiences. 'I thought, why don't you really argue it out? What can they be? I remember reading Oliver Sacks' massive book on migraine in which he tries to suggest that a lot of religious visions are nothing but hallucinations of a migraine type. So I thought, what happens if there's a character who does have visions which one set of people sees as being divinely inspired and another set as being physiologically caused. Where is the truth, and what happens to that character caught in the crossfire?'

Stewart garners a great deal of respect

from the scientific community which sees his books not only as entertainment but also as a method by which the questions posed by science can be explored. 'I think I can call on any scientist more or less anywhere and say, 'Listen, tell me about what you're doing.' I'll give them a copy of one of my books if they haven't read one and they'll know that I won't dishonour their work by making it sensationalist. But I don't think one needs to, because there's enough extraordinary stuff going on at the frontiers of science.

'I mean, *Prodigy* which is my previous book to *Grace* is all about genetic engineering and I met a man and said, 'Listen, I want you to tell me how to make a prodigy child.' And he said you've got to find the master gene that triggers off other genes and lists how it could be done and how to introduce it into the embryo. You don't need to sensationalise it because there's enough that's dramatic on the edge of science.'

RISKY BUSINESS

Research, for story and fact, is an integral part of each novel. Indeed, Stewart's work could be described as fictional, where reality blends with not altogether proven scientific theory in a believable form. 'I think they're probably about eighty per cent fact, then the last bit is of the novelist's imagination just nudges it over the frontier. They're certainly not futuristic and they're always based on breakthroughs that are currently happening in science.'

Stewart's career has had some odd twists which you would in no way associate with a scientific background. Even his education veered towards the arts rather than science and, at one early point in his life, he formed a company with an 'Arthur Daley-type' character, which sold ex-stock. 'I did Latin and Greek at university and that leads nowhere . . . but everywhere! Then I went to business school, into banking and management consultancy. Then I went into business of my own with varying success and I ended up with this wonderful character who looked like Henry Cooper, and he and I had this amazing duo.

'We bought redundant stock from companies and flogged these things ultimately into the street markets through wholesalers and, for the time we did it, made a colossal amount of money; but then we overreached and got into oil and that sort of thing.

'I lost my respect for money in its own right, and I thought that making money in itself is not enough. Life's about what you do with it. So I thought, well let's try and do the real thing. I'd written a lot of short stories that I showed to a friend of mine who was an editor at Macmillan and he said: 'Lovely short stories, but who wants short stories, write a novel.'

FATAL DISTRACTION

Stewart wrote two political 'pot boiler' thrillers for Arrow, and then decided to write a book that he wanted to read. *Monkeyshines* was the result and is, coincidentally, the first of his novels to be made into a feature film, directed by George Romero. Despite the director's association with the horror genre, the movie is a beautifully paced thriller which does the book justice and shows that Michael Stewart is unlikely to suffer the movie curse which has dogged authors such as Stephen King and Dean R Koontz.

'The movie is not a horror movie. It's horrific and it has one or two horror stunts. For instance, though I don't want to spoil it for you, there's a *Fatal Attraction* trick at the end which is the result entirely of a quarrel between the distributors and the producers. It was made when *Fatal Attraction* had swept the board and, as is the way in America, everybody had to do a *Fatal Attraction* kick in the balls. George Romero was strongly against it but he was pretty much overruled by the distributors.

'He sees this book and the movie as a psychological thriller. I spoke to him when I was in Pittsburg and he was saying that he saw this as his new direction, away from mainstream horror.

"I lost my respect for money in its own right, and I thought that making money in itself is not enough. Life's about what you do with it"

'It's a brave movie. He's done tremendous justice to an extremely complicated story and I think that one or two of the pitfalls of the movie are because he's tried almost to keep too many threads of the book. The best movies, in a way, come out of novellas or long short stories and, if you keep too literally to a book, you have an overrun of stuff. But I think the movie is wonderful, it's bloody scary. It's a real, real triumph.'

PARALLELS

'Seeing the movie has taught me quite a lot about writing books. For instance, the movie starts with a bang, when Alan has his accident as the credits are rolling, which is exactly how movies should happen and I think, probably how a book ought to as well.'

Stewart's next book will follow a similar style to his previous bestsellers, a well-wrought mixture of science, character and action. 'It's called *Birthright* and that'll be a really sinister story in its own way. It's about a Neanderthal boy. There's quite a strong scientific theory that certain sittings of humanoids in very little known areas of the world could be relics of Neanderthal man, our caveman cousin. A boy of this kind gets brought back to civilisation and it's about what happens to him and it's about ourselves. I've almost come to the end of that story and I've got the glimmerings of an idea for the next one . . . but only the glimmerings.'

BURTON BACK TO BAT?

Yes, John Glenday returns In the Flesh with news of a possible new Barker movie, Roger Corman's epic Frankenstein Unbound, the return of Hannibal the Cannibal and the lowdown on Batman 2.

Let's put the record straight once and for all. The sequel to *Highlander* is simply going to be called *Highlander II*, it will have a script by Ross Johnson and feature the Incas in the depths of South America. There's a brand new bad guy - details unavailable as yet - and word is that Clancy Brown will not return.

Turning to good, but slightly roguish, guys a recent chat with SF author Harry Harrison bore the news that the film rights for *Stainless Steel Rat* are still in negotiation. No large figures have been discussed, so I guess Stanley Kubrick is not now involved.

In the Flesh, the long short story from Clive Barker's *Books of Blood*, could be the new film project for *Critters II* director Mick Garris. Hopefully this one will get off the ground soon, as *Son of Celluloid* appears to have

been iced for the near future.

From horror to SF and Peter Weller is now out of *Frankenstein Unbound*, the movie based on the brilliant Brian Aldiss book, and on his way to work on *Robocop II* for director Irvin Kershner. The script is rumoured to have the Murphy character deprogrammed of his inhibitive directives, thus releasing any humanity in the remainder of his brain. And talking of brains, or elephantine heads, John Hurt will fill Weller's shoes on Corman's Frankie movie.

The Thomas Harris novel *The Silence of the Lambs* is destined for the big screen. Gene Hackman was impressed enough to buy the rights but it's unlikely that he will play the psychopathic Dr Hannibal Lector. The betting is that Brian Cox will return to the role once he has finished his West End season with Julie Walters in *Frankie and Johnny*.

WATCHMEN ON HOLD

John Landis is toying with the idea of a brand new Lone

Ranger movie, although I hope Dan Aykroyd doesn't want to be a hero, remember all the fuss about his new role?

Rumours of *Blade Runner II* are still being bandied about, *Watchmen* appears to be off for the moment and *Batman II* is likely to start shooting at Pinewood in April 1990. Word is that, despite his protestations, Tim Burton will direct and Jack Nicholson will appear in some role or other . . .

I'm sorry to say that Scooby-Doo is heading for a live action movie and the Henson company could be animating the large brown dog into existence. The big question is, who will play Shaggy?

And finally, Brian Dennehy and Brian Brown are destined to return in *FX II*. I didn't know that *F/X Murder By Illusion* was that big a hit.

STOP PRESS! There's talk of a *Maniac Cop II* and more to follow. It's nice to see that Medusa haven't totally dropped out of the horror market.

PET SEMETARY

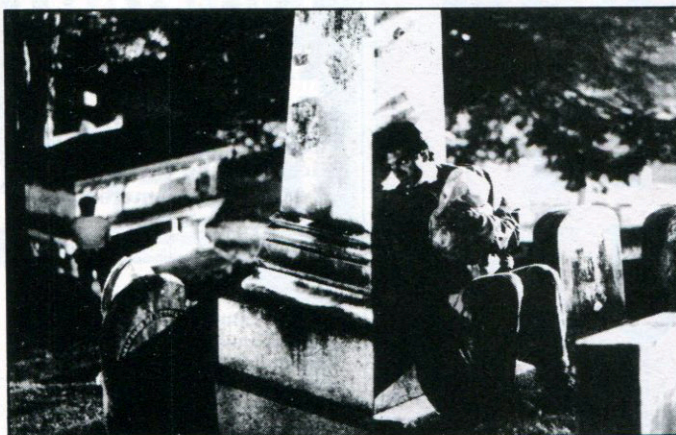
Starring: Starring: Dale Midkiff, Fred Gwynne, Denise Crosby
Director Mary Lambert
Distributor UIP
Cert 18

A Stephen King movie that works! Well, almost. Penned by the man himself, *Pet Semetary* is an unsettling tale of burial rights and resurrection which even King sometimes regrets having written as a novel. The storyline, which sticks closely to the book, has Dr Louise Creed and family moving to Ludlow (!), Maine where the Doc has just won a medical post at a nearby university.

He soon learns of the town's pet semetary from Jud Crandall, a local oldster played with (thankfully) understatement by Fred (*The Munsters*) Gwynn; in fact, if he had played a typical backwoods Maine resident it's unlikely English audiences would have understood him.

The semetary becomes the focal point of Creed's encroaching real life nightmares which slowly involve his family as their cat, Churchill, is splattered in a road accident and miraculously comes back to life, a changed fee-line.

King is not finished yet, however. What would happen if a human being was planted in the



semetary? The author knows and he tells all with added relish. Unfortunately, the maudlin mood tends to wander during the film. The Stephen King cameo, for instance, isn't the best planned part of the movie. Here we are, in a semetary during a funeral service.

Sombre, right?

Not according to our audience. When King came on as the local preacher the kids went wild and the movie's mood was utterly destroyed: there's no respect for the dead these days.

On the whole, though, *Pet Semetary* is a celebration of horror. Its unpleasant overtones, which left acid in the pit of my stomach

for days, are only bettered by a trip to a funeral home; not to view the deceased but to pick out a casket.

The principals are well cast, including an engaging boy called Miko Hughes who plays the Creeds' son Gage - and we all know what happens to him in the book, don't we?!

Pet Semetary is a must for all horror fans. It's gory and intelligent, not a combination which you readily find in the genre these days. Go out and see it. That's an order!

John Gilbert

*US PREVIEW COURTESY
 PARAMOUNT PICTURES

THE FLY II

Starring: Eric Stoltz, Daphne Zuniga, Lee Richardson, John Getz, Frank Turner, Ann Marie Lee, Gary Chalk, Harley Cross
Director Chris Wales
Distributor Twentieth Century Fox
Cert 18

'Like father like son,' critic Bob Massey said to me after viewing the sequel to David Cronenberg's *The Fly*, cleverly titled *The Fly II* (as opposed to my own choice, *The Flies*). In my column for *The Edge* magazine I had prematurely stated that 'Cronenberg's *Fly* is undone!', predicting at that time that the sequel would be abysmal.

I am delighted to say that Chris Walas and Eric Stoltz have forced me to eat those ill-chosen words, for their collaboration on *The Fly II* has resulted in a gritty, hard-hitting movie which takes nothing away from its parent (except, of course, Jeff Goldblum, Geena Davis and David Cronenberg). It adds little to the original either, but when one has seen the awful *Freddy's Revenge*, which undid everything that was good about *A Nightmare on Elm Street* in less than half an hour, one does not expect



FEAR
competition

THE TALL MAN WANTS YOU

Before you rush in where not even the dead dare to tread, here's a warning from our sponsor.

THOSE DEADLY silver spheres are back – yet again – this time on video, and we've got ten, plus T-shirts, to give away.

Phantasm II is not a movie you can easily ignore. The anti-hero is a mortician, the means of death are diabolical, and there's no happy ending. If you want to win a copy of this tasteful little tale, handsomely donated by **Guild Home Video**, just tell us **the nickname given to the silver ball by FX artist Steve Patino**. What could be simpler?

Put your answer on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope and send it to **Golden Ball Competition, FEAR, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB**.

All our usual red tape applies.



a great deal from sequels, particularly when key members of the crew from the original picture are absent.

The Fly II opens with the violent birth of the late Seth Brundle's son, witnessed by slimy cripple, Stathis Barnes (the only member of the cast of *The Fly* to reappear, here in two delightful cameos). The boy (played by Eric Stoltz, whose excellent performance in *Mask* a few years ago makes him no stranger to complex makeup), although born inside a nightmarish caul, soon develops under the watchful eye of Seth Brundle's, heretofore unseen, boss.

The plot unfolds at a healthy pace and, although implausible at times, manages to provide a coherent follow-up to Cronenberg's movie. Martin Brundle is encouraged to uncover the secrets of his father's successful, but ill-starred, teleportation devices – the telepods – using videotapes of Brundle senior's experiments (includ-

ing some footage cut from the original film – a real 'fix' for Cronenberg completists).

Brundle junior has his own problems, however: his father's insect genes are proving stronger than his human ones, and he begins the inevitable metamorphosis – with refreshingly unpredictable results.

While not as tightly scripted and keenly directed as *The Fly*, and although Eric occasionally looks downright silly in his makeup, there are enough twists, shocks, special effects and grisly scenes to make the sequel a worthwhile and memorable project. The pathos of Cronenberg's film returns with a vengeance, and the edge-of-seat tension which made first time viewers of *The Fly* so breathless also remains. If we must make sequels to films as brilliant as *The Fly*, at least let's make 'em like this!

Dave Hughes
Paris

THE ABYSS

Starring: Ed Harris, Mary Elizabeth Mastantonio, Michael Biehn
Director James Cameron
Distributor Twentieth Century Fox
Cert 18

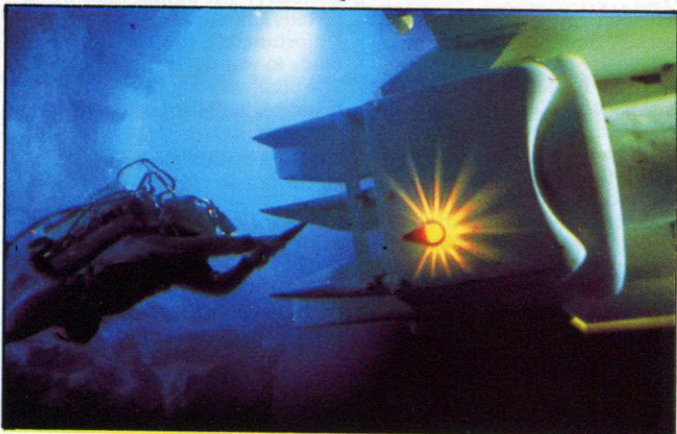
James Cameron's underwater movie masterpiece is about to open in the States and has its UK release in October. It's the film that has to restore the reputation of the sub-aqua sub-genre, as all others that have gone before have

nose-dived.

The plot contains some differences to those of the other movies but it's still a search and rescue scene. A nuclear sub has vanished into the depths and a team of civilian divers is ordered to search for the vessel. They discover a massive abyss, a bottomless cavity, on the floor of the Atlantic ocean and some of the weirdest creatures you're likely to see on the screen this year.

Hell, everything's different about this underwater voyage. The stars can act, the creatures cause menace and awe, and it looks as though James Cameron will have a hit on his hands. More – exclusive – news next issue.

Bob Rachin



MONKEYSHINES: AN EXPERIMENT IN FEAR

Starring: John Beghe, John Pankow, Kate McNeil, Boo Director George A Romero
Distributor Rank Cert 18



Shame! *Monkeyshines* has been moved from an autumn launch to March of next year. But, as we're running an interview with author Michael Stewart, we thought we ought to give you a sneak preview of this wonderful movie with a proper review following next year.

The film starts with a smash at the beginning, as athlete Allan Mann is crippled in an accident. His friend Geoffrey Fisher has been experimenting with intelligence in Capuchin monkeys and donates one of these critters, called Ella, to Allan.

Man and monkey soon become bonded by an almost telepathic link and Ella becomes Allan's arms and legs. Everything goes well until mother arrives to baby her boy. Acquaintances start to die, and Mann begins to wonder whether his increasing intolerance to all around him—and Ella's moonlight flits—have anything to do with the murders.

Monkeyshines is a movie to look out for, but don't let that put you off reading the book. Romero develops some interesting diversities in plot and character from those in the book, and one can be viewed or read without damaging the effect of the other.

Bob Rachine

*FEAR US PREVIEW

STOMACH-TURNING
GROTESQUERIE
GONE BESERK!

Alan Jones, STARBURST

BAD
TASTE

18



produced and directed by PETER JACKSON
with PETER O'HERNE MIKE MINETT TERRY POTTER
PETER JACKSON CRAIG SMITH

OPENS SEPTEMBER 15 PRINCE CHARLES cinema LEC. SO. 437-8181

THE VINEYARD

Starring: James Hong, Karen Witter, Michael Wong, Lars Wanberg, Cheryl Madsen, Rue Douglas

Director Bill Rice, James Hong
Distributor New World Video
Cert 18

The moulderingly, elderly Doctor Elson Po has a recipe for eternal life, which involves an ancient amulet and the blood of young men and women.

He stole the amulet from his mother in eighteenth century China and killed his father with a large sword which now hangs from a wall in his sumptuous living room in a very twentieth century American house.



Po entices his victims to his island stronghold with the promise of parts in a movie which he intends to shoot in his vineyards. These lucky kids, however, soon become blood sacrifices and, on occasions, even end up in the wine vats.

The movie is very confused for a number of reasons. Firstly, the only reason for the vineyard's appearance in the movie seems to be as host for the zombie dead of Po's experiments; secondly, why does Po's mother remain alive, albeit very old, and locked up in

her room, when she can pose such a magical threat to the doctor? Finally, why does Po leave the evidence of his extended life in his library where the film's young journalist will easily uncover it?

None of the answers I could come up with were plausible enough to save this bit of nonsense. I couldn't stop myself laughing at some of the more incredible bits of unintentional farce – and, in this respect, I was not the only member of the audience to burst into uncontrollable fits of mirth.

The Vineyard works well as low budget schlock and it garnered a favourable response from the preview audience. It posed a good,

original idea but what a pity that some of the illogical plot strands strangled this production.
John Gilbert

Thanks to Stefan and Alan for the screening of *The Vineyard* which I saw at Shock Around the Clock. The festival came too late for our press purposes so we were unable to include a substantial report, but the programme was strong, we all had a great time as usual, and we'll obviously give plenty of warning in time for the next one.

BAD BLOOD

Starring: Linda Blair, Troy Donahue

Director Chuck Vincent
Distributor Colourbox
Cert 18, 100 mins

Troy Donahue, fresh from his sexual antics in *Dr Alien*, teams up with Linda Blair, star of *The Exorcist I and II*, in a psychological thriller about a boy and his mama.

Ted Barnes (Donahue) finds his real mother, after twenty-three

years away from her apron strings, but she's not the sort of parent you'd want to have. She was mad enough when she had to give up her baby, but when Ted comes back into her life she goes plain insane and sees her murdered husband's features in her son's face.

It's not often that women go off their rockers. Until recently Norman Bates and co had the psycho situation sewn up. But Blair is used to being a little devil, and now she can be a big psycho. *Bad Blood* isn't the best movie for her to choose to come out of the closet with, but it's two main movers make it an event which is just as entertaining as some of Colourbox's other releases (*Ghosthouse II*

and *Dr Alien*, to name but two). If you've got two hours to spare and don't have tickets to see *Bad Taste* – which Colourbox have for video release later this year – then settle down and prepare for this shocker.

Mark Westerby

SHE DEVILS ON WHEELS

Starring: Betty Connel, Ruby Tuesday

Director Herschell Gordon Lewis

Distributor Palace Video
Cert 18, 88 mins

HG *Blood Feast* Lewis was seeking a new profit-making film genre in 1968, after he had had the gore market. He homed in on the female biker market with *She Devils*, but didn't forget the gorehounds by whom he was already held in high esteem.

The *She Devils* are a bunch of wholesome women bikers called the Man Eaters who, in their adventures, display their contempt for the male of the species by various blood lettings and, in one extreme, decapitation.

These girls really are tough: Lewis used an existing gang called the Cut Throats, a female



chapter of the Miami Iron Cross gang, as actors, in an attempt to convey a sense of realism. The only problem with this is that the girls can't act like true thespians.

A major selling point of the movie was the *Blinding Colour*, which is truly amazing. It's like watching a rainbow, the picture quality is excellent, and you can almost feel the grooviness of the Sixties reaching out.

Herschell got it right this time and *She Devils* was his second most successful feature, next to the now world famous *Blood Feast*. In the final line of the movie the 'female hellcats' sum up its whole spirit. 'We're swinging chicks on motors, we're man eaters on wheels'.

Says it all really.
John Glenday

THE HAMMER HORROR COLLECTION

Starring: Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee

Director Various

Distributor Warner Bros

Warner's sell-thru video division has come up with some tasty morsels during the past year, first with *The Stephen King Collection* – see Issue 3 – and now *The Hammer Horror Collection*. It includes *Dracula Has Risen From the Grave*, *Taste the Blood of Dracula*, *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* and *To the Devil a Daughter*, all of which retail at £9.99.

Peter Cushing is cast as the much misunderstood Baron Frankenstein in *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* (97 mins), this time resorting to murder to find new victims. As a doctor at an insane asylum, he seizes the opportunity to transplant the surgeon's brain into a new body.

Unfortunately the hybrid creature has no conscience and

threatens to destroy the Baron's life and, worse still, his anonymity.

Taste the Blood of Dracula (97 mins) stars Cushing and Christopher Lee in their usual roles, and begins when Lord Courtley, the vile Satanist, buys the Count's cloak, signet ring and a phial of dried blood. A black ritual follows in which the Prince of Darkness rejoins the undead. The original cast included Vincent Price, but he had to bow out because of other engagements.

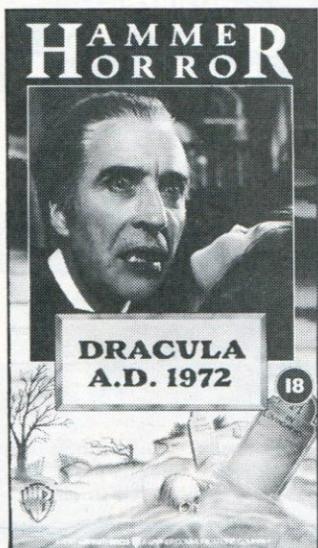
On to *Scars of Dracula* (92 mins), where the small village of Kleinenberg is threatened with the curse of vampirism when Dracula is resurrected with a spattering of bats' blood. This movie was sequentially followed by *Dracula Has Risen From the Grave* (89 mins) in which the blood-sucker is resurrected again to wreak havoc in the same Transylvanian village. This time, however, Monsignor Rupert Davis is

recruited by the church to put an end to Dracula's dark reign.

The final movie in this excellent collection is *To The Devil . . . a Daughter* (89 mins) which has Lee cast in an unusual role as a priest intent on stopping Satanists using a young girl's soul to create a homunculus – 'minature man' – of the demon Astaroth. The film is a particular favourite of mine, although it went through some tricky transformations before it reached the screen. Author Dennis Wheatley sold the rights to Christopher Lee's production company, Charlemagne, which unfortunately ceased production after the flop of its first film. Hammer then bought the rights.

The Hammer Collection is an excellent package of movies, particularly if you're a Hammer fan – though maybe you shouldn't be a completist, as some of the film were cut before they got to video. Segments from the finales of both *Scars of Dracula* and *Dracula Has Risen From the Grave* are amongst the most well known of the snips, though I would buy both films for their flair and inventiveness – in particular *Risen . . .*

Taste the Blood of Dracula is, in



my view, a particularly weak example of the Count's films – with only *Dracula 1972AD* coming off worse. Similarly, *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* is not the best example of the Baron's adventures.

John Gilbert

GRIEVOUS BODILY HARM



Starring: Colin Forbes, John Walters, Bruno Lawrence, Shane Briant, Caz Lederman, Joy Bell

Director Mark Joffe

Distributor Castle Pictures

Cert 18, 90 mins

A college teacher with a volatile temperament believes that his recently deceased 'wife' is alive. He tries to convince his friends that he's seen her but they all think he's mad: and he is.

So convinced is he that she is alive that he kills all those friends whom he believes are involved in the 'conspiracy' surrounding her death and then goes after her. Simultaneously, a corrupt journalist investigates the murders and soon realises that the teacher is involved. The punchline should be obvious but it tops an above

average thriller with a strong cast and a sense of humour. One suspects that you are meant to loathe Briant's sleazy journo character but anyone who can get away with what he does during the movie, and lead the police on a merry hop, deserves full marks for survival genius – as does this stylish thriller.

John Gilbert



Yes, after a truly mammoth heart transplant, Kong is back on his feet and in **lurve**. We thought you'd want to be the first to see his latest tall story so we've got . . .

TEN COPIES OF THIS TERRIFIC CBS/FOX VIDEO TO GIVE AWAY!

IT'S THE GREATEST show on Earth. I mean, how much more spectacular could you get than one massive monkey? Two massive lovestruck monkeys! If you want to win one – a video that is – just answer the following question. *Who played Kong's original girlfriend?*

Put your answer on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope and address it to *Furry Friends Competition, FEAR, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB*. Usual rules apply to all human readers under the height of seven feet six inches.

SHADOW DANCING

Starring: Nadine Van der Velde, Christopher Plummer

Director Lewis Furey

Distributor Collins Home

Video

Cert 15, 100 mins

Collins Home Video launch into the horror market with an effective Gothic thriller which enters the world of dance in a most dramatic way.

Talented dancer Jessica wins a part in a new musical when a cast member falls victim to a rather suspect accident. She becomes possessed, her dancing becomes

more than normally electric and she becomes a nymphomaniac – part and parcel of this type of film, I suspect.

Only one man suspects the truth, theatre owner Edmund Beaumont, Christopher Plummer at his most inane. His theatre was built some fifty years ago to honour a dancer who died on stage. Now the dancer's spirit is restless and looking for possession of a new body. Her provocative presence is dangerous to Jessica, the cast of the show and the theatre. So what's new?

Mark Westerby

THE CASE OF THE HILLSIDE STRANGLERS

Starring: Richard Crenna, Dennis Farina, Billy Zane, Tony Plana, James Tolkan, Karen Austin

Director Steven Gethers

Distributor Castle Pictures

Cert 18, 90 mins

An evil chiller made even more horrific because it's a true

story. Two sadistic murderers, posing as policemen, torture, rape and kill ten women, discarding their naked bodies on the hill-sides of north-east downtown Los Angeles.

We pick up the story after the fifth murder when the pressure on case head, Sergeant Robert Grogan, is intensified. The media,



public and his bosses want answers. Grogan replies with an intensive campaign of investigation which turns into an obsessive quest. This guy will not be beaten and you almost want to cheer with each step forward he takes.

Director Getthers has produced an unsensationalised thriller which takes a real life drama to pieces and ends up with slightly

more than the sum of its parts. He should be congratulated for showing this policeman's weak and strong points during the film rather than turning it into just another cop movie. Well paced, it gathers momentum with every murder and also shows how two fairly straightlaced men can become crafty, sociopathic killers.

Andrew Morentis

ANDY COLBY'S INCREDIBLE AWESOME ADVENTURE

Starring: Randy Josselyn, Jessica Puskas, Dianne Kay, John Franklin, Don Sparks, John Bluto, Laura Piper, Chuck Kovacic

Director Deborah Brock

Distributor MGM/UA

Cert PG, 90 mins

Film combined with video. I can't think of a worse collaboration but, true to nature, Roger Corman has taken some fairly crummy video clips and framed them with the adventures of a boy beyond the boundaries of the television, in videoland.

He's searching for his sister who's been kidnapped by the evil

Lord Chroma who wants to steal her colours and use them to brighten up his monochrome world. The whole escapade is shot on video and we only get onto film stock during some of the 'adventures' in which Andy gets loosely involved with space fights and knight wars. I say 'loosely' because the only time the boy gets involved in the adventures happens when his video reaction is intercut with the footage.

I have never seen such an appallingly made movie. It's like *Sesame Street* on speed and, if video renters have any taste, it's likely to stay on the shelf – the only place where it's safe.

Andrew Morentis

BEVERLY HILLS BODY SNATCHERS

Starring: Vic Tayback, Frank Gorshin, Rodney Eastman, Warren Selko, Art Metrano

Director John Mostow

Distributor Castle Pictures

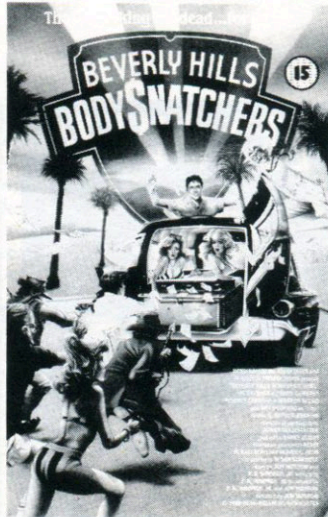
Cert 15, 90 minutes

What better place for a mad scientist to investigate the secret of eternal life than in a mob mortuary, and what better

way of making money?

Doc, played with manic zeal by Frank Gorshin, uses any old corpse for his project but comes a cropper when a local godfather is delivered and accidentally reanimated. Gorshin has yet to hit upon a workable formula and his reanimated 'victims' are little more than brainless zombies.

Enter Freddie and Vincent – played by Rodney Eastman (of the



Nightmare on Elm Street films) and Warren Selko – who are nephews of Mafia chief Vito. The morti-

cians owe the mob money and Vito forces the two boys on them. The boys get job experience while Vito gets reports on the mortuary's cash situation.

Soon, however, Freddie and Vincent are helping the mad Doc to procure bodies and that's when the fun begins . . .

If you like your comedy exceedingly black then you'll like *Bodysnatchers*. It's a lot like *Mortuary Academy* with Chris Atkins and Paul Bartel, but in this one the corpses come back to independent life. Unfortunately, it does not boast the Bartel sleaziness but Gorshin is a good substitute and, if you take the movie as a bit of light entertainment, you're assured of a laugh or two.

John Gilbert

KING KONG LIVES

Starring: Brian Kerwin, Linda Hamilton, John Ashton, Peter Michael Goetz, Frank Maraden, Jimmy Ray Weeks

Director John Guillermin

Distributor CBS/Fox

Cert 15, 100 mins

Call a doctor, this movie needs some serious surgery. Yes folks, the ape you love to hate has survived his climactic fall from the top of the Empire State building and requires a heart transplant.

He duly gets more than he bargained for when some stupid berk brings a similarly huge female ape back from the jungle in order to give him a blood transfusion. It's only a matter of time and severely wasted film stock – but then Dino De Laurentis never was much good at figures – before the pair are aping it up and escaping into the wild jungle paradise that is America. Where do they get those sets from?

The movie should have died at birth but, seeing it escape from the operating theatre, there are at least two reasons for renting. The first is the wonderfully hammy operating theatre sequence in which the tools are all outsized, and look like something out of David Cronenberg's *Dead Ringers*, and when the hydraulic lift cables supporting the massive metal heart snap. The squelching sounds of the operation are dead good too.

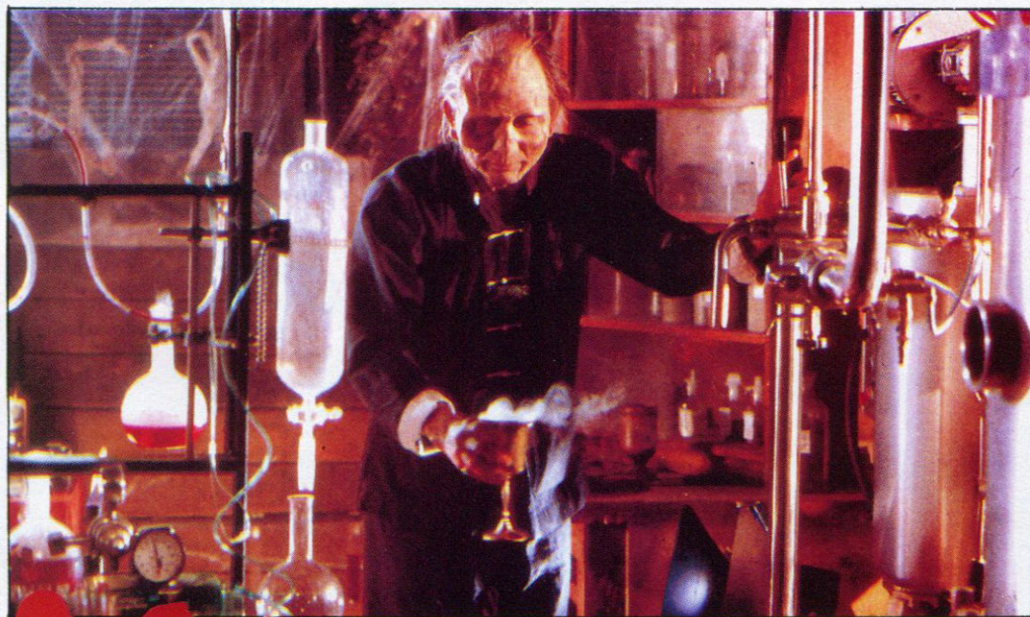
Secondly, Kong's first petting session with his she-love is one of the most hysterical scenes I have ever seen. The looks that pass between them must have had makeup man Carlo Rambaldi fuming.

Bad movie, huh? You said it. But look on the bright side: there's unlikely to be another sequel from the DEG stable.

John Gilbert



BIG TROUBLE FROM CHINATOWN



His oriental features are very familiar. They have appeared in films such as *Big Trouble in Little China*, *The Golden Child*, *Brotherhood of the Rose*,

Jack Nicholson's *Chinatown* sequel and New World's new horror movie, *The Vineyard*. He has also done more than two hundred small screen stints on many top shows, including *Hawaii Five-0*, *Miami Vice*, *The Equaliser* and *Dynasty*.

Despite being born in America, the influence of Asian culture greatly affected James Hong's upbringing. His father, a nightclub operator and restaurateur in Minneapolis' Chinatown, sent him to Hong Kong for a Chinese education. World War II broke out and, at the age of ten, he moved back home to begin grade school and learn English.

His repatriation did not mean the end of links with the Chinese way of life. 'Chinese superstition was a big part of my parents' life. They were first generation Chinese from a village where the fables and stories played were important, as were the martial arts and the bravery of men.

James Hong reveals the secret of eternal youth as he stars in and codirects New World's latest horror movie, *The Vineyard*. John Gilbert samples the vintage.

'I was in an episode of *The Chinese Detective* - a BBC TV series - and my upbringing was a bit like the central character's. I came from a Chinese background but was brought up in a double culture and all my thoughts reflected that.'

EYEBALLED

Hong became interested in the performing arts during his days in junior high school but it was while studying to become a civil engineer at the University of Minnesota that he teamed up with a close friend to form a 'yellow and white' comedy team.

After leaving university and a short diversion in an LA county engineering job, he won a part in *Love is a Many Splendored Thing* with William Holden and

Jennifer Jones. Film work followed and, during his thirty-five years in the business he has gained a reputation for sinister leads. One such role is that of an old scientist who manufactured eyeballs in the Ridley Scott SF blockbuster *Blade Runner*.

'We filmed the scene in an actual frozen food locker in east LA,' he says, with a soft chuckle which only those in love the horror and SF genres are able to produce.

He would have to be to write and codirect his most recent horror entree, *The Vineyard*, which is due soon from New World Pictures. It's the story of a mysterious Dr Po who grows wine with more than a good vintage in mind. He is, in fact, after a potion of eternal life, brewed from grapes grown in earth which has been satiated by the blood of teenagers.

Hong, naturally, plays the part of Po, a job which often consisted of directing sequences behind the camera while still in heavy make-up which considerably aged him. On any other movie such inconvenience might have crippled a director, but Hong did not have the time to worry about the oppressive heat of location shooting in LA. 'The make-up took four hours to put on but it wasn't as gruelling as the make-up for *Big Trouble in Little China*.

That took eight hours to put on and it was a horrifying experience.'

RAISIN' THE DEAD

Experience as an actor and as a director was certainly important for Hong. Shooting had to take less than four weeks, the budget was low, and the cast largely unknown, but Hong was still able to turn out a remarkably good film.

At one point it looked as if the film might not have been made because of location difficulties. 'We had to find a vineyard in LA and, as you can imagine, producers of wine don't want to be associated with horror movies. It's not good for business. But fortunately we found some people who love horror movies.'

He also acknowledges that there could have been problems with the cast, many of whom

"We had to find a vineyard in LA and, as you can imagine, producers of wine don't want to be associated with horror movies. It's not good for business"

had never appeared in a horror movie or worn heavy make-up, but all those problems were taken into account during pre-production. 'There was one scene, for instance, in which a young girl had to appear in old lady make-up. My experience in heavy make-up came in useful. When you're wearing it you have to over-emote with facial expressions. Subtle movements have to be exaggerated.'

'The cast was very easy to coach. They were hungry for good acting lessons. They welcomed them.'

As for his continued acting career, Hong has hit the big time yet again with an integral role in Jack Nicholson's *Two Jakes*, the long awaited sequel to *Chinatown*. 'I play the character who links the two movies together.'

But it's back to horror and SF for the actor in his next movie role, *Shadow Zone*, for infamous producer Charles Band. 'It stars Louise Fletcher and myself and it's about suspending people in a brain dead form so that their bodies are preserved.'

Again, that spine-chilling, soft chuckle says that you can guess the rest . . .



THE BALL GA

The tools of horror often become more famous than the movie stars they kill. That's certainly the case with those deadly, silver spheres from *Phantasm II*. But just how do these death-dealing macabre miracles work? John Gilbert pumps all the grisly details from their creator, FX maestro Steve Patino.

Illusion has always been a part of Steve Patino's life. He performed as a magician in his early teens and, when he discovered that he could combine those talents with moviemaking, ventured to become a special effects technician. 'I used to perform magic in night clubs, on the same bill with singers such as Donna Summers, I did spots in discotheque showcases, Disneyland, even at Universal Studios and amusement parks.'

Patino was in his last year at high school when he met a special effects artist and decided that

this was the career for him. '*Star Wars* had just come out and at that time I made up my mind. I married a year later and was offered a job on *Dune*.

'They hired me as a gofer, you know - go for this, go for that - but after two weeks they realised that I had a lot of potential and I started working on the fibre glass moulds. I was a full time crew member for one-and-a-half years.

'Kyle MacLachlan, Sting and Max Von Sydow came into the studio and we took two piece body casts of them which were then turned into mannequins of the actor's body. They were then used by the wardrobe department. I then moved onto

the still suit crew because I had the ability to pick things up quickly.'

Patino supplemented his next job, a two year stint at Don Post

"During one month in October I worked on eight movies out of this garage"

Studios in LA, with a dose of moonlighting, doing effects work from his garage. At the end of two years he had managed to build up an impressive portfolio and decided to leave his daytime job. 'I was on my own. I worked for Boss Films for



ME

finished on *Prince of Darkness* when he called me about *Phantasm*. He said there might be some special effects prop work and that somebody would be calling me. The producer called me on my wife's birthday and I went down to the studio.

'I was a big fan of the first movie in high school. You know it's sad, but Burt Davidson, the guy who created the ball for the original film, died before it was finished and never saw its release. That ball alone stuck in

"That ball alone stuck in my mind for a year. It's a unique prop"

my mind for a year. It's a unique prop.'

Patino was determined that the ball should be different from the simple flying death machine of the first movie. 'Don (Coscarelli), the director, is a pleasant man to work for. He gave us a breakdown of what he wanted to see and how we could improve on the first movie.

'We watched the movie four or five times. All we had to work with was a four-inch ball and Don wanted to do something new with it.'

GOLDEN BALLS

Balls were made to perform one of several different tasks, such as blood pumping and drilling bone. Patino relied on his knowledge of magic and illusion to come up with some of the trickier stunts where special effects machinery had to be hidden from a particularly prying camera angle. 'I didn't like the first blood pumping ball effect, for instance. It was only half a ball with a pump behind it and I wanted to improve it. I came up with a full 3D ball, so that you can see the blade and drill and the space between the ball and the body. And yet you'd be able to hide the pump and they could shoot at any angle. We wanted the same 3D effect with the drilling ball, and there we were able to use a full 4-inch ball which actually drilled.

'We used seventy-five balls in the movie, twenty-five of which had to be thrown down a hallway and broke when they hit a wall. Fifteen went to Dream Quest opticals for the sequence where the balls turn at the end of the hall and they used a blue screen to get that effect.

'We had one ball for each part of an effect so, for instance, we could have used four or five balls for one complete effect. Take the priest effect. We used one ball to cut his ear off, one to hit his head, one drilling ball, and one blood pumping ball.

That's four in all. We also had a laser ball effect in which we destroyed twenty-five and fifteen were used for opticals.'

The process sounds very expensive but Patino was not satisfied with blood hungry children. He wanted a Son of . . . ball, coloured gold and cutely named Rambo. 'I wanted a tough mother that would never stop. To make the ball different it couldn't be silver. We increased the ball size to 5-inches, made it gold and called it the Rambo sphere. It has a heat-seeking laser that can go through wood, metal and steel doors. It also has blades that go right around the ball and shoot out the front.'

SHOT IN SECRECY

Sounds as if that ball could do some gruesome damage and, according to Patino, it did in several sequences which were cut from the movie. 'Getting back to the death of the priest, the sequence with the ball in the back was cut. Originally, there was a cavity in the back with the ball springing out and pumping blood. Then it was supposed to go up the throat and explode in the mouth, but Don wanted to come up with another idea.

Other cut sequences have the ball shooting out of one character's head and sticking to the ceiling, and the chipmunk face effect in which a mouth explodes outwards. All of these were deleted during the production process, a move which Patino was against. 'I think you

"I came up with a full 3D ball, so that you can see the blade and drill and the space between the ball and the body"

should shoot a movie the way you want to shoot it. You shouldn't be afraid to film a shot, and there were some times when I thought I was working on a Spielberg movie.'

The film was shot in California amidst a secrecy which put even the security teams on *Batman* in the shade. 'They used three names for the production company; Space Gate, Morningside Productions and The Big Sleep. They didn't want anybody to know what they were doing. Secrecy on a film is fine, especially where the plot is concerned, but *Phantasm II* took it too far.'

CREDIT BROKERS

Patino found the production environment uncomfortably claustrophobic. Nobody was allowed to talk about the production and professional relationships were strained. 'There was a lot of power play on the film. At first the production got a lot of people enthusiastic, but during the eight months of production people started to hate one another. If you spoke out you were threatened with loss of credits.

'I loved the work I did! Me and my wife put four grand into the film and were promised publicity but Dream Quest got

"Secrecy on a film is fine, especially where the plot is concerned, but Phantasm II took it too far"

it all. They did a marvellous job and were credited for the opticals on the balls but the live action was done by me and Universal cut my credit. At the premiere they had a twenty-foot billboard with the ball on it with little credit for me. Someone must have known how I felt because they said, 'Stay away from him, he looks as if he could kill someone.'

And yet, he would like to see, and work on, a sequel. 'A sequel? I'd love to do one. It's been talked about already and I've already got ideas for a new ball on paper. I just wish Don would give the rights to another director. Part II took the story a step further but Part I had a mysterious to it and II didn't; the storyline was wishywashy, but if Don offered I'd do it. It would have to be on my terms, however. I didn't have the political pull or knowhow during *Phantasm II*, but I do now.'

STEVE PATINO has recently teamed up with Ken Tarallo - the weapons expert of *Godfather II* fame - to form FX Concepts Limited. The new shop will provide every conceivable type of effect for the movie industry. His recent film work includes all of the recent spate of underwater movies, *Critters II*, *Horror Show*, *Nightwish* and *Deep Space*, and he'll be discussing many of these in future issues of FEAR.

one year and did stints on *Poltergeist II*.'

Work with effects genius and director Stan Winston followed on *Monster Squad*, *Predator*, *Pumpkinhead*, *Alien Nation* and the yet to be released *Leviathan*. 'During one month in October I worked on eight movies out of this garage. I decided to open a studio. Two months and fourteen movies later, I began working on *Phantasm II*.'

The work on the *Phantasm* sequel was shared with Mark Shostrom and it was Shostrom who first dangled the movie's carrot in front of Patino's nose. 'I had worked with Mark Shostrom on four different movies as part of the crew. We had just

THE MAINE M



PART TWO: OVERLOOKED

Curse or blessing? The Stanley Hotel is the role model for Stephen King's bestseller *The Shining* and the staff there are willing to cater for, and often exploit, King fans. But, as Paddy McKillop finds out in the second instalment of his pictorial tour of Kingdom, the novelty appears to be wearing thin.

In the absence—so far—of an official Stephen King Theme Park, the next best alternative for the vacationing King fan is to visit the Stanley Hotel in the small resort town of Estes Park, high in the Colorado Rockies. It was a spooky night spent in this hotel at the end of the 1973 summer season when the place was all but deserted which inspired King to write possibly his best novel to date—*The Shining*. The peculiar atmosphere which so impressed King then is still there today, ready to welcome the fearless horror traveler... But he couldn't make it so they sent me instead.

First impressions incline you to wonder what all the fuss is about. This is hardly the remote, isolated site described in the book, situated as it is on the edge of Estes Park, three minutes from the nearest burger joint. And the hotel itself looks

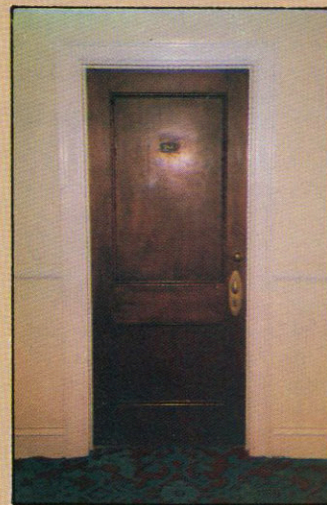
nothing like the grand version seen in Stanley Kubrick's film (because Kubrick used exterior shots of Timberline Lodge on Mount Hood in Oregon, citing power and snow shortages as his reasons for 'over-looking' the Stanley). But, if you follow King's example and apply a little imagination, it is easy to appreciate the implications of being snowbound in the middle of nowhere.

After you check in and glance around the lobby area, with its high-backed, leather armchairs and The Stanley Steamer vintage car, invention of the hotel's designer, Freelán O Stanley, proudly displayed just inside the front door, you will want to dump your luggage in the plush bedroom and go exploring. All you need as a guide is your trusty paperback copy of *The Shining*.

THE REAL 217

The first port of call on any Stanley/Overlook tour has to be

room 217, scene of the book's most frightening moment as Danny Torrance ignores the shower curtain and comes face to face with a less than lovely lady. Hotel staff nod, wink, and whisper conspiratorially that the scene is based on a real suicide in that same room, but maybe a sceptical pinch of salt would make that easier to swallow. Ideally, you should ask for and be given room 217 for your stay, but unfortunately the room is always solidly booked up and, unless you can ingratiate yourself with the lucky guests, the best you can hope for is a snapshot of the door. In a recent renumbering operation, 217 became 340, but there is still a door sporting the 217 numberplate.



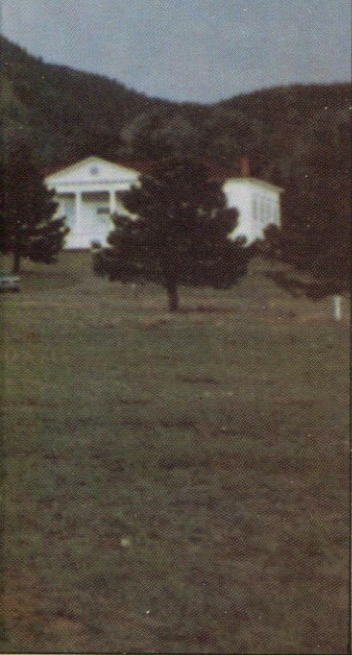
As you wander away from whichever door you choose to examine, you may be so intent on looking for blood stains on the wallpaper that you miss the sleeping fire hoses. Miss them, that is, until one leaps out and fastens a death grip about your throat. These old-fashioned canvas hoses really do look menacing in light of Danny's nasty experience with one, and caution when passing them is advised.

If providence is on your side and you escape the fire hoses, the elevator will get you for sure. It is precisely as described in the book, not only in its brass and copper detail but also in its suspect operation. It is prone to coming up a few inches short of the required floor and it's for good reason that the hotel management insist a member of staff accompany anyone foolhardy

"Hotel staff nod, wink, and whisper conspiratorially that the scene is based on a real suicide in that same room"

enough to risk the ride. If you try it, take along a friend with whom you don't mind spending six hours in a confined space.

AN



Suitably fortified with drink, the more rebellious guests attempt to sneak past the hawk-eyed manager and bar staff to explore the hotel kitchen. If you make it into this forbidden territory (and I won't tell anyone if you won't), you will see a scaled-down version of the scene so vividly portrayed in the novel. This kitchen is less ordered than the Overlook's, as this is a working kitchen, not one that has been closed down for the winter months. As well as vast amounts of food and kitchen-

LOCATION SHOTS

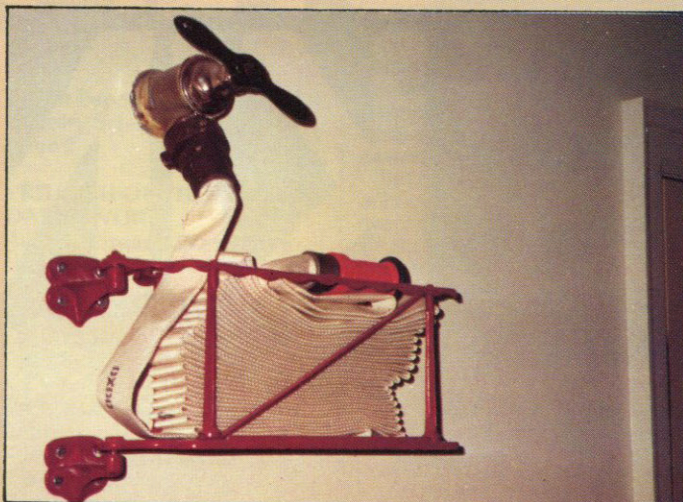
EXPLOITATION

When the pressure of the boiler room gets too much, a stretch of the legs in the hotel grounds is called for, and here too there is fare for the King-hungry eye. Behind the three buildings which make up the hotel – the ninety-room main building, a thirty-three-room replica, the Manor House, beside it and the

hoping they get along. A risky policy, but the hotel has its fingers crossed.

Exploitation excesses aside, the Stanley Hotel invites visitors to exercise their imaginations and draw what they wish from its attractions. For the King fans, there is a whole novel's worth or more of things to see and do (and the more time you spend in the bar the more you become Jack Torrance, believe me), as well as the long and dis-

"You can sit drinking 'Martians' and discussing the best way to discipline psychic children to your heart's content"



ware and enough sharp knives to keep an army of psychopaths happy, there is the famous walk-in cold pantry, used in the book by Wendy to imprison Jack when she discovers, at long last, that her husband is ever-so-slightly crazy. Why not have a friend lock you in the cold pantry and you can shout and cuss just like poor Jack?

When the irate cook chases you out the kitchen with one of the aforementioned knives, head for the basement. There you will find all the information a tourist could want about the hotel and its surroundings, and the really keen-eyed might spot the plaque celebrating King's visit and the book he went on to write. Hidden away in the basement, the plaque suggests that the subsequent attention was not entirely welcome. But the most interesting bits in the basement are behind closed doors. One opens to reveal a closet full of old postcards, pamphlets and papers just like the haul Jack found so educational in the Overlook. And another leads to the boiler room, a very significant place in King's plot.

And what a boiler room! The boiler itself is a massive beast sprouting copper pipes from all angles, and it stands in what appears to be a room hollowed out of the hard mountain rock. It's like a prehistoric cave with all mod cons. Standing next to the boiler you can almost hear the Overlook's caretaker, Watson, warning Jack, 'She creeps'.

Concert Hall beside that – they have started their own Pet Semetary and, still not satisfied, have procured not one but two Christines, which sit in front of the hotel waiting to mow down any awkward customers.

To the cynic, the instant Pet Semetary, the Christines (claimed by experts to be at least one year too old to be properly called Christine) and *The Shining* T-shirts and baseball caps for sale in the hotel gift shop all smack of blatant cashing-in on the book's and the film's success. Nobody would deny the hotel the right to benefit from its good fortune, but a dilemma exists which it is not tackling. On one hand, the hotel is striving to maintain its luxury status, with classical music performances in the concert hall, while at the same time it is trying to attract the Stephen King public and its horror dollars. It's like booking the well-to-do Spring Ball crowd and the guts 'n' gore Horror Convention crowd into the same hall and

tinguished pre-*Shining* history to savour.

The town of Estes Park on the Stanley's doorstep has every souvenir you could wish for and it serves as the perfect springboard from which to continue your trip to places such as Boulder (scene of much of *The Stand*, and yet another good hunting ground for King nuts), Denver or the Grand Canyon further south. It is an area rich in natural and man-made wonders and, if the Stanley plays only a small part in your general tour of the area, it is nonetheless a valuable one. Especially if you visit around snow time when flakes the size of watermelons coat everything in picture postcard white. It is then that your *Shining* fantasy really comes alive. But one final word of caution: please don't call the manager an 'officious little prick', the joke is wearing a bit thin.



The Stanley's original features (clockwise from far left): the door to infamous room 217; the elevator, bloody and unreliable; a murderous fire hose; and TWO jealous Christines



UNDER PRESSURE

When and if the elevator lets you go, you will definitely need a drink. The bar shares the first floor with the lobby, a billiard room (sans tables, alas), a music room and the dining room where King and his wife ate alone during their bizarre summer visit. Again much smaller than expected, the bar nevertheless provides you with an opportunity to be really silly and run through your Jack Nicholson repertoire. The bartender is *not* named Lloyd, but after years of the same old wisecracks from countless King nuts, he'll answer to anything. You can sit drinking 'Martians' and discussing the best way to discipline psychic children to your heart's content.



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REALMS OF FANTASTIC FICTION

John Gilbert assesses the wealth of genre literature on the shelves of W H Smith in a month devoted to tripping the light fantastic.

The past year has seen a massive growth in the fantasy, horror and science fiction genres. Newspapers have started to review the books, television has covered the movies and even the high street retail trade has started to wake up to the phenomenon.

W H Smith has been selling genre books for years but, with the advent of FEAR and with greater media coverage, the retail chain's book departments have decided to have a Realms of Fantastic Fiction field day – well, month actually – in which the genres are promoted to their fullest.

FEAR has agreed to spearhead this worthy campaign by highlighting the books that you will find in the W H Smith promotion. Most of the works of fiction reviewed in this issue are on the hits list and below are the titles we've already reviewed, together with the number of the issue in which they featured. Back issues of FEAR are obtainable from Newsfield Publications.

Most of the books covered are top of the class so, if you're a newcomer to the fantasy, horror, or SF genres, here's your chance to get off to a really good start.

The Realms of Fantastic Fiction promotion will run from 15 August to 11 September at all branches of W H Smith. Copies of the titles listed here should be obtainable but are, of course, subject to availability.

THE MIDDLE KINGDOM/CHUNG KUO BOOK ONE
 Author David Wingrove
 Publisher New English Library
 Format Paperback, £7.95
 Category Science fiction
 Issue 8

PLAYER OF GAMES
 Author Iain M Banks
 Publisher Futura

Format Paperback, £3.50
 Category Science fiction
 Issue 2

TRIUMPH OF THE DARKSWORD
 Author Margaret Weis/Tracy Hickman
 Publisher Bantam
 Format Paperback, £3.50
 Category Fantasy
 Issue 8

BATMAN (movie novelisation)
 Author Craig Shaw Gardner
 Publisher Futura
 Format Paperback, £3.50
 Category Science fiction
 Issue 8

HAUNTED
 Author James Herbert
 Publisher New English Library
 Format Paperback, £3.50
 Category Horror
 Issue 2

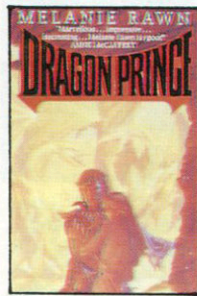
THE GREAT AND SECRET SHOW/BOOK ONE OF THE ART
 Author Clive Barker
 Publisher Collins
 Format Hardback, £12.95
 Category Fantasy/horror
 Issue 8

DRAGON PRINCE

Melanie Rawn
 Publisher Sidgwick and Jackson
 Format Paperback, £6.99
 Category Fantasy

Bookish prince Rohan prematurely assumes the power of Radzyn Keep when his father, Zehava, is mortally wounded on a dragon hunt. Rohan kills the dragon, but has to defend his realm from rival Roelstra, who plans to ensnare the princeling by marrying him off to one of his daughters.

Rohan's sorceress aunt, Princess Andrade, has other ideas. She conjures a vision of Princess Sioned – adept in a form



of magic called *faradhi* – who is destined to become his bride. The couple fall in love despite the machinations of Roelstra and his mistress, Lady Palila.

But a series of political and military complications have to be overcome before Rohan can assume complete control of his principedom.

This is the first in a series of five books, it is Rawn's fiction debut and the lead title in Pan's revamped SF/fantasy list. The story – which owes a debt to Anne McCaffrey – is hardly fresh, but it is finely written and pacy. The dragons are the real stars, perhaps at the expense of the human characters, who lack substance.

The court intrigues are well-drawn, bringing to mind a kind of fantasy Roman Empire. There is a good quota of action and, although a little overlong, *Dragon Prince* certainly entertains.
 Stan Nicholls



EXCESS OF ENCHANTMENTS

All good fairy tales begin with the words 'Once upon a time . . . ' and who better to start such a story than Craig Shaw Gardner, one of the few writers who can successfully take the Michael out of the fantasy genre.

Gardner's latest book (Headline, paperback, £2.99) continues the story of Wuntvor, the witless apprentice to the wizard Ebenezeum. As you may remember, he's on one of those quests to find a cure for his master's horrible malady, which has since been passed on to the rest of the College of Wizards. He reaches quest's end, but falls into the clutches of Mother Duck (what an awful joke!), a ghostly

storyteller who wants everyone to become involved with her dreadful plotlines.

Fortunately, our real life storyteller has got over his spell of less than admirable plotification – ie *Batman* the movie novelisation – and is well on the way to scoring a success with yet another novel filled with lunatic fantasy antics.
 Mark Westerby

HERO OF DREAMS

You may be surprised by Brian Lumley's latest offering (Headline, paperback, £2.99). It's a heroic fantasy which contains no vampires, no psychotic psychics and very little horror. But, if you're surprised by that, you probably don't know Lumley's work as well as you should.

His early fiction centred around H P Lovecraft's Cthulu mythos and it is that writer's dream world in which the main character, plainly called David Hero, resides. It is the world beyond waking in which normal human beings take on the guises of mythic characters. David, for instance, is an Earth artist until he dreams over to the Dreamland, while his friend Eldin is a learned professor.

An unlikely pair, but their task, to defeat the First One in his plan to resurrect slumbering Cthulu, is dangerous enough. Lumley transplants Lovecraft's eldritch fables from the real world into a parallel universe in which anything can happen much more readily. He has created a unique world, bordered on one side by high fantasy and on the other by primordial horror. The first book is quite an accomplishment and I'm only sorry that we'll see several gibbous moons before we see the next instalment, *Ship of Dreams*, on the shelves.
 John Gilbert

ARTHUR

Book three of Stephen Lawhead's wonderful Pendragon Cycle (Lion, paperback, £3.99), completes an epic exploration of Arthurian legend. It is told by one of his most trusted warriors and shows that the first King of Britain was thought to be a simpleton, under the tutelage – and thumb – of the scheming magician, Merlin.

Like the original legend it has a Welsh background, with names suitably changed from Mallory's famous rendering of the myth. It is a book about battles of warring factions and seemingly simple magic; a closely told history rather than a romantic fable.

Only two of the books are written in the first person – book two is told through the eyes of Merlin

— and I was somewhat disappointed that we did not get 'first person' close to Arthur. The trilogy seems to be fragmented between books two and three, and book one, the latter part of which appears a little out of place in the 'third person' — although I can see that the number of characters and the timespan involved make it difficult to use the first person.

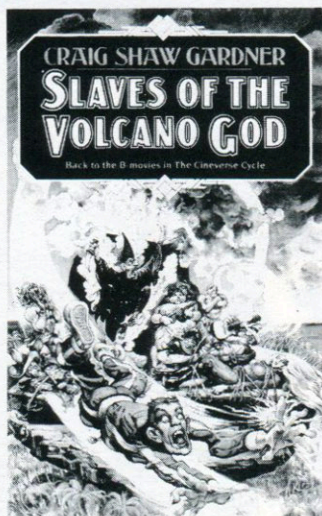
However, *Arthur* is an excellent book, despite my slight reservations about the trilogy's structure, and it is certainly not just another glossy retelling of the legend but, rather, a worthwhile and sensibly told expansion.

Mark Westerby

SLAVES OF THE VOLCANO GODS

After a less than delightful brush with the Batman movie novelisation, Craig Shaw Gardner is back on form with the first in a hilarious series which takes place this time in a comic book cosmos.

Meet Roger the PR man, who thinks that he can face any crisis with a steely smile. Wrong. His beautiful girlfriend is kidnapped by Dr Dread and Roger must try to get her back with only his Captain Crusader decoder ring.



The doctor has disappeared into a B-movie universe and, when Roger arrives there, he finds that this clash of clichés is in danger of disruption (?). The only hope is our 'hero's hero' — but where the hell is he?

Gardner's obvious lust for laughs sharpens *Slaves of the Volcano Gods* (Headline, paperback, £3.50) into a jewel of hysteria. I have no idea why this B-movie plot play has not been used before. Fortunately it was Gardner who stumbled upon it; only he, or perhaps Terry Pratchett, could do it justice.

Mark Westerby

THE DRAGONBONE CHAIR

Tad Williams

Publisher Legend

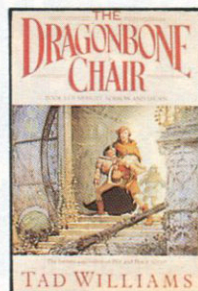
Format Hardback, £14.95

Category Fantasy

I am rarely so held captive by a fantasy novel that I put all other reading on hold, take up the massive tome and read huge chunks of it at each sitting, yet such is the case with *The Dragonbone Chair*, Book One of *Memory, Sorrow and Thorn*.

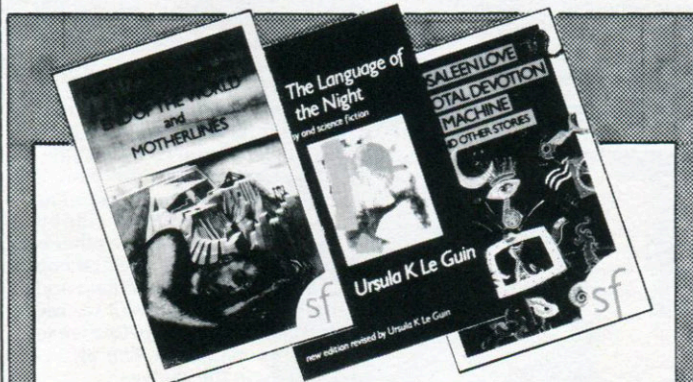
It's a 654-page volume which begins, simply enough, with the description of an ancient case (from every conceivable angle) by an unemployable boy who becomes apprenticed to a magician as the elderly king of the story dies. From here, Simon the kitchen boy is swept into a power parade of court intrigues, huge battles and supernatural forces as the ancient, undead, former ruler of Hayholt castle and the surrounding lands battles to reconquer his once proud empire.

This book is slow at its start, but Williams' wonderful style and sense of character and observation will carry any reader



through the few dull edges of the adventure. I was hooked by the grandeur of the tale, the battle not just between two simple black-and-white forces but between innocence and avarice, a much underestimated theme in fantasy or in any other genre since those feeble Hobbit hands took up the Ring in Tolkien's epic. Indeed, for sheer size of vision alone, Williams is our Tolkien of the Eighties and I suspect, if he can hold the depth of narrative in the subsequent volumes of this epic, that his coronation will be confirmed.

John Gilbert



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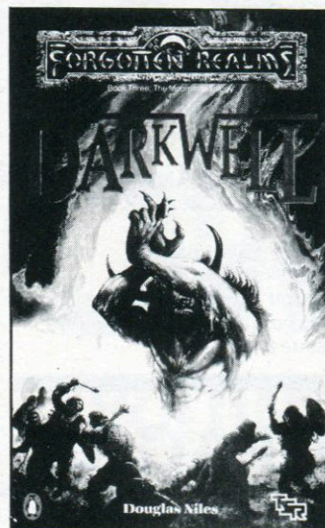
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DARKWELL: MOONSHAE III

The final part of Douglas Niles' Moonshae Trilogy (Penguin, paperback, £3.99) is, like its forebears, an adjunct to role-playing games rather than a novel of true credit.

It is part of TSR's *Forgotten Realms* adventure series and the combination of its blatant comparison with the fantasy game and its cliché-ridden plotline makes it little better than the ton of high-fantasy, low-intellect garbage which regularly hits the shelves.

Which is not to say that I have contempt for all role-playing

inspired books. The engaging fantasies of Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman are, for instance, well-written and effectively characterised. But I can't for the life of me see the future in this series.

The final novel sees the newly consecrated king of the Folk (?) trying to bring the diverse peoples of the Isles under one rulership. Simultaneously, the female druid Robyn (?) must confront an evil power which has inhabited the land (aka Stephen Donaldson). Then they must decide whether to marry — become king and queen — or whether to become immortal enemies. It's an interesting alliance of clichés.

Mark Westerby

THE MUMMY

Anne Rice

Publisher Chatto and Windus

Format Hardback, £12.95

Category Horror/Romance

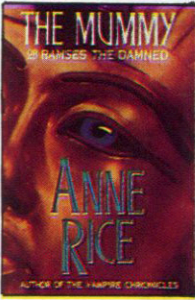
Immortality runs a thread through most of Anne Rice's work. She has already redefined and expanded the world of vampires in three critically acclaimed books. Her latest novel similarly redefines the image of an old horror cliché, *The Mummy*, and mixes the theme of eternal life

in an unusual way.

You may remember that the vampire Lestat referred to Ramesses the Damned in the second segment of *The Vampire Chronicles*. He is rumoured to be an ancient vampire, in much the same vein as Magnus, but his secret of immortality is more bizarre than the communion of blood. During the formal days of ancient Egypt he discovered an elixir which transforms the body and makes it immune to disease and age. He sees the birth of civilisation, becomes a great ruler of Egypt and a lover of Cleopatra.

Such immortality is, however, interminable and Ramesses deals with it by sinking into a trancelike sleep after each human lifespan. Like King Arthur, he is only awakened when a disaster is about to fall upon the land of the Pharaohs.

Cut to the early twentieth century. An English archeologist is murdered by his nephew while exploring the 'tomb' Ramesses. The Pharaoh slowly reanimates in the London home of the archeologist's daughter where it is being held in storage. Ramesses falls for the daughter and she is entranced by his power. But the truth about his immortality is threatened with exposure and he must put aside his own, quickly developing, feelings to make sure that the secret does not fall into the wrong hands.



The novel, which forms only a part of the story of Ramesses the Damned, is written in the style which has made Rice's vampire books so successful but, unfortunately, it lacks depth. The few scenes of suspense might come out of an early twentieth century newspaper, with all its censorial elegance; and what little horror is contained within *The Mummy* does not work in either the gore or the subtle polarities. Such a shame: *The Mummy* is somewhat disappointing, but I will look for rectification in the next of the series.

John Gilbert

FORGE OF GOD/EON

Greg Bear is adept in both the fantasy and the science fiction arenas. His almost colourful and philosophical approach to alternate fantastic realities in *Blood Music* and *The Serpent Mage* is counterbalanced by his brilliant portrayal of humanity's future in the science fiction epics *Eon*

(Legend, paperback, £3.50) and *Forge of God* (Legend, paperback, £3.50).

Eon is a story of Earth-threat. A mysterious hollow Stone hangs in orbit around the Earth. Its inner dimensions are larger than its outer circumference and boast vast, uninhabited cities.

The scientists are baffled. It appears to be of alien construction, perhaps an ominous threat to the planet. But the answer to the mystery lies closer to home. The Stone's past foreshadows its creators' future and their potential destruction.

Eon is an epic science fiction novel that fans of Arthur C Clarke will love. It has all the mystery of an Isaac Asimov space saga together with the plausibility of Clarke's before-their-time creations - space satellites, for instance.

Though clothed in a similar cover, *The Forge of God*, Bear's latest novel, is very different in concept and takes place many moons away from Earth.

Europa, one of Jupiter's moons, disappears without trace. The incident is followed by the discovery of an alien spaceship and a creature who warns of calamity. Later, a spacecraft lands in Australia and its inhabitants, a race of robots, boast friendship and peace. Who is telling the truth, and what does this close encounter mean?

Again, Bear blends space exploration with the deep concerns of humankind. *Forge of God* is an unsettling novel, as it forces the reader to see the insecurity of life on planet Earth when the rest of the galaxy, or universe, is taken into account. Bear goes beyond the petty accelerations of the future which inspire lesser SF writers, and takes huge, intuitive and intelligent leaps into our future to show not only cause but also effect. He is the face of science fiction for the Nineties and he doesn't need a tag or label to put him up front.

John Gilbert

THE DIAMOND THRONE: THE ELENUM BOOK ONE

Another potentially great saga from David Eddings (Grafton, hardback, £12.95) starts with the tragic illness of a queen and her cryogenic entombment in crystal to provide time to find a cure.

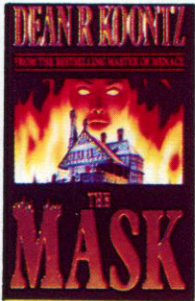
Leader of the quest is Sparhawk, a Pandion knight who has sworn to protect the queen. His search is, however, hampered by the claims of the queen's bastard relative to the throne and the Machiavellian ploys of a church primate who plans to ensure that this relative wears the crown. It soon becomes evident that the monarch has been poisoned and the quest for the antidote begins in earnest as the book concludes.

The Diamond Throne shows the promise of what could be a won-



derful fantasy series but, unfortunately, this weighty tome offers little else in the way of entertainment. Eddings obviously has some grand plans but, as the book slowly draws to a conclusion, he appears to be filling space with unnecessary action. One could, perhaps, forgive such a ploy if he were writing about the wonderful characters in the Belgariad and Mallorean sagas; we know them well enough to be intrigued by their every little action. But, in the case of this novel, it appears that Eddings has put up a large canvas and started to spread the oils too thinly.

John Gilbert



THE MASK

Dean R Koontz has been hot news for the past two years but now, I suspect, his publisher may have made a mistake. His latest book (Headline, paperback, £3.50) was first published under the pseudonym of Owen West in 1982. It's an interesting, though slightly clichéd story, of reincarnation, matricide and revenge which has all the hallmarks of a Koontz classic but in the end does not deliver.

The mystery is deep at the beginning of the book but, by mid way, you'll begin to realise what's happening. You reach the end with an uncomfortable sense of déjà vu which leaves you wondering what all the fuss was about.

Koontz would have been wise to let sleeping dogs lie and Owen West remain the author of this well-written, though uninspired, book. I just hope that *The Face of Fear*, the next pseudonymous novel republished under his own name, will go further in the suspense stakes than this new release. *The Mask* shows Koontz' style emerging with a potential power which has been realised. If you want to plot Koontz' rise to literary power then this book is a modestly good read, but don't expect anything as sophisticated as *Stranger* or *Lightning*.

John Gilbert

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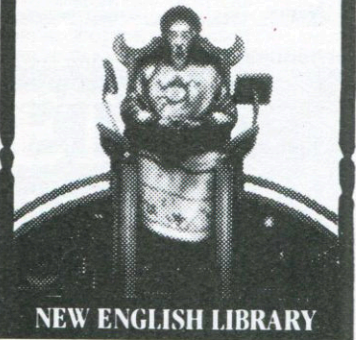
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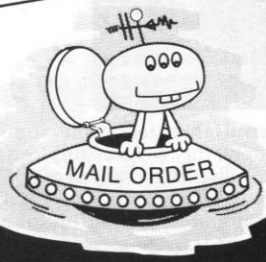
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THE ALIEN'S DICTIONARY

This indispensable guide for all life forms visiting Earth, penned by the hospitalised space traveller Youl Strangst, describes the more exciting phenomena that aliens may encounter while touring this planet: things like accountants, canaries, limbo dancing, raffia and zebras.

Needless to say, David Hallamshire's book (Headline, paperback, £2.99) pokes fun at the many absurd aspects of human behaviour whilst adhering firmly to the dictionary format (for example, its system of cross-referencing actually works!). A mere slip of a book, unusual in this particular genre, it's something to read as light relief from volume twenty-one of all those other SF/fantasy sagas.

Patience Coster

THE NIGHT MAYOR

'The pun is the lowest form of wit,' quoth Eric Partridge in his English language bible *Usage and Abuse*. This epigram cannot be applied, however, to the keen-witted Kim Newman whose first novel, *The Night Mayor* (Simon and Schuster, hardback £11.95), appears this month. Newman is well known as a film critic and a horror and SF aficionado and all these elements seep into the narrative of his novel.

It is the future. The movies and TV have been replaced by the electronic dream package in which consumers can dream themselves into the shoes of their favourite

film star. Arch criminal, murderer and fiendish genius Truro Daine has escaped from prison by dreaming himself a private universe wrought from the classic American crime movies he favours. Susan Bishopric, a sassy, post-feminist heroine, is given the task of entering Daine's dream world, conquering the villain and rescuing the third-rate crime fiction writer, Tom Tunney, who has become enmeshed in a nightmarish conflation of Daine's world with one of his own derivative detective stories.

The Night Mayor's punning doesn't end with its title. Newman's novel is redolent with double meanings, oblique B-movie and film noir references and Chanderlesque metaphors, such as: 'Darkness wrapped around me like an anaconda' and 'Truro Daine had a cultivated accent. The kind you cultivated on agar jelly in a petri dish.'

The author's descriptive skills are put to good use with vividly relived movie moments (though, if you haven't seen the films, all this may seem entirely elitist and meaningless), and the book is a well-written and witty first. But, sadly, Newman's storyline seems to lose its momentum early on, partly because all the players, apart from the two central protagonists, are recognisable movie stereotypes whose futures are predetermined. As for the two main characters, they don't really come alive in the way they should and the reader is left longing for the tight narrative, the sexual tension and the dark and brooding shadows suggesting uncontrolled and destructive passion that characterise a Nicholas Ray film or a Cornell Woolrich short story.

Patience Coster

NECROSCOPE III: THE SOURCE

Brian Lumley

Publisher Grafton

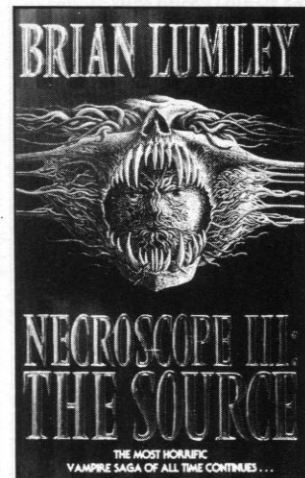
Format PB, £4.50

Category Horror/fantasy

Lumley has always been a prolific writer but his worth is only now being recognised by British publishers. *Hero of Dreams* has just been launched by Headline, to be followed by others in the series, and *The Source*, a long awaited sequel to *The Necroscope* and *Wamphyri*, has just burst onto the shelves.

The Source contains everything that is good about a Lumley novel. Non stop action, well-honed characterisation and a string of what appear to be fantastic suppositions but are, in fact, theoretical possibilities.

The author wastes no time in developing his story. A military accident in Russia has opened a gateway between our world and that of the Wamphyri. It is time to



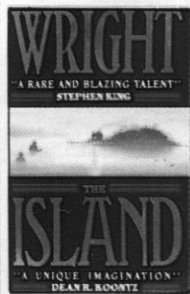
meet some of the most incredible, almost indestructible, monsters that have ever peopled the pages of a horror novel. Even the lady vampires in this story have more than fans with which to defend

their honour.

If this barbarous new world were not enough, Lumley again extols his theories regarding the Mobius continuum, and the dark legends of those Wampyri who have already spent some time on Earth. His brave metamorphosis of the traditional vampire legends plays in counterpoint to Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*. Both are wonderful series but Lumley reveals the creatures' barbarous habits while Rice has a more sensuous approach to the subject.

As revealed in **FEAR** Issue 3, there are at least another two *Necroscope* novels. The tension and raw power Lumley's narrative have not yet begun to wind down. New ideas and surprises spring up from almost every page in the first three novels so I sincerely doubt whether this vampire epic will lose any of its momentum.

John Gilbert



THE ISLAND

TM WRIGHT
Publisher **Gollancz Horror**
Format **Paperback, £3.50**
Category **Horror**

The new horror range from Gollancz is shaping up well, and one of its best aspects is the introduction of writers well known only in the States to the British literary pool. One such is TM Wright, an author whose stylistic capabilities rank with Ramsey Campbell's and whose nose for horror is as acute as Stephen King's.

Wright's first foray into the UK is called *The Island*. It's a ghost story in which the dead, who have long been sleeping in the deep waters of an island lake, come back to haunt and kill the living during one lonesome winter. It is a traditional ghost story in every sense but the author's preference for slowly built tension, which creates an atmosphere which gradually seeps into the mind of the reader rather than performing the quick execution of a Hutson-like bullet.

Fans of Charles L Grant and Ramsey Campbell will take to TM Wright like a dingy on a rough sea. Long may he float.

John Gilbert

DARK FANTASIES

Not the most inspired of anthology concepts, this book of horror and fantasy stories is an excuse for the usual gathering of the big name clan. I count only three stories by lesser known authors and none by unknowns. But I suppose that's the way to sell books and I certainly won't condemn the high standard of writing contained within this book (Legend, Paperback, £5.95).

Let's take a trip through the Chris Morgan edited contents. Brian Stableford is the first on call with a chilling tale of influence beyond the grave. It's an unusual but very welcome story from a man who has, until recently, been known for science fiction and grand fantasy.

The tale that follows Stableford's macabre set piece comes from Gary Kilworth and fits his style perfectly. It concerns the sudden abandonment of reality and the fears that all of us have that someone might do our job of living better than us.

On through Stephen Gallagher's excellent *Life Line*, past AL Barker's *Charley* and RM Laming's *Candle Lies* – both of which have strong supernatural threads – and onto Ian Watson's *Tales From Weston Willow*. Set in a small village, it moves through a series of interlinked story segments told in a pub.

The book's other notable stories are from Freda Warrington, Ramsey Campbell, Tanith Lee – who never ceases to amaze with her incredible imagination – and Lisa Tuttle whose growing reputation as a fantasy writer is notched up a peg with another macabre tale; *Skin Deep*.

Finally, an honourable mention should go to Nicholas Royle for yet another of his decidedly odd short stories. This one, called *Archway*, yet again has the world doing loops and splitting at the seams to fit in with Royle's visions of fantasy.



Nicholas Royle

All considered, *Dark Fantasies* – despite it's fairly inane name – is a strong compendium of fears from British writers and matches up well to anything the States can throw at us. At the very least it's a snapshot of the fantasy genre, at most it is a confirmation that that anthologies can still succeed, despite UK publishers' preference for novels.

Mark Westerby

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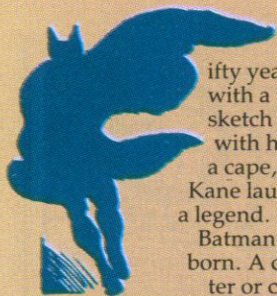
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MORRIGAN PUBLICATIONS



ifty years ago, with a primitive sketch of a man with horns and a cape, Bob Kane launched a legend. The Batman was born. A character or creature

that has survived decades of diverse interpretations. A man who fought crime on the streets throughout a war, plucked flowers from his cowl in the Sixties and is now the star of one of the biggest motion pictures ever.

Many men have steered the Caped Crusader through deadly encounters, in both Batman and his premier title Detective Comics, against such surreal foes as the infamous Joker, the Penguin and the Riddler, and our hero has always emerged triumphant but ever vigilant.

“In a way Batman is a right wing character, but I believe he is motivated by a sense of justice, not the desire for revenge”

The current chronicler of Detective Comics, and one of its finest, is Scottish comic writer Alan Grant who, since his apprenticeship with DC Thompson, has worked extensively in the British comic field on titles such as *Judge Dredd*, *Tarzan* and *Strontium Dog*. He is currently collaborating with his long time friend and writing partner John Wagner on *The Bogie Man*, *The Last American* and the comic book adaptation of Clive Barker's latest film *Nightbreed*.

FEAR

The Batman job quite literally fell into his lap, claims Alan. ‘Denny O’Neil, editor of the *Batman* line, called John and I out of the blue. He said that he enjoyed our work on *Judge Dredd* and was wanting something a bit different for Detective comics. He sent us copies of Frank Miller’s *Year One* and said that that’s the kind of Batman he wanted. He said ‘I want grotesque storylines and villains. I want Batman in the city, I want it at night and I want it weird. So we have basically tried to keep it to that.’

After seven issues, John Wagner’s interest flagged and it was left to Alan to charge on, scripting alone. One of his most successful stories, *The Fear*, chronicled the crimes of Cornelius Stark in a journey

through the Batman’s motivation. It combined horrific elements which were seemingly out of place in a comic title of its kind.

‘I was quite surprised that they didn’t tone it down any from the way in which I had written it. Denny called me after the story was published to say that they had received more than the usual number of complaints from parents, and he said – and I agreed – that we have to be careful because Batman is a national American icon. It isn’t just because Frank Miller has written a book that has made Batman acceptable to grown ups. You’ve still got to remember that there are six and seven year old kids who think that Batman is fantastic and I accept that that story could upset children of a young age. I’m in agreement with Denny when he says we have got to be careful. He asked me to tone down the horrific elements after that particular story and I have done so.’

REVENGE

In the mid Eighties Batman was radically altered by Frank Miller in the series *The Dark Knight Returns* which focused on Batman’s right wing politics. How did Grant feel this compared with his representation of Gotham’s finest?

‘Batman is a character who can be used politically but I don’t think the politics necessarily have to come into it. In a way Batman is a right wing character, but I believe he is motivated by a sense of justice, not the desire for revenge which I think is what Frank’s Batman was driven by. The desire for revenge is there, but I think if Batman was real character, he would be mature enough to be able to cope with it to a certain extent. It’s the sort of emotion that might overwhelm him but I don’t think it would drive him the way it does in *The Dark Knight*.

‘I think that his main mission is for justice. He knows what it’s like to be on the receiving end and he wants to prevent the sort of things that happened to him happening to other innocent people. I can sympathise with that. I would love to dress up in a Batman costume at night and go out and beat up bad people. Even if it’s just smashing the windscreens of cars that are parked on double yellow lines.’

In the *Batman* title, the recent death of Robin still echoes in his mind and he is portrayed as ‘angst ridden’, with many stories brimming over with psychological exposition and undertones. ‘I think that psychology is one of the faults in American comics. In many

THE MANY LIVES OF BATMAN

AT LAST: IT’S HERE! The controversial interview that separates Batman the comic book hero from Batman the movie. Alan Grant, current writer of DC’s Detective comic, gives FEAR’s Stephen McGinty his views on the Batman character, his transformation from cowed investigator to vengeful dark knight and his launch onto the big screen.

ways I see American comics as being adolescent superhero versions of *Dallas* and *Dynasty*. All these people are screwing each other and cheating and in the middle you’ve one or two innocent characters. But you end up with so many superheroes with their own problems that you forget what they are meant to be doing for the world.’

VAMPIRE BATMAN

Alan’s brief dip into the murky waters of Batman’s psyche in *The Fear* revealed how the character feeds on the fear he creates, and produced a story critically acclaimed by fans. ‘It’s something that I feel about The Batman. You know the whole story about criminals being a cowardly and superstitious mob and how he always plays

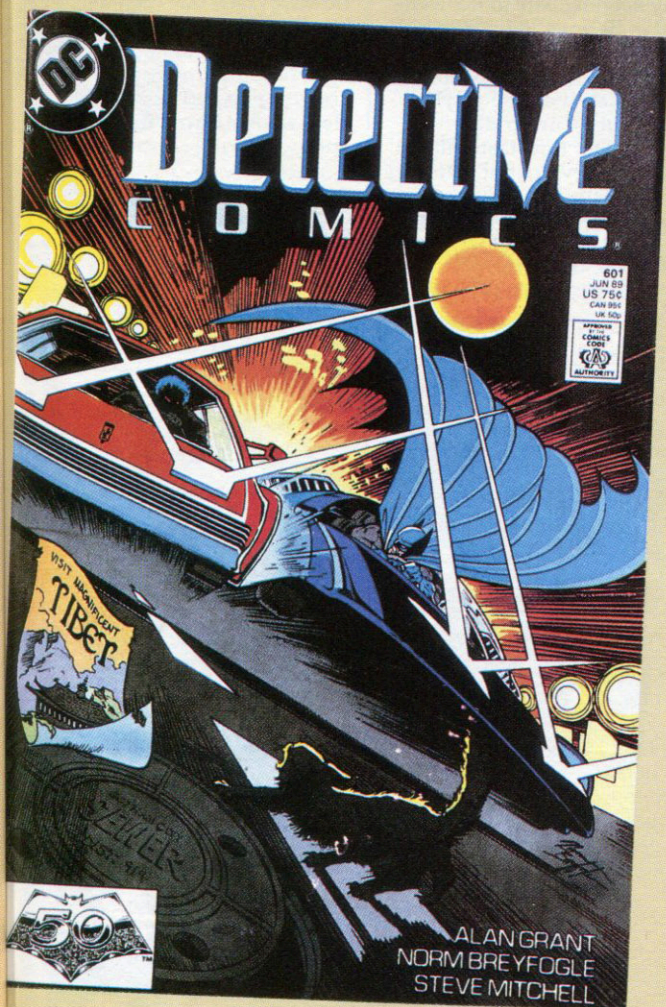
on that. I think that to a certain extent it’s valid to show him as drawing some sort of strength from his victims, because in a way they are his victims. People that Batman attacks may well deserve to get dangled from a ledge in the pursuit of informa-

“I would love to dress up in a Batman costume at night and go out and beat up bad people”

tion which is going to save innocent lives, but if you think about it on an individual level it’s not very nice for anybody to get their arms broken or dangled two hundred feet above the



AN



pavement. These people have feelings too, and I think that Batman not necessarily gets a kick out of it but gets some sort of strength from it. Even if its only to further his own image among criminals that he's a real mean 'bastard' and that they don't come any worse than him, if he only does it for that reason then I think it's valid.'

An element that has been

"I want Batman in the city, I want it at night and I want it weird"

missing from recent Batman realisations, but is not missing from the comic's title, is the Caped Crusader's detective skill. 'I know in the past it was really important to Batman, he was always billed as being the world's greatest detective but it wasn't the element that I enjoyed. I enjoyed the element of him out there kicking the shit out of thugs, the weirder the better, frightening them and being nasty, but at the end of it you know that he could still cuddle a kid and say look everything is going to be *Okedokey*.'

Batman is trademark and copyright DC Comics Inc 1989

Since his premier in issue 583, Grant, with the help of Wagner, has created some of the most memorable and colourful characters in many years. Scarface, a ventriloquist's gangster doll with a male moll pumping the trigger, The Aborigine, a man hunting for society's acceptance of his people, and Cornelius Stark, a good old-fashioned nutter. But what about a mega-villain, a new Joker or Penguin? 'I haven't consciously decided to introduce a new *Batman* mega-villain. I think several of the villains I've created could be brought back and made more powerful.

'For me part of the challenge is to think up different characters and villains. Generally speaking, if the villain has been disposed of I don't want to find out next month that the guy's daughter, who up to this point may not have been featured, suddenly wants revenge. I can't be bothered with that soap opera type story. I much prefer short complete stories.'

RESPECT

Since his conception in 1939 by Bob Kane, Batman has been drawn by hundreds of different



artists, each one adding to or detracting from the character's dynamism and style. In Detective Comics, Norm Breyfogle draws the demon that is The Batman, a windswept colossus bestriding Gotham, with a cape that almost encapsulates the city itself. 'I think he is fantastic, he is one of DC Comics' best artists at the moment. When I'm lying back with my eyes closed, thinking about what's going to happen, it's Norm's artwork that I'm seeing it in terms of, he draws it as I see it. When he doesn't draw it the way I've described it, when he adds his own elements, it's always an improvement. He's so good at doing that sort of thing.

'The major factor in his artwork for me is what you call his storytelling ability, he really tells it well, he could have learned it from Will Eisner (*The Spirit's* creator). He's got the same sort of talent for doing it.'

The biggest movie of the year, in a summer filled with giants such as *Indiana Jones: The Final Crusade* and *Ghostbusters II* is *Batman*, which has grossed phenomenal amounts of cash Stateside and is not doing too badly here either. Whilst Alan had no hands-on involvement in the film, DC had to ensure that their most cherished character was in safe hands. 'Denny, I think, supervised the script at every stage. Denny O'Neil probably more than any other man alive knows The Batman and, because he is held in a lot of respect, had he taken exception to anything in the

script his complaints or criticisms would have been acted on. Publisher Jenette Kahn probably also had some sort of script veto, but I don't know whether she exercised it. She keeps a close eye on DC stuff. It's good to have a publisher with such an interest in the stuff

"I think that to a certain extent it's valid to show him as drawing some sort of strength from his victims"

she's publishing, and with Batman being her favourite character she has an interest in making sure everything is okay with him.

'Denny told me that he is very happy with the Sam Hamm screenplay. While I haven't seen the screenplay, I thought that his three issue run in Detective, although it wasn't exactly my sort of Batman, showed a lot of really nice cinematic touches.'

SPIRIT

As a DC freelancer, Grant was given an exclusive tour round the Gotham sets for the film. 'The sets are pretty fantastic. Walking through them I felt like a child. You don't realise how huge the sets are going to be in the movie. Because of the angles they are shooting from, all the

buildings were truncated at thirty feet. When you see the movie the tops of all the skyscrapers were provided by a team of people sent over to Manhattan to take 20,000 photographs, which were then fed into a computer. The tops of the buildings are computer generated images. They didn't have anything to do with the sets. But even truncated at thirty feet you really sense the grand scale. The Batmobile looked amazing, I really liked it. I'm a big fan of Norm Breyfogle's Batmobile. You can't really get a meaner looking machine. But the one they had built was very impressive.'

But how does he think it will compare with his personal view of The Batman? 'I think it will compare pretty well. I've never written a Joker story, but if I did I would think of Jack Nicholson. He's a natural choice for it. The sets definitely fit in with the way I see Gotham. The only thing that I personally felt was out of sync with the way I see it was Michael Keaton. From the stills I've seen, Michael Keaton doesn't look like my Batman, maybe actually seeing it on the big screen, because I haven't seen the movie, he will look like The Batman, but I have my doubts.'

'I thought it wasn't right, having read the revelations in *The Daily Star*, that Batman and Vikki Vale end up in bed making love. Now I could see Bruce Wayne doing that although, really keeping true to the Kane spirit of Batman, I don't think Bruce Wayne would ever do that. He's always led people to believe that, with the playboy image, but he never did.'

'No matter how tastefully or sensually they do it, it's not right for Batman to go screwing or making love. That's not what he's about, that's not why he puts on the uniform.'

'I also thought the expense was pretty ridiculous. In my opinion, *Batman* is the sort of movie that could be made on a very low budget, not a shoestring, but there was no need to spend the amount of money that they spent. I suspect that there are a lot of gimmicky things that wouldn't really be needed. I think it would be better seen from an old thriller point of view, although that's difficult for me to say - it may work perfectly.'

The Chinese are celebrating the year of the snake, but as the

"I'm a big fan of Norm Breyfogle's Batmobile. You can't really get a meaner looking machine"

sales of comics and merchandise rise astronomically, it appears that, worldwide, the year of the bat is upon us. Batmania is at an all-time high and Alan takes a very philosophical approach to all the money flying around. 'Sales have gone up but I don't feel that I'm entitled to any part of the *Batman* gravy train. I've got no real stake in Batman other than that he's a character I love to read and like to write.'

'When I was a kid and reading DC comics for the first time, I always knew that I could never be a Green Lantern, and even if I wanted to I could never grow up to be a Superman, but I could grown up to be The Batman. He'll always be my number one.'





In the first visit in a nationwide tour of specialist shops, Stan Nicholls looks in on the UK's largest and most successful SF store.

LIFE ON ANOTHER PLANET



plaints. If I throw them in front of the directors they will take notice.

'I've only had three protests since I've been here, all about *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. It is completely beyond my comprehension why people want to see films about a scarred child murderer. Unfortunately it exists as a very hot-selling product; you could sell Freddy Krueger shoes if somebody made them.

'We are not the only specialist shop. There are several competitors who will gleefully sell anything we don't. But that isn't an argument I would use. If I find true distress about something, I'm quite happy to try to persuade the owners to act on

"If I find true distress about something, I'm quite happy to try to persuade the owners to act on it"

it. I've long resented, for example, John Norman's *Gor* books. I understand anybody who finds them offensive and fully support Michael Moorcock's crusade against Smith's. But it would take an awfully convincing case and lots of complaints for me to build a case against them. Remember, I'm the manager; I have no vested interest in this business except my pay packet.'

Dick Jude has a clear view of the way ahead. 'I would like this place to represent all the related genres, and to develop the concept of Forbidden Planet, so it's not just SF, comics, etc, but the realm of the imaginative generally.'

Before this happens there possibly may have to be another move. 'We've got to expand,' declares Jude. 'Already these premises, although they have 40,000 square feet retail space, aren't big enough for what we want to do.'

He is anxious to dispel one particular criticism: 'There is a feeling amongst some customers that we've grown large and impersonal. It's a no-win situation. We got flak in Denmark Street for the gross overcrowding of both stock and customers. So we moved to a big store and now critics say we're a super-market.'

'I can't speak for other people, but I find supermarkets a brilliant arrangement. They are a very efficient way of buying.'

The weekly take is around £40,000, but Jude believes that there is an inflated idea about the profits made. 'Too many people outside retail refuse to accept that there is a maximum 35% margin, and out of that the cost of the building, staff and all the other overheads have to be paid.'

"It is completely beyond my comprehension why people want to see films about a scarred child murderer"

'Some customers naively think that, if they pay £3.50 for a paperback, all of the money comes back to us. It ain't so. A lot of criticism has been levelled at us based on this kind of misapprehension.'

He is equally passionate in defending his staff, currently numbering twenty-six with casuals on hand for busy periods. 'We get criticised for not having staff with comprehensive knowledge, which is insane. The people who have such knowledge are the sort who spend all day talking about it and not working.'

'It's been said that we have arrogant, couldn't-care-less staff. This is unreasonable. The staff are enthusiasts who like what they sell. They are very personable people.'

The philosophy on stock aims to be as all-embracing as possible, but this isn't always feasible. 'It would be a beautiful situation if we could carry everything in print, but there are inevitable supply problems,' he says. 'We are 70-80% stocked on SF at any given point. Comics are always up to date, because they sell at a greater speed and we have a very efficient way of checking this. Our back issue section is well stocked, although the prices are controversial. We pitch them higher than in England, where people tend to throw away valuable old comics, and lower than the Americans, who seem to have no sense of proportion.'

KRUEGER SHOES

What does he say to the argument that some items have a detrimental effect on impressionable minds? 'I can't hold with that equation. There is material I personally do not like, but we are in business to sell the stuff. When we have a complaint I try to get the customer to put it in writing. I can do something with written com-

Forbidden Planet opened in June 1977 with a small staff and modest premises in London's Denmark Street.

In July 1988 it moved to a megastore in New Oxford Street. 'I remember it well,' says manager Dick Jude, 'all the tills broke down.'

'We had a press party,' he recalls, 'and I've never seen such a bunch of animals. Fresh carpet on the floor was completely ruined by these pigs who didn't understand what ashtrays are for. I can't understand an attitude like that. They were invited into a new shop and tried to destroy it.'

Jude has been with FP for nine years, acting as manager for the last three-and-a-half, and the launch was just another problem in running the UK's largest and most successful specialist store.

Sales average 6,000 a week. 'This is the number of times the total button is hit on our cash registers; bodies passing through amount to three times that,' he explains.

THE ONLY THING IT DOESN'T DO IS MOVE

John Bolton has been a freelance artist for some fifteen years. During this time his work has embraced illustration, comic strips, book jackets and the storyboards for a number of major films, including Mel Smith's latest comedy *The Tall Guy*. But with a new novel, *Someplace Strange*, just out and a full colour adaptation of Clive Barker's *In the Hills*, the Cities on the cards, it is clear that graphic horror is where his heart is, as Stan Nicholls discovered.





Perhaps best known in this country for his strips in *House of Hammer*, John Bolton has concentrated exclusively on the American market since 1981 when he adapted a *King Kull* story for Marvel. The recent publication of his graphic novel, *Someplace Strange*, was the result of a five year effort.

Bolton started out at East Ham Technical College on a three year graphics course. 'After college I went into civil engineering for a time,' he recalls. 'It probably taught me perspective, but I found it tiresome. I would do the work required then disappear into the Xerox room and draw a couple of monsters or something and use the facilities available to enhance them. I was found out and got told off.'

An early encounter with Salvador Dali's work led to a continuing interest in surrealism. 'After a visit to the Tate Gallery, where I saw *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*, I was inspired to paint. The whole point of surrealism is to place a real object upside down, on its head, melting . . . to do something else with it. That's what always appealed to me and really helped with some horror covers I did at a later date.'

MELTING POT OF MONSTERS

Like so many working in the field, John Bolton grew up reading *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. 'It helped shape my formative years and my interest now,' he says. 'I think we all have Forry Ackerman to thank for a lot of things. As a kid, comics didn't interest me at all; the only publication I read on a regular basis was *Famous Monsters*. But in my second year at college somebody came in and gave a slide show on comics - I remember John Buscema's *Silver Surfer* being one example - and to see panels enlarged onto a 12 foot screen made them something more than just comics; they became art. Around 1972 I discovered Barry Smith's *Conan*. In conjunction with the slide show, it made me realise comics were an acceptable form to work in.'

Lon Chaney Snr was another formative influence and 'films like *King Kong* and those illustrations in *Famous Monsters* by Basil Gogos. I found them inspiring. I was also very interested in the



Napoleonic Wars and copied paintings of the period from books. My influences were not from within comics as such, they tended to be Dali and those Napoleonic War artists. They contributed to my interest in art and helped me to formulate a style.'

In fact, Bolton's work embraces a number of diverse styles. 'The style I use comes

"I once created a monster from a piece of bark I found in Highgate Wood"

from the story,' he explains. 'If I want it to be realistic, I draw from life. If I want to put something more abstract across it's better to draw from memory. If Dali wanted to show a melted clock he needed to understand exactly what the clock looked like before he could melt it. As far as being abstract is concerned, you learn a formula, a process - you exaggerate. I once

created a monster from a piece of bark I found in Highgate Wood. I remember picking this thing up, twisting it round and it suddenly took on the shape of a creature. So I used it as reference for a particular piece of work I was doing.'

A childhood hobby has also proved useful in his professional life as an adult: 'At the age of nine or ten I came across a Classics Illustrated comic about the Franco-Prussian War. I was fascinated by the characters and their uniforms, and started by making them in plasticine. That's something which in the last ten years I've been using again. I make creatures to use as studio models, set them up and maybe light them. If you make a thing in a three-dimensional form and copy from that the illustration has more depth. It's rather like *Close Encounters*, where they go to the mountain, and Dreyfuss is aware there is a plateau on the other side because he's the only one who built it. Everyone else just drew the thing. That's what I cite as the reason I work in plasticine.

'I did a chess book in 1979 and one of the pieces, the white queen, wore a helmet. I came up with a number of rather exotic designs for it and had a lot of problems, so I made it out of plasticine. It was such a help to have this as a source of reference that I decided to develop the technique further.'

BLOODY FOOT-PRINTS

These techniques are now being used in animation. 'They did something similar in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*' Bolton says. 'What made that a first was the fact that the characters were three-dimensional. You forget Jessica is just some paint on a cell. And it says a lot about us, I think, being able to find her very sexy. I suppose that feeling takes us back to *King Kong*, where you had sympathy for this bit of fluff and wire.'

The drive to discover new techniques has led him to combine things one is not supposed to - from 3-in-1 oil to candle wax - just to see how they would

interact. He used car sprays at one point – ‘but because they’re not ozone friendly I found them difficult to use without feeling guilty. Most artists have to suffer for their work, but to include everybody else is just a bit too selfish.

‘You can bastardise anything in pursuit of the end result,’ he contends, ‘it doesn’t matter what it is. I’ve actually worked in food; sticking a chicken skin to a board and manipulating it, so you end up with a grotesque image. I have an illustration of a rubber glove lying on a tiled floor surrounded by bloody footprints. To achieve something like that, obviously, you take a rubber glove, you buy some tiles from the local hardware store, get a chicken leg and dip it in red ink. It doesn’t make a blind bit of difference to the man in the street. He doesn’t know it’s a piece of chicken, all he sees is the message the image is trying to convey.’

This wide range of techniques and styles came together in *Someplace Strange*. ‘It’s a culmination of all my experience, an ambition that was unfulfilled for many years.’ And the catalyst was meeting the right writer: ‘She had a similar interest – an equally off-the-wall, surreal interest she wanted to exploit – and we were able to work



together. *Someplace Strange* took five years. It’s the sum of all my interests, but it’s slotted into a format that enhances each style. I had a style for each chapter, or each character.’

Unless an artist writes their own material, inevitably they have to work in harness with a scriptwriter. Fortunately Bolton finds this a stimulating experience. ‘In collaboration, the ideas go off at a tangent and you think of things you’ve never thought of before. You can progress and digress.’

But he draws a distinction between the two functions. ‘When you’re talking about writer and artist, whatever happens I’m the one who has to execute it. I’m getting ready to adapt *The Yattering* by Clive Barker, and he has given me a completely free hand to do whatever I want. I’ve had a few words with him about it, but he’s made it clear he doesn’t want to step on any toes and it’s up to me how to do it. After all, I’m the one who will be spending six months on it.

‘I’m quite happy to work with Clive at any time. He’s protec-

“I like to find out what people think, but ultimately I want control over the end result, which is why I don’t work in advertising”

tive about his work, but at the same time if he’s letting somebody adapt something, he allows them to get on with it. Clive makes suggestions, he doesn’t make demands. He’s not only established, he’s also a top seller and sometimes people can change overnight – become absolute bastards – but he hasn’t changed from the time before he was famous.’

FRENCH KISSING

When interpreting someone else’s work, the amount of creative leeway allowed can be a contentious point, but Bolton believes in making his position clear. ‘I like to find out what people think, but ultimately I want control over the end result, which is why I don’t work in advertising. I could make a fortune doing advertising, in fact I did it for a short time. But what invariably happened was I saw the agency, did the artwork and they showed it to the client, who made changes. The agency came back to me, and I made changes. Obviously the first time you turn in your work you do it to the best of your ability. When

you start making changes that aren't yours it usually doesn't improve the work.

'It's rather like thinking the Mona Lisa would look better with a moustache. Sometimes you wanted to put your signature with a note underneath - 'Under sufferance', or 'I'm afraid the client asked me to add this little bit at the end.' I've now reached the position where people contact me because they like my work, not because they want me to do something and then change it.'

He likes doing comic strips because they allow him a certain amount of freedom. 'I'm sent the scripts (which I've usually discussed with the writer), adapt them and send them back. And that's it. There aren't too many changes as a rule. Although there was one occasion when a costume was a bit too skimpy. So the comic did a bromide of the artwork and added a little more cloth.' Does he regard that as interference? 'No, because you're doing something for a client, and the client is doing it for an audience.'

"I've now reached the position where people contact me because they like my work, not because they want me to do something and then change it"

If the audience is going to react against something like that, you try to avoid it. I don't consider that censorship. I don't mind as long as they haven't done it to the original artwork. If anybody did that to my original I'd never work for them again.'

Considering the content of some graphic novels, it is surprising they have had so few censorship problems and maybe it's only a matter of time before Mary Whitehouse et al start to take an interest. 'The problem is you're working in a format that's been accepted as being for children for so many years and it's smothered by those restraints,' he points out. 'There are children's books and there are adult books - there should be children's comics and adult comics.'

'You have to be aware of the market your client is serving. If it's kids' books you don't put rape and murder in there. You have to edit the work yourself and you can't cry afterwards if something's taken out. At the moment the lines haven't been defined in the industry. People have to understand that because it's a comic it isn't just



meant for kids. Look at the Italian and French comics. They have nudity, sex . . . and it's accepted.

'I had a graphic novel sent to me, *The Punisher*, and it's so violent; but the problem is it's in a comic format. So is *The Killing Joke*. The next graphic novel I'm working on is horror, and it's going to be so gross people will throw up or toss it away. I want to show somebody being ripped to shreds on the page. What format can you put that in? The format seems to be the question to me, because if it ceases to be comic-sized, maybe that's where the parameters lie, where the safety is.'

GOTHIC MYSTERY

In 1978 Bolton was involved in a project to bring Lin Carter's sword and sorcery hero, Thongor, to the screen. He worked on characterisation and was going to do the storyboards, but at the last moment the backers pulled out. But this led to further film work: 'Milton Subotsky was producing the film and about a year later he contacted me again and wanted me to adapt the script of *The Monster Club* as a promo magazine to be given away at the Cannes film festival. I think there were just a

"There are children's books and there are adult books – there should be children's comics and adult comics"

thousand printed. This adaptation was later used as storyboards, once the film was under development, and I was called in during the shooting to draw a sequence to be seen on screen. This was a scene where Stewart Whitman walks into a church and picks up a bible; there's a voice-over and a dissolve into seven of my illustrations.

'There's also a painting by me, of a family tree, which Vincent Price and John Carradine use. The family tree was a device to get us into each segment of the movie. They focused on one particular face and Vincent Price told a story.'

Therein lies a mystery. 'The painting measured probably six feet by three feet wide – we had to use a truck to get it to the studio and it took two men to hang it on the wall – and the day they finished shooting somebody stole it off the set. A reward was offered through the local newspaper – this was Pinewood – but it was never recovered. I can't imagine what happened to it. The contract

said the painting had to be replaced in case there was a sequel, so I had to paint another one. I have the duplicate in the loft, but somebody else out there has the original.'

Next he did storyboards for *Battletruck (Warlords of the 21st Century)*, which was shot in New Zealand. 'Then I was introduced to John Landis, who was making *An American Werewolf in London*, and he commissioned me to come up with a concept poster for the film. I saw the rough cut and was given transparencies of the transformation sequence. What he wanted was a vague image, the outline of the werewolf with just the eyes and teeth showing, lit from behind.' Bolton worked to Landis' specification, but ultimately it wasn't right, nor were the efforts of the seven or eight other artists who had also been asked to tackle the job. 'We came up with this sort of compromise – he kept the original and I was left with a transparency – but I retained the rights. I wanted to use it later for a series of horror comics brought out by Pacific in the States. I sent them the transparency and they lost it. Then the business folded, so it never saw print. But I was determined to have an original, so I redid it.'

'After *Werewolf* I met Dino De Laurentis and did some scene missings for *Flash Gordon*. They had about fifty per cent of the film in the can and asked me to produce three or four paintings to show the exhibitors.'

Bolton didn't work on films for some time after that, until *Dream Demon*, when he did the storyboards for the dream sequences. The last film he worked on was Mel Smith's *Camden Town Boy* (retitled *The Tall Guy*).

So how do you storyboard? 'You meet the director and, rather like a comic strip, go through each sequence and draw it. You'll choose the angles at this point, show the content of the frame and the action. You need to establish the scene, location and special effects, if any. The information is all there – the only thing it doesn't do is move.'

'In *The Tall Guy* there were several sequences with a lot of extras. You storyboard those scenes so you can sail through them fairly quickly when it comes to shoot. A storyboard is much less expensive than having lots of people hanging around for days.'

'All you're asked to convey are the director's thoughts, on paper, like visual shorthand. The script isn't set in concrete and the whole situation's very volatile at this point. I'm talking about preproduction. There's a sex scene in *The Tall Guy* which is actually very funny, and

didn't exist as such in the script. It was something Mel and I discussed and developed when working on the storyboards. In the script it was very vague, but Mel had an idea of what he wanted, and it was really just adding bits which helped to make it funny.'

"I never thought I'd do superheroes, in fact there was a time when the idea would make me want to throw-up"

Apparently, Hitchcock aside, it's quite rare to storyboard an entire film. 'I don't think you can. It's very time-consuming, and usually I can only spare one or two weeks, so you storyboard as much as you can in that period. I couldn't do it full time, I wouldn't get satisfaction out of it. I'd need to go away and work in oils or something.'

X-MEN ECLIPSED

What are his current projects and future plans? 'I never thought I'd do superheroes,' he admits, 'in fact there was a time when the idea would make me want to throw-up. But a couple of years ago I started doing a backup story in *Classic X-Men*, and now it's developing the way I want it to. I've been able to include, again, my earlier

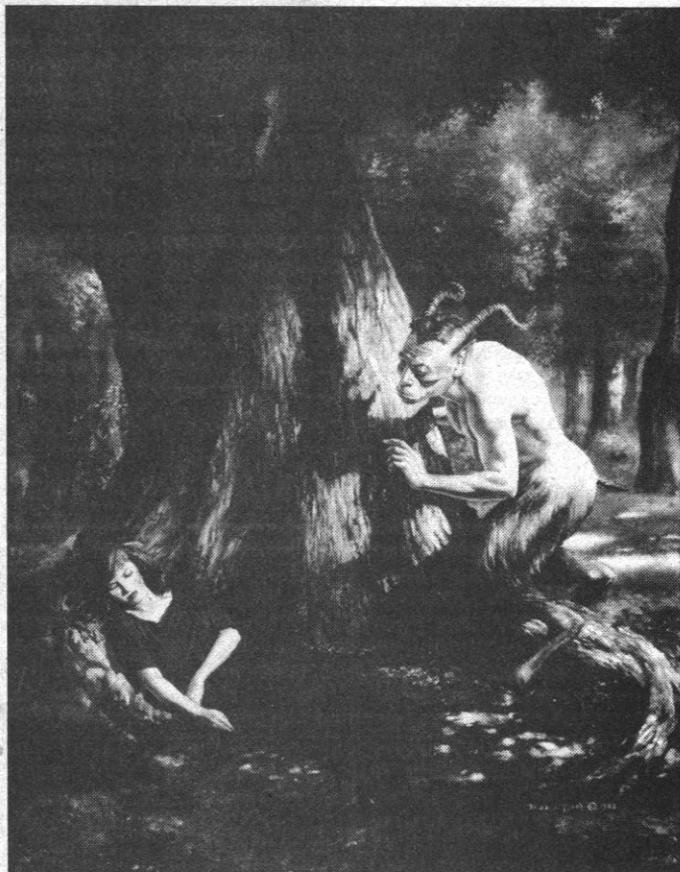
influences, like Dali and Lewis Carroll. It's totally bizarre. The security it provides allows me to be selective about the projects I accept. It's rather like working on a soap and at the same time being in major theatre.'

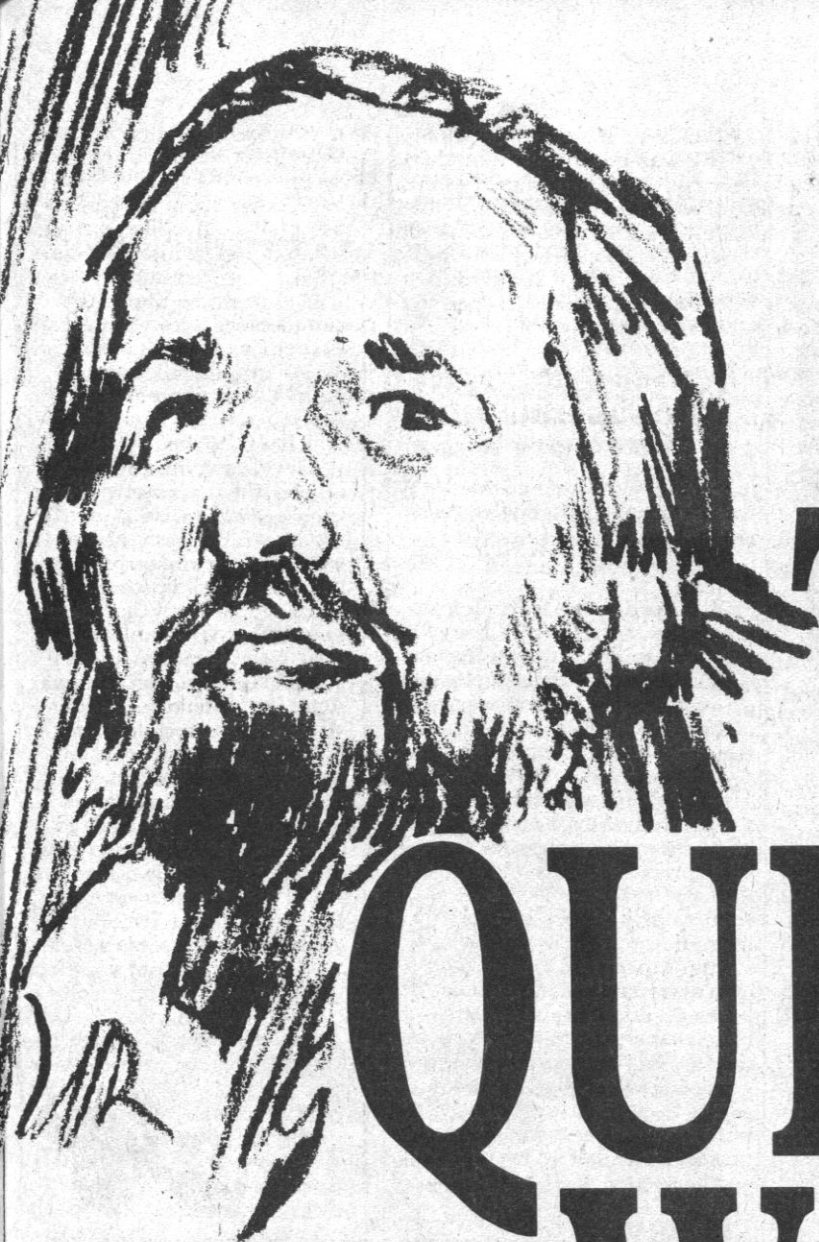
'Future work includes some commissions from Steve Niles' Arcane Comics (see FEAR Issue 8). We're going to do several strips together and he's published a portfolio of mine. Epic, which is published by Marvel, will be developing a series called *Hellraiser*, based on Clive's stories. I'll be doing some work for them. I'll also be adapting *In the Hills*, the *Cities* in full colour for Eclipse.'

'I'm doing a French graphic novel with a couple of friends who live in Paris; and there's going to be a book on me from Acme that should appear this year. It will be original works, probably some unpublished material and a checklist.'

'Finally, I'm working on a project about Vincent Van Gogh. Remember, he cut his ear off and sent it in the post to his friend. He used to meet with whores and was a schizophrenic. He suffered blackouts and he was in London in 1888 . . .'

Surely he can't mean . . . ?
'Yes. Was Van Gogh Jack the Ripper?'





THE QUIET WOLF

Bestsellerdom may have eluded him, but Charles L Grant, acclaimed horror author and anthologist, has one of the most revered critical voices in the genre. And, as FEAR's Paddy McKillop soon found out, new writers would do well to listen to him.

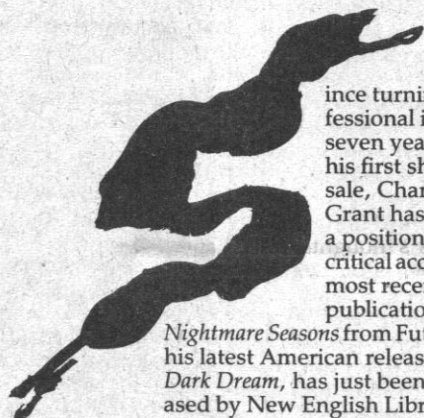
Since turning professional in 1975, seven years after his first short story sale, Charles L Grant has risen to a position of high critical acclaim. His most recent British publication is

Nightmare Seasons from Futura, and his latest American release, *In a Dark Dream*, has just been purchased by New English Library.

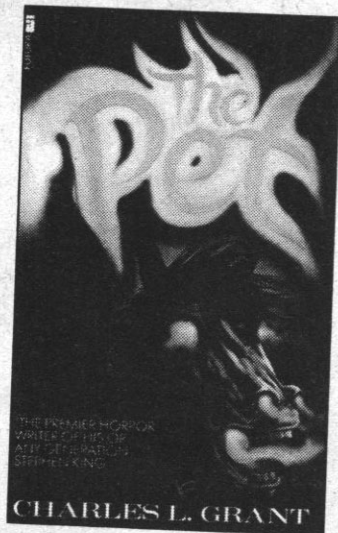
December also sees the appearance of a three-book spoof fantasy series, the Kent Montana books, written under the well-known Lionel Fenn pseudonym.

But, although 'Charlie' has long been a favourite with British fandom, his work is available to the UK audience in only a handful of Futura titles – *Tales From the Night-side*, *The Pet*, *For Fear of the Night* and *The Orchard*.

Douglas E Winter, American horror critic and editor of the acclaimed *Prime Evil* anthology, has called him both 'the modern master of atmospheric horror' and



"I don't sit down to write a horror novel, I sit down to write a novel that has horror in it"



'the field's leading anthologist'. However, the bestseller charts still elude him.

A body of work, comprising over forty books, twenty anthologies and more short stories than you can shake a rejection slip at, has not made Grant a rich man. The book he is working on now, *Shadow of the Wolf*, might well be retitled *Shadow of the Tax Man* and serve as a fine autobiography.

Having survived in a tough business for many years, and knowing what it is like to strive for the breakthrough book, Charlie took time out from his work to give FEAR the benefit of his observations.

SALT IN THE WOUND

PM Why do you go for quiet horror and avoid the visceral?

CLG Because, when it comes down to it, I still believe in the power of imagination. I'll give you a perfect example: in *Night Songs*, my zombie books, there's a scene where there's a cop sitting in a car and a zombie lady walks up to him and pulls his arm off. And I don't say anything except *she pulled his arm off*. And I got letters complaining about how needlessly graphic that scene was. I just said it and *they* filled in the rest. If I had done it in detail it would not have been nearly as powerful.

That's what I mean about the power of the imagination. As long as you can suggest, and you let the reader fill in whatever is most disgusting to him about whatever it is that you're doing, that'll get 'em better than anything. I want people to be really nervous and anxious and apprehensive, and I think that effect lingers more than the jump-shock or the detail.

In a lot of ways it's like a naked lady and the same woman in a nightgown – the nightgown is much more erotic and sexy.

PM This is where we get into sexual hang-ups . . .

CLG Ha, I'm not gonna press that one at all, I'll just leave that one the way it is!

PM Dean Koontz refuses the tag 'horror' for most of his work. Does

it bother *you* that you're known as a 'horror writer'?

CLG No, I write what I write. I see a lot of authors, without mentioning names, who once they get successful decide that, in terms of publishing, it's no longer economically or politically expedient to be known as a horror writer. If I ever made it – which I don't kid myself about, once in a while I dream about it, but I don't kid myself – I will never be a bestseller writer.

This is not a self-fulfilling prophecy, by the way, I just know that the type of stuff I do does not have that mass base. But let's talk fantasy here and let's say that I do it – I'll never say I'm a mainstream writer.

I don't sit down to write a horror novel, I sit down to write a novel that has horror in it. A lot of horror novels that are out are blatantly set up as *horror stories* and they're not really *novels* in the sense that they're not about people and people's problems. The only problems they have are the supernatural things. I write a novel and it's about people who have personal problems – with their jobs, their families, whatever – and the supernatural is like salt in the wound. And while it may not have anything to do with the character's own everyday problems, those problems don't go away just because there's a critter or a ghost or some sort of supernatural thing going on. That's what I mean by saying that I write a novel that has horror in it rather than a horror novel. I think that's a big difference.

SURVIVAL

PM Is the preponderance of lower-class horror choking off the good horror?

CLG Ah, no. In the States there is a bust in the horror field right now, it's gone down hill. They bought up all the splatterpunk and derivative stuff and, when they realised it wasn't going to sell as well as, say, Robert McCammon, they just dumped it on the market. We're just now seeing the tail end of that. There's not much horror being published now relative to last year or two years ago, and what happens is the people who are good enough survive the shake-up – and those that aren't – you never hear from them again.

In a period of prosperity it does take up slots. The field would be better served by them not being there because people would then be able to read better written horror, which would perhaps entice them to read more and they would learn the difference between good and bad. But when you've got so much bad out there, it's hard to find the good and the casual reader is not inclined to go looking for it. So it always pays to have the good stuff outnumber the bad, to turn a casual reader into a fan, or at least *your* fan.

But I don't think it chokes off the

good horror. It makes it harder for good horror writers to get their books published if they're not into the *demon child* kind of book.

LEATHER ELBOWS

PM I have a list of quotations about you, all of them complimentary. Does it annoy you that you have all this acclaim and yet the money in the bank does not follow it up?

CLG Well, it's gonna sound like sour grapes, but what the hell – yeah, it does sometimes, because I work very hard at what I do. When I read a book that has been paid say ten times what I get paid – which isn't all that difficult – yeah, I get pissed, and I get very depressed.

There was an auction for my new book, *Shadow of the Wolf* . . . and nobody came. Now, you wanna talk depressing? I wonder why I bother. *I bother* because that's what I do and I like what I'm doing anyway, and some people are reading it and some people say nice things about it. I'm always embarrassed by people who say really nice things because I don't see it, you know, I just do what I do.

One of the neat things about having been around for twenty years now is that I don't give a shit what people think of me. Most people don't much care for me, and that's all right; and the few I get along with keep me in line. So I have a good time, and I have an even better time when I can get somebody pissed off. I'll do it deliberately if I have to, but I won't lie to do it.

It's like the splatterpunk nonsense. I came to the conclusion there's no such thing as splatterpunk as a type of horror. What are they doing that's new? Nothing. Everything they've done – and I'm talking about pushing the taboos in writing – virtually every subject they've picked has been done before, many times, even graphically. And I realised that it's hype. It was a nice publicity vehicle but all in all there's no such thing.

Ray Garton alluded to my giving the image of a leather-elbows-on-the-jacket type. If that's what he thinks then he's not nearly as aware of the real world of publishing as he thinks he is.

I don't know why they don't like me . . . Maybe it's because they feel that I feel threatened by their *perceived* success. Well, I don't. Ha, that would be really stupid on my part, to be threatened by the likes of a splatterpunk? What, are you crazy? Those of that group that think they are splatterpunks – and I do not include Joe Lansdale or Robert McCammon in this because they know better – but those who are talented will make it through. They'll find what's good about the stuff I do, they'll use it; they'll find out what's good about the stuff they do and use it, meld it all together, and in about ten years *they'll* be wearing the leather elbow patches because there will be some other damn new fad coming along. And I'll be an old fart.

“There was an auction for my new book, *Shadow of the Wolf* . . . and nobody came”

SENTIENT SHIT

PM You've been editing anthologies for donkey's years now . . .

CLG Ha! Thank you.

PM How has the graph of quality gone?

CLG Down! There are two reasons why I quit editing anthologies: the first is the scheduling, they were throwing the schedules way off; and second, the quality of the submissions I've been getting have gone way down. I was getting more crap than ever before—things like a story about sentient shit!—and it was getting harder to fill the anthologies with good writing. The professionals didn't have the time to write short stories, and even from some of them they were obviously toss-offs, and I bounced them.

PM Would you compromise just to have a 'name'?

CLG I had to in the first *Shadows*. To sell the series I had to have a 'name' and so I took what I thought was publishable, although I might not have taken it otherwise. But after that I never took a story I didn't like a lot, no matter who it was written by.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

PM What do you think of the current crop of big-name anthologies—

the *Masques* series and *Prime Evil*?

CLG You really want me to get in trouble don't you. At the risk of getting a lot of people really ticked off, I think *Masques* is not a super series. It's had some good stuff in it, but considering the editor, it has had more mediocre stuff in it than it ought to have done, I think. *Prime Evil*—now that's hard 'cause I'm in that, so there's obviously one terribly brilliant story . . . Overall I think it's a super anthology. The Stephen King story is a dog, I think it's a horrible story.

PM So is that story there because it has Stephen King's name on it? Had it been Charlie Grant's name on it, would it have been there?

CLG If it had my name on it, I hope it wouldn't have been there. But I don't know, you'd have to talk to Doug. [We do in the next issue—Ed.] Again, you're talking editor's taste here, too. Like JN Williamson with *Masques*. Now his tastes are different to mine and, while I would not have bought eighty per cent of the stories that he had, I'm almost positive that he probably would reverse that percentage for the stories I put out in *Shadows*.

Some anthologies are closed anthologies, which brings up an important point I want to make. There's a new anthology being edited by Kathryn Cramer who



wrote to me and asked if I would submit a short story. And I'm not gonna do it because I've since found out that the anthology is closed, and I decided about a month ago to make it a policy not to submit to an anthology that's closed, period. At least a third of it, or a quarter of it, has gotta be open to unsolicited manuscripts to give new writers a chance. I know all about selling anthologies to publishers, and I've heard all the excuses about you've gotta have the big names, blah blah blah, and it's ninety-nine per cent bullshit. Big names help the anthology sell when it's on the stands, but you don't need all big names.

FIRST LOVE

PM What do you think of the marketing of your *Shadows* series in the UK?

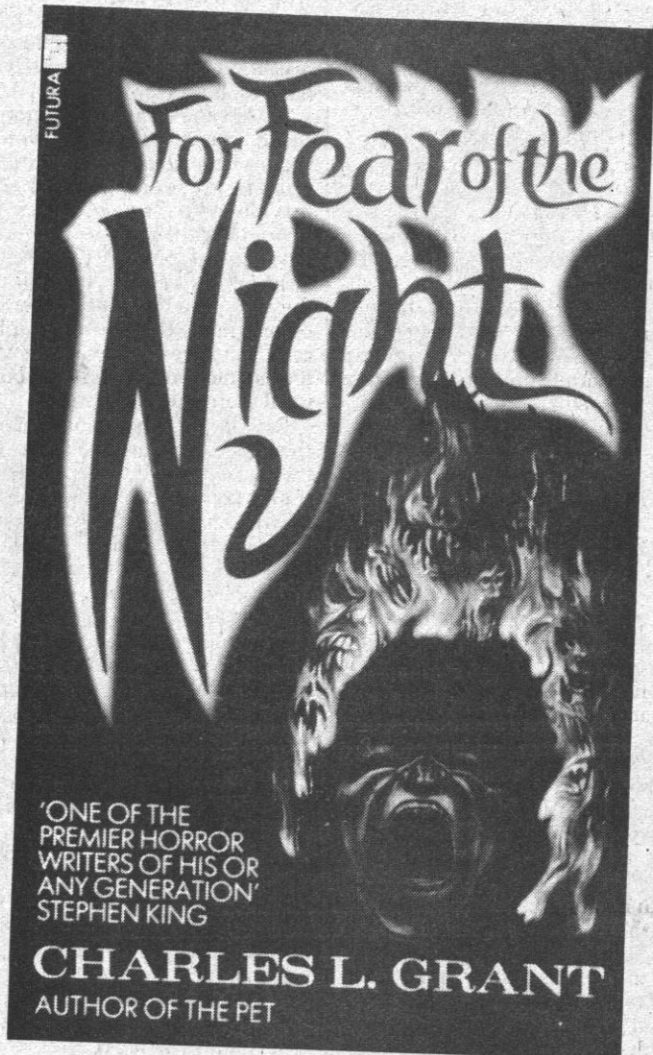
CLG I think it sucks! They bought the two volumes that had Stephen King in and they never bothered to do the others. I think it sucks. The covers are godawful! They reversed the order and changed the numbers—*Shadows 4* was *Shadows 1* and *Shadows 1* was *Shadows 2*—and never picked up the rest of the series. And yet there are thirty volumes of *The Pan Book of Horror Stories*, for Christ's sake! Yeah, sucks pond-water, boy. I was really ticked at the publisher.

PM Finally, tell us who Helen Dewar was.

CLG How the hell did you know about Helen Dewar? Helen was in my History or English class in high school, and I was in love with her. She had red hair and freckles, just like every other girl in my town. And I don't know why I did it but that's when I wrote my first book. It was done in a little teeny-tiny notebook, and I would write a chapter every night and read it to her in class the next day. A really stupid thing, about these masta-don-type creatures that came out of a swamp and stomped people. Really terrible.

She never went out with me, by the way, Helen never did. Ahhh, it's too bad!

"One of the neat things about having been around for twenty years now is that I don't give a shit what people think of me"



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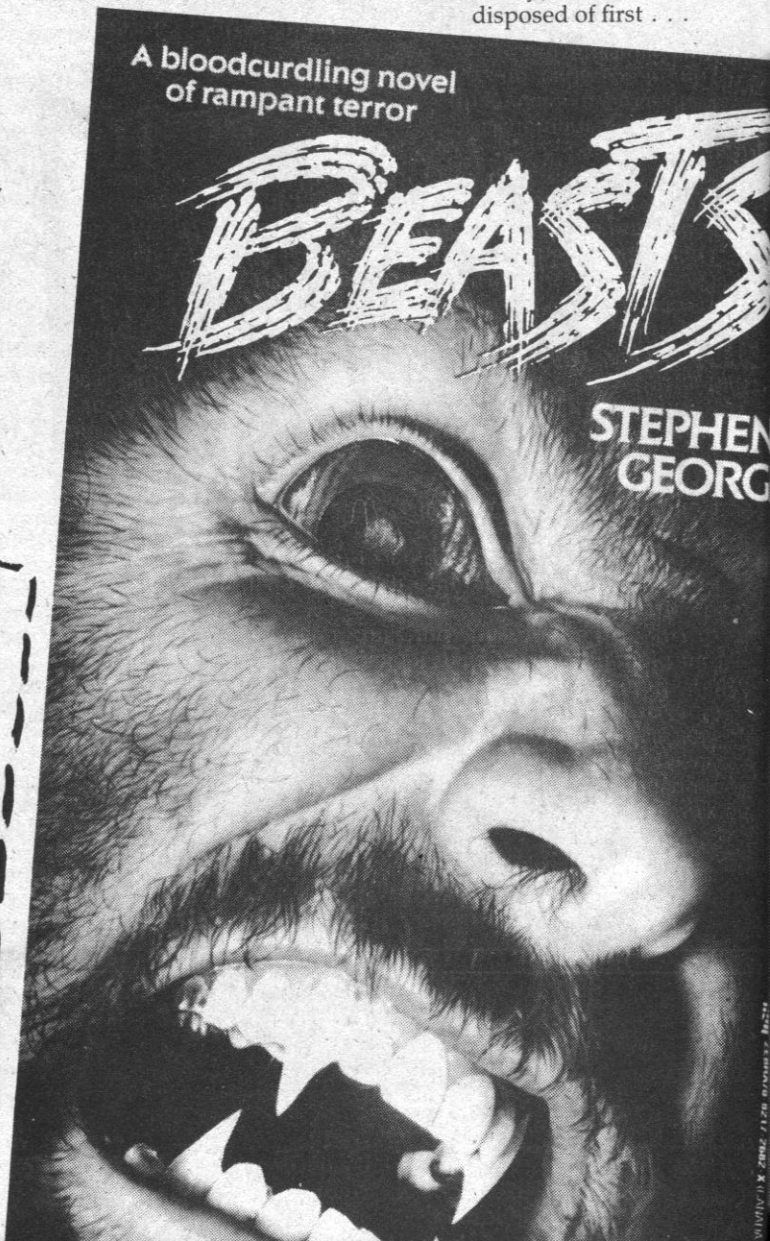
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FEAR

FEAR FICTION

Nine newly-minted stories feature in this month's slice of FEAR fiction. The first will be instantly recognisable to horror fiction fans as the work of grandmaster Graham Masterton: we feature an exclusive extract from *Night Plague*, his third and final *Night Warriors* novel. The remaining pages are filled with eight stories from outstanding new authors who recently submitted their work to FEAR.

If you have a tale to tell, and if it fits FEAR's horror, science fiction or fantasy brief, then send it to David Western, Fiction

Editor, FEAR, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB. Please remember to indicate the wordage of your story (which must be typed, preferably double spaced) and ensure that you enclose a day-time phone number and a photograph of yourself.

Because of the deluge of brown A4 envelopes currently filling the FEAR offices, you may have to wait a while for acknowledgement of your story. We'll do our best to respond promptly but, if there is a – hrrmph! – slight delay then please, please be patient!

We kick off with a piece by C M Drapkin. The author claims that it's the 'shortest horror story ever written.' True or false? Here goes:

Pitch darkness. She ran towards me, terrified, screaming.

'Horrible! Horrible!'

'What on earth's happened?' I asked.

'A vampire!'

There was rustling: a cloaked figure. Then, cruel claws clutched me. A corpse-white face, eyes burning red. Sharp, pointed teeth, snarling and slavering.

Moonlight appeared from behind the clouds.

I whispered, 'Like me?'

FICTION INDEX

42 NIGHT PLAGUE

By Graham Masterton. Stanley, Graham and Angie stumble upon supernatural horrors through Tennyson's portals . . . And where the hell is Knitted Hood?

50 CELLMATE

By Steve Burford. You'll never clone alone

52 CHIC CUISINE

By Brian Mills. A couple of social climbers are invited to a dinner more *nouvelle* than they'd bargained for

55 A STORM IN THE WIND

Part Two of P A Gardner's riproaring SF thriller. John, Carol and Jake are on the case, Baxter's finger is on the button, Judith Knight's hair has gone white, the ghostly creatures are multiplying by the minute . . . Oh my Gaaad! . . .

60 JULIA

By Judith Coulter. The parents of an adopted child are haunted by her traumatic past

63 THE TALE OF THE RED-EYED RAT

By Chris Watson. Tall stories of verminous valiance

66 A TASTE OF BLOOD

By Kay Callahan. You'll lap it up

68 DEAD SHE WAS

By Alison Brooks. Well, she was – but she ain't no more . . .

71 OVER THE TOP

By Duncan Adams. An over-stressed psychologist discovers that you're as Jung as you feel

NIGHT PLAGUE

By
Graham
Masterton

An exclusive preview of the third and last *Night Warriors* novel. Following their battles against unimaginable evil in *Night Warriors* and *Death Dream* (not yet published in Britain), the ancient order of Night Warriors now confronts the most terrible of all Satanic scourges.

American violinist Stanley Eisner is on a concert tour in London when he is assaulted and raped by a hideous medieval-looking figure in a Knitted Hood. He discovers that he has been infected by a sexually-transmitted virus which causes him grotesque physical sickness and fearsome hallucinations, but which also undermines his sense of morality.

In the company of Angie Denman, the girl who comforted him after his attack, and rape counsellor Gordon Rutherford, Stanley tracks Knitted Hood down to a forbidding Edwardian house in Kew.

Stanley stood halfway up *Tennyson's* path and looked up to the second floor. Unlike every other house in the street — even those houses which remained unlit — *Tennyson* appeared to be empty. More than empty — derelict. A house in which unhappy lives had been lived out; lives that were gone now; ways that were parted.

Gordon said, a shade petulantly, 'Are you going to knock, dear, or not? Because if not, my beddeth calleth.'

'You aint 'alf gay,' Angie scolded him.

'Listen to it,' Gordon complained. 'She's more like Samantha Fox than Samantha Fox.'

'For God's sake,' Stanley shushed them. He approached the front porch. It was generously deep and plunged in shadow. Seven or eight empty milk bottles were arranged in a soldierly line along one side of it, half-filled with green, murky rainwater. What Stanley couldn't have known was that they were all of a style of tall thin milk bottle that had been changed more than twenty years ago.





"Skeletons walked with skeletal dogs at their heels, elegant and terrible, with scythes over their shoulders and hourglasses in their bony hands"

He reached out for the front door. The paint felt weather-dulled and dry, and cracked in places into razor-sharp blisters. He couldn't see very much, but he ran his hands over leaded windows, scarred putty, a corroded, brass letterbox. Then, gradually, he raised both hands up the centre of the door and felt something bronze, heavy and gnarled. Something metallic, something which had always possessed its own cold-hearted independence, as some metallic things do, even if they have been made by men. Horseshoes and hammers, and hooks.

'Gordon,' he whispered. 'Pass me your lighter.'

Gordon passed over his Zippo. Stanley flicked its metal-grated wheel with the ball of his thumb and the wick immediately flared up — smoky, orange and pungent.

'This thing stinks,' Stanley told him.

Gordon nodded, as if Stanley had paid him a compliment. 'I fill it with eighty-five per cent petrol, five per cent methylated spirits, five per cent olive oil and five per cent Brylcreem Body Splash. Works a treat, doesn't it?'

Stanley held the flickering cigarette lighter up to the door. When its guttering flames eventually illuminated the knocker, however, he involuntarily took two steps back.

'God almighty,' he breathed.

The doorknocker was the head of a woman, with a blindfold wrapped tightly around her eyes. Her mouth was stretched wide open and three fat tongues protruded from it. A coronet of spikes encircled her hair — spikes which, on closer examination, turned out to be twisted nails.

Something else became apparent as Stanley scrutinised the doorknocker more closely. Her three tongues were not tongues but toads, warty and swollen, forcing their way out from between her lips, as if they were determined to choke her.

For some reason that he couldn't understand, Stanley felt a splintering sensation of alarm — but of excitement too, as if, after years of searching, he had come face to face with something whose existence he had suspected ever since he was a boy.

The woman's face was terrible because she was being tortured. But what made it doubly terrible was the look of triumph which the artist had somehow managed to convey; as if she were proud of her debasement.

'Dear me,' said Gordon, leaning forward to look at the doorknocker more closely. 'I'm surprised nobody's nicked it before now.' He stepped back again and looked around the front of the house. 'I mean the whole place looks completely empty, doesn't it?'

'I definitely saw Knitted Hood here,' said Stanley. 'Maybe he's let things slide.'

'Understatement of the year,' Gordon replied. He rubbed the heel of his hand against the stained-glass windows in the front door. 'Look at the state of these windows.'

Stanley lifted the cigarette lighter higher. The stained-glass was grimy, and some of the panes were chipped and cracked. But, as he strained his eyes against the swivelling flame, he gradually made out the pictures which had been formed out of triangles and curves of coloured glass. Unlike most Edwardian houses, which displayed stylised arts-and-crafts flowers or Elizabethan galleons under full sail, these windows showed a ghastly parade of human death. Heaps of naked, white bodies were being carted through narrow streets in the shadow of tilted buildings. Skeletons walked

with skeleton dogs at their heels, elegant and terrible, with scythes over their shoulders and hourglasses in their bony hands. Fat men were lashed to posts, their bellies slashed open with huge double-headed axes, so that their bowels gushed over the feet of their executioners. Women were paraded around high in the air, impaled on tall poles, holding their arms out wide so that they wouldn't lose their balance and have even more horrifying damage inflicted on their insides.

The lower quarter of the windows was taken up by the depiction of an open mass grave, into which hundreds of bodies had already been tipped, like shoals of herring.

Just as the expression on the face of the doorknocker suggested a kind of masochistic triumph, this stained-glass charivari of agony and death was made all the more grisly because of the glee on the faces of both torturers and tortured; as if pain was something to be celebrated; as if death were a huge delight.

'Jesus,' Gordon whispered.

Angie came and looked at the windows too, open-mouthed, standing very close to Stanley and exuding warm wafts of Lou-Lou perfume. 'Bloody 'ell,' she said at last. 'It's 'orrible. 'Oo on erf would want a bloody 'orrible winder like that?'

'I'm having a nightmare,' said Stanley, with no confidence whatsoever. 'I'm still asleep and I'm having a nightmare. *Nobody* has stained-glass windows like that, not in London.'

'You ain't asleep, Stan, love,' Angie told him, taking hold of his hand. 'I promise you. I can see it too.'

'Are you going to knock, then?' asked Gordon. 'I don't really feel like standing here for the rest of the night.'

Stanley reached out gingerly for the huge, frightening doorknocker. As he did so, however, Gordon said, 'There's a bell here.'

Stanley pressed the brass button. They heard the faint thrilling of the bell somewhere in the back of the house, where (in hinter times) the servants would have heard it.

'Bet you five quid there's nobody in,' said Gordon, with a confident sniff.

'You aint 'alf pessimistic,' Angie told him.

'That's me,' Gordon retorted. 'The gay pessimist.'

But it appeared as if Gordon was right; because the arcane door remained closed and they heard no noises or footsteps inside the house. Stanley, with some reluctance, hefted up the doorknocker, and gave it a timid bang, but again there was no response. 'Well... I'm sorry, it looks like I've dragged you out of bed for nothing,' Stanley admitted.

'Oh, come on, give it one more shot,' said Gordon, and gave the knocker three tremendous slams against the door. A dog started barking across the road, and in the house opposite, a bedroom light was switched on and a curtain was drawn back.

'You didn't have to wake to whole damned neighborhood,' Stanley hissed. 'You were right, okay? There's nobody home.'

As he said that, however, the front door squeaked very quietly on its hinges and opened a little way, no more than two or three inches. Stanley and Gordon collided with each other as they both stepped hastily away from it, expecting to see Knitted Hood confronting them, or worse.

Angie said, 'You're not scared, are you?'

Stanley kept his eyes on the slightly-open door. It was completely dark inside and, as far as he could make out, there was nobody there; although he thought he could detect the faintest pattering noise, and he thought that he could smell cold and damp. Rotten carpets, dry rot, disused store-cupboards with unnameable fungi growing in them.

'Hallo?' he called, his voice strangled. 'Hallo?'

Gordon gave the door a cautious push. It swung open even wider, revealing a shadowy hallway, with stairs rising on the right-hand side. At the very end of the hallway, another door stood ajar; and through that door they could dimly make out another stained-glass window, a very pallid and yellowy stained-glass window, on which was depicted yet again the face of the blindfolded woman. This time, however, she wore no coronet of twisted nails, and her mouth was tightly closed.

'Hallo?' Gordon ventured. 'Is anybody home?'

'Coo-ee!' called Angie.

Gordon turned to stare at her. "Coo-ee? That's no way to call on a diseased, maniac rapist, for God's sake."

Angie flushed, and looked embarrassed; until she realised that Gordon was ribbing her. In fact, Gordon had woken up sufficiently to have regained his waspish sense of mischief; and, even if they weren't going to have a real adventure, at least they could have some laughs.

'I vote we go inside and take a look,' he suggested. 'I mean, just look at the state of this place, nobody lives here.'

Stanley peered into the shadowy doorway. He could still hear that faint pattering noise... still smell that terminal sourness. It was like the sourness of death, corpses washed in vinegar.

Welcome, somebody whispered.

He stepped into the hallway without another word. If he had spoken, he may not have had the courage to go in.

Gordon hesitated for a moment, then followed him inside, holding out his hand for Angie. Angie hesitated, too, looking dubiously at Gordon's hand.

'Homosexuality isn't *catching*, you know,' Gordon told her.

They stood together in the darkness. Inside the hallway, the smell of decay was almost overwhelming; partly sweet, partly fishy, partly acidic.

'Smells like a mortuary,' Gordon remarked.

Angie said, 'Ssh! Can you 'ear anything?'

Again, that light pattering sound; steady and insistent. Gordon looked at Stanley and Stanley looked at Gordon. 'Sounds like dripping water,' said Stanley, at length. 'Maybe a pipe's burst. That would account for the smell, too.'

'Only one way to find out,' said Gordon. He flicked his cigarette-lighter and held it up in front of him. Its dipping flame made shadows come alive on the walls, leaping and froghopping all around them. The walls were papered in a pattern of huge faded roses. So much of the colour had soaked out of them that they looked more like decaying cabbages. There were no pictures on the walls, although grimy rectangular outlines marked the places where pictures had once hung. At the far side of the hallway was suspended an old barometer, its veneered case corrugated by years of damp. Its face was thick with dust; its needle was

stuck at *Rain*.

Gordon ventured further along the hallway, and Stanley followed him. Angie came close behind, clinging on to Stanley's sleeve. Ahead of them, the stained-glass window of the blindfolded woman gleamed and stirred in the light of Gordon's Zippo, almost as if it had suddenly awakened.

'What do you make of that window?' Stanley asked Gordon. But he was interrupted by Angie exclaiming, 'Urggh!' and suddenly lifting up her left foot. 'This carpet's bloody *soaking!*'

In her strappy little shoes, she had noticed the sodden carpet first. Gordon lowered the lighter, and Stanley could see that the crimson, patterned Axminster was swollen with water, and that every time he put his foot down, he squeezed out a large wet footprint.

'Burst pipe, no doubt about it,' said Gordon.

They had reached what Stanley presumed to be the door to the main downstairs living-room. They paused; and now they could hear the water much more clearly. Gordon placed his hand against the door and said, 'Soaked through, absolutely soaked through.'

That pattering sound, thought Stanley. That doesn't sound like a burst pipe. That sounds like...

'Can we go now?' Angie fretted. 'I'm going to ruin me shoes.'

'Let's just take a shufti in here,' said Gordon, and turned the doorhandle. But the door wouldn't budge. He turned the green, corroded key, and announced, 'It's not locked. The frame must have swollen in the wet. How about putting our shoulders to it?'

Angie held the cigarette lighter while Stanley and Gordon thumped their shoulders against the door panels. 'Come on,' she jeered. 'You two couldn't fight your way out of a paper bag.'

Gordon gave the door a petulant kick.

'We have to do it together,' Stanley told him. 'It's no good us

bouncing backwards and forwards alternately. It's like music, okay? Timing!'

'All right, then,' Gordon agreed. 'One, two, three, Geronimo!'

Together they walloped their shoulders against the door; and this time they jarred it inwards a quarter of an inch, wet wood protesting against wet wood. 'Again!' shouted Stanley, and this time they almost managed to open it. 'One more!'

The door hurtled open and juddered a quarter of the way back again. Angie let out a sarcastic 'Hooray!' but she swallowed it almost as soon as she said it. Inside the living-room it was gloomy and cold, and a persistent wind blew. The walls snaked with running water, and the carpeted floor was awash. In the middle of the room a three-piece suite of heavy, brown, 1930s design stood miserably dripping. The tiled hearth overflowed; on the sideboard, water trickled persistently out of the brimming fruit bowl, in which three or four swollen apples still bobbed, blotchy and brown, like human kidneys in a specimen jar.

Inside the living-room there were no burst pipes. Inside the living-room, it was raining.

Stanley held out his hand. It was rain, there was no mistaking it. He stared up at the ceiling but there was nothing to be seen there except water-stained plaster. The rain was falling out of the ceiling as if the ceiling simply wasn't there; as if it were open sky. Yet he could see the ceiling clearly. He could see its damp-blurred acanthus-leaf mouldings and the ugly, brown glass lampshade



GRAHAM MASTERTON started his professional life as a journalist and became editor of *Penthouse* magazine before leaving fact for horror fiction. His novels include *Night Warriors* and *The Manitou* the latter of which was made into a film, *Charnel House*.

"He could still hear that faint pattering noise... still smell that terminal sourness"

that was suspended from the centre of it.

He took one step into the room, then another. The wind was the same as the rain — it blew keenly through the room as if the walls simply didn't exist. Yet the walls did exist, he could see that they existed, he could feel them, and even thought the rain was falling from nowhere at all, it was making the walls wet.

Stanley touched the sofa. It was upholstered with soggy brocade. He lifted an antimacassar from one of its cushions and held it up for a moment. It dripped, he dropped it. It was real, he could feel it was real. But this whole room was very much more than it appeared. It wasn't just a dowdy, wet living-room in south-west London; it was somewhere else, too. In defiance of all of the laws of matter, in defiance of any kind of logic or sense, this room was two places at the same time.

Stanley turned back to Gordon, who was standing in the doorway, with an odd expression on his face, as if somebody had just tried to explain the theory of relativity to him, and failed.

'Am I dreaming?' Stanley asked.

Gordon stared at him. 'It's raining. How can it be raining?'

'Am I asleep or am I awake?' Stanley demanded.

Gordon stepped into the room, too, and lifted his face to the ceiling, and to the falling rain. 'You're awake, Stanley. And I'm awake, too. What about you, Angie? Come on in!'

'No fear,' said Angie. 'It's bad enough getting me shoes wet without getting me hair wet, too.'

Stanley walked around the room in a slow, measured circle. The rain plastered his hair against his forehead and darkened the shoulders of his coat. It was extraordinary. It felt exactly the same as if they were standing outside, and yet here they were, in somebody's living-room. He drew back the brown brocade curtains, heavy with water, and through the murky, misted-up window he could see the orange sodium lights of Kew Gardens Road.

'It's rain,' Gordon repeated. 'That's what I can't get over. It's actual rain.'

He went to the wall beside the fireplace and laid his hands flat against the wallpaper. 'I can feel the wind on my hands, but I can feel the wall, too. It's incredible. It's the most incredible thing I've ever seen.'

Angie, who was still patiently holding up Gordon's cigarette lighter, asked, 'Can we go now? I'm ever so cold.' There was a look in her eyes which told Stanley that she just wanted to leave, as quickly as she could.

'Okay' he told her, 'let's go. Maybe you'd all like to come back to my place for breakfast.'

'Don't you think we ought to take a look upstairs?' said Gordorf.

'Upstairs?'

Gordon nodded towards the ceiling. 'I'd be interested to know if it's raining upstairs, that's all. I mean — is the rain coming through the ceiling from the room above, or is it in this room only?'

Stanley turned his face towards the wind. It was pungent, the wind. It smelled of river. 'I don't know,' he told Gordon. 'I really don't know. I'm not so sure that I care any more.'

'You came here to face down this Knitted Hood character, didn't you? You came here to find out what he was all about?'

'I don't know, I'm confused. How the hell can it be raining in here?'

'My dearest Stanley, I haven't a clue. But let's try

to find out, shall we?'

Stanley felt an unexpected surge of hatred for Gordon. He couldn't think why he had invited him to come here to Kew in the first place. It was raining, the wind was blowing, what more did Gordon want? Sometimes things happened because they happened, and you didn't question them. Why did Gordon want to interfere?

Gordon came out of the living-room and shook his wet hair like a dog. He came up close to Stanley so that Stanley could smell the wet leather of his jacket and the strong undertone of Cerruti aftershave. 'I'm converted,' he announced. 'Just like Saul, on the road to Damascus, I done seen the light. You, my dear, have got yourself involved with something really...' he searched for the word '...outré.'

'I just want to know whether I'm asleep or awake,' Stanley replied, stiffly. His whole being felt as if it were rigid with panic, like a jammed-up ten-lever deadlock.

Gordon looked at him for quite a long time. 'You really don't know?'

Stanley shook his head.

'He's done something serious to you, hasn't he?' Gordon asked. 'Even if he hasn't actually infected you... he's had an effect on your mind. He's altered your whole perception of things.'

'What the hell is it to you?' roared Stanley. 'What the hell difference...!'

'Hey now, shush, come on now,' said Gordon. 'You're under a strain, right? You're still trying to make sense of what happened to you. So, if we're going to find out what your problem is, we're going to have to understand what's happening in this house. Yes?'

Angie said, 'Can we go now? My plates are freezing.'

Stanley was instantly enraged, almost as if he were drunk. 'Will you shut up?' he screamed at her. And then, angrily, at Gordon. 'I'm sorry! All right? I'm very, very, very sorry I dragged you out of bed, I'm sorry I brought you here, I'm sorry I came here myself! You were right the first time! It's a burst pipe! It's nothing! It's a waste of time! So we're going, all right? *Vamos!* Forget it!'

Gordon folded his arms and leaned obstinately back against the doorframe. 'I'm still going upstairs, Stanley. You don't witness the greatest miracle since the loaves and the fishes and turn your back on it and go home for Gold Blend coffee and a bowl of Rice Krispies.'

'Gordon, this is my life, and my problem.' Stanley replied, trying his best to be patient; his voice wet-sand-slushy with badly contained rage.

'Exactly,' Gordon replied. 'and that's why I'm going to go on helping you, whether you want me to or not.'

'God preserve me,' said Stanley.

'He will,' Gordon smiled. 'And so will I.'

Gordon took the hot, flickering lighter from Angie and squelched back along the wet-carpeted hallway to the foot of the stairs. He mounted one stair, then another, then another, while Stanley stayed where he was with his back against the faded rose wallpaper, watching him, and Angie shivered like a young child lost at Coney Island. After the sixth or seventh stair, Gordon leaned over the bannister rail, the lighter flame held close to his face, so that it looked like an illuminated clown's mask suspended in the air, and asked, 'Coming, are we? Or are we scared?'

'Do we 'ave to?' Angie asked Stanley.

"That pattering sound, thought Stanley. That doesn't sound like a burst pipe. That sounds like..."

'I'll go,' Stanley told her. 'You wait outside. We won't be long.'

'I'm not waiting outside by myself.'

'Well, in that case, come on upstairs with us. I doubt if there's anything up there.'

They walked to the foot of the stairs and Stanley went up first, turning to Angie and saying, 'It's okay. There's nothing to be frightened of. It's just some kind of weird natural phenomenon. You know, like St Elmo's Fire, or mirages in the desert.'

'All right,' Angie agreed, although she didn't sound very happy about it.

Gordon climbed on ahead, taking three and four stairs at a time. He turned a bend in the stairs, and for a moment all they could see of him was his huge hunchbacked shadow. 'Sounds like it's raining upstairs, too!' he called back.

'Bloody 'ell,' Angie muttered. 'Right 'ow's-your-father this is.'

'Come on,' Stanley encouraged her. Gordon's insouciance had given him new courage. 'It's only rain, after all.'

They joined Gordon on the upstairs landing. There were five doors leading off it, four bedrooms, probably, and a bathroom. On the walls hung dozens of dark and diminutive paintings and prints, so small that they were almost miniatures, of the same blindfolded woman whose likeness appeared on the doorknocker and in the stained-glass window at the end of the hallway. Stanley peered closely at the pictures, and discovered that each of them varied slightly. In one, the woman had a coronet of what looked like fish-hooks, piercing the skin of her forehead. In another, her mouth was crammed full to choking with a green herb that looked like parsley or coriander. In a third, the head of a dead martlet protruded from her lips.

'What the hell do you think these pictures are all about?' he asked Gordon.

Gordon, leaning over his shoulder, slowly shook his head. 'I haven't the faintest idea. Perhaps they're all symbolic. They remind me of Tarot cards a bit. Rather *medieval*, if you know what I mean.'

When Stanley examined the paintings even more closely, he could see that their backgrounds varied, too. In some, there were gloomy, forested landscapes, or the battlements of broken-down Teutonic castles. In others, there were deserted beaches or overgrown gardens or long, empty corridors with harlequin-patterned tiles. All that every one of the paintings seemed to carry in common was the blindfolded girl, and a small hooded figure in the distance — a figure that was always looking away, or hurrying off in the opposite direction.

Stanley stopped in front of a painting in which the blindfolded girl was depicted in front of a landscape of boggy, deserted fields and a ramshackle collection of huts and lean-tos and pigpens. In this picture, thick, whitish fluid was pouring from the sides of her mouth and Stanley could only guess what it was supposed to be.

Angie shivered, 'D'you mind if we 'urry up, please?'

They all looked around the landing, and listened. The same sound of rain pattering onto wet carpets was just as apparent up here as it had been downstairs in the hallway. 'Let's try some of these doors,' Stanley suggested. 'This room looks like it's directly on top of the living-room, right?'

He took hold of the handle, which was duller

and more corroded than any of the others. The wood felt damp.

The door was easier to open than the living-room door downstairs, although Gordon had to give it a sharp kick to free it from its frame. Inside, it was raining hard; but it was much lighter than the living-room, because the street-lamp directly opposite *Tennyson* was able to shine into the window. The floor was covered with linoleum, scattered with sodden rugs. The only furniture appeared to be an iron-framed bed, heaped with blankets, and a small battered bureau, which somebody had once painted medicine-pink, and covered with *My Little Pony* stickers.

Gordon and Stanley walked into the room and looked around. Stanley raised his collar against the persistent rain. It seemed to fall right out of the ceiling and right through the floor, into the living-room below. If anything, it was even heavier up here; and the wind was certainly keener.

'Maybe it's some kind of micro-climate,' Stanley volunteered. 'Some kind of electrical disturbance.'

Gordon walked across to the window, and looked out. Then he crossed to the fireplace. It was small and arched; a typical Edwardian bedroom fireplace, in olive-green tiles, with stylised lilies curving around it.

'I think before we go any further we'd better find somebody who understands this kind of thing,' Gordon said. 'I'm a rape counsellor, not an exorcist.'

'Maybe a priest might know,' Stanley suggested.

'I don't know. Either a priest or a meteorologist.'

They turned to leave. They hadn't quite reached the door, however, when they heard a scratching, tumbling noise in the fireplace. Stanley hesitated and frowned at it. 'Did you hear that?'

'Sounds like a starling, falling down the chimney. They do that sometimes.'

They stood in the chilly rain, listening. Another scratch; and then a quick, furtive dragging sound, and a sharp pitter-patter that sounded like a dog's claws on parquet flooring.

'There's definitely something there,' said Stanley.

'If it isn't a bird, then it's probably a rat,' Gordon told him. 'I wouldn't go too close. They're infected with just about every disgusting disease you can think of, and a few more you wouldn't even want to think of.'

But Stanley shielded his eyes against the rain, and peered intently at the small, arched, Edwardian fireplace, and he could see brownish soot showering softly down inside it, into the narrow, rusted grate, and hear scratching and scuffling and *whispering*, he was sure of it, somebody was *whispering*.

'Hallo?' he called, unsteadily.

Gordon said, 'For goodness' sake, Stanley, there can't be anybody stuck in the chimney. It simply isn't big enough. You're saying hallo to a rat.'

'Gordon, I can hear whispering.'

Gordon listened. 'It's the rain, that's all.'

'Can we please go now?' Angie called, even more plaintively than before. 'It's absolutely brass monkeys in 'ere.'

Gordon ignored her, and knelt down in front of the fireplace. He listened again, and this time he nodded. 'I'm sorry, Stanley you're right. I *can* hear somebody whispering. Maybe it's somebody in the house next door; or somebody's radio.'

'Can you hear what they're saying?' asked Stanley.

Gordon shook his head. 'Sounds like they're

"Yet, if he were dead, who had been doing all that scratching and shuffling?"

"He wrenched his arm downwards, out of the chimney, in a shower of soot and a bursting splatter of rusty-coloured blood"

laughing, or *growling*, I don't know. It's very odd.'

Stanley said, 'It's almost three-thirty. Maybe we'd better leave. It doesn't look like we're going to find Knitted Hood.'

'Just a minute,' said Gordon, angling his head so that he could see up the chimney. 'There's something here. An opening.'

Cautiously, he reached his hand into the fireplace and felt up inside the canopy. 'There's an opening here, definitely. I can feel the draught coming through. It feels as if somebody's knocked the bricks out of the back of the flue.'

He withdrew his hand and looked up the chimney again. 'Damn soot keeps dropping in my eyes. I'm going to look like Al Jolson after this.'

He stared up into the darkness for almost a minute. Stanley, with his hand resting on the rain-spotted tiles of the mantle, began to feel impatient. Outside on the landing, Angie was pacing nervously and irritably backwards and forwards, and letting out louder and louder sighs of annoyance.

Stanley was about to suggest that they call it a night when — without any warning at all — Gordon jerked away from the fireplace, and fell back against the bed, knocking his shoulder against the iron upright.

'What?' Stanley demanded. 'What?'

Gordon looked up at him in astonishment. 'There's a boy in there.'

'A what? What are you talking about?'

'There's a boy up the chimney! I saw his face.'

'For God's sake, Gordon. How can there be a boy up the chimney?'

'How the hell should I know? I was trying to make out where that opening was, and all of a sudden I saw this white round face, with black eyes, and this sort of bristly hair, and it was staring right back at me.'

Stanley swallowed dryly. He dropped down on to one knee himself, and slightly lowered his head, and looked up inside the chimney canopy.

'I don't see anything.'

'I saw him, I swear it.'

Stanley waited for a moment, and then called, 'Hey! Up in the chimney! Anybody there?'

A flurry of scratching; another soft shower of soot; but no reply.

He couldn't see anything at first, the inside of the chimney was so dark compared with the dim, orange light in the bedroom. But then gradually he distinguished a pale round face, with dark and rather protuberant eyes and short bristly hair. The face was looking at him from just above the breast of the flue. Looking at him, without any expression at all, so that Stanley couldn't even be certain that the boy could see him. Maybe it just appeared that he was looking at him. Maybe he was blind.

Maybe — and this was the most chilling thought of all — maybe he was dead. Maybe he was wedged tight upside-down in the chimney, within four feet of the open fireplace, and that's where he had suffocated, or starved. A lonely, agonising, long drawn out death. He had heard of Victorian boy chimney-sweeps dying that way. Maybe it had happened by accident to this boy, too.

Yet, if he were dead, who had been doing all that scratching and shuffling? Rats, maybe, gnawing his flesh? Or crows. Crows picked at dead flesh, too.

Stanley glanced back at Gordon. 'Do you think he's still alive?'

'I don't know,' Gordon replied. 'He could be comatose, from lack of oxygen.'

'I think we ought to call an ambulance,' said Angie. 'And the fire brigade. And the Old Bill.'

'Yes, you're right, we ought to,' Gordon agreed. 'Perhaps I should try to reach him... I should be able to feel if he's breathing or not, or if he's still warm.'

'Well, for God's sake be careful,' Stanley cautioned him.

Gordon sat in the tiled hearth tailor-fashion with his legs crossed, and tugged up the sleeve of his coat. Then he rested his cheek against the curved iron canopy over the hearth, and reached as far up the chimney as he could.

'Can you reach him?' asked Stanley.

'Unh-hunh, not quite yet. He's just...'

He shuffled himself a little closer to the hearth, and grimaced as he reached even further up the flue.

'You should be able to feel 'is breaf on yer fingers,' said Angie. 'That's if 'e's breeving.'

'I can't feel anything,' Gordon winced. 'Not so far, anyway.'

'Oh God, he's dead,' said Stanley. Although another voice said: *Serve him right, the stupid, dumb, bastard kid. Serve him right if he suffered and choked. I hope he panicked. I hope he cried. I hope he understood what death was going to be, before he died.* 'I can feel him,' said Gordon. 'I can feel his forehead. He feels cold... I can't feel any breathing.'

'That's it, he's dead,' Stanley heard himself saying.

Gordon said, 'Hold on, wait... I thought his eyelashes flickered. Perhaps he's...'

Aaaahhhhh!!!! Gordon screamed, his voice so high-pitched and penetrating that Stanley's brain didn't register at first that his ears had heard anything at all — only that the air in the room had been somehow condensed into an expression of concentrated pain.

'Aaaah, my hand! Oh Christ, my hand! Ah! Aaaa!'

Stanley threw himself down on his knees beside him and gripped the shoulder of his coat. 'Gordon? Gordon?'

Gordon stared at him wildly, his face emptied of colour. He blurted out something, but it sounded like a foreign language; the dialect of unremitting agony.

'What?' Stanley demanded. 'What's happened? For God's sake, Gordon, what's happened?'

'My ha--' Gordon began. But his survival instinct must have decided that rescuing himself from further pain was far more important than talking, because he twisted his head away, his teeth gritted, the tendons in his neck as tight as violin-strings, and wrenched his arm downwards, out of the chimney, in a shower of soot and a bursting splatter of rusty-coloured blood.

But something else flopped heavily out of the chimney, into the hearth, and thrashed furiously from side to side on the end of Gordon's bloodied arm. Angie screamed and tripped backwards against the wall. Stanley grabbed the end of the bed and pulled himself to his feet — terrified, incredulous, his mind exploding like a fission-bomb.

This cannot be! This simply cannot be! And yet it must be, because I'm here now, watching it, and it's jerking and tussling around in front of me.

Clinging ferociously to Gordon's hand was a boy's head; a white-faced, bristly-haired boy's head, with protuberant eyes and a snubbish nose. His teeth were sunk deeply into the meaty flesh just above Gordon's thumb, and already Gordon's

thumb was wagging dangerously sideways as if the boy's teeth were an eighth-of-an-inch away from ripping it off altogether. Gordon's hand was smothered in blood; and the boy's face looked as if it had been toothbrush-sprayed in carmine red.

But it wasn't the blood or the savagery of the boy's attack that caused Stanley to stumble away so quickly. It was the boy himself. He had the head of a boy, but the short brutish body of a dog. He looked like a Pit Bull with a human head. Four paws, a deep-barrelled chest, brindled fur, and a tail. And although his face was handsome, in a bulgy-eyed Donald Sutherland kind of way, his teeth were curved and bloody, and he snapped and snarled with all the ferocity of a dog.

Gordon heaved himself sideways, hitting the boy-dog loudly and wetly against the floor. He was screaming all the time, out of rage, out of pain, but mostly out of absolute terror. Angie screamed too, and the rain lashed down from the ceiling, and for a moment Stanley didn't know whether he was in London or in hell.

What brought him back to stark reality was the sight of the boy-dog's teeth tearing the rumpled skin from the back of Gordon's hand, and then — with a sharp, crackling sound — the raw, scarlet flesh of the lumbrical muscles, the palmar muscles, and even the interosseous muscles between the finger-bones. It was like watching a bloody glove being wrenched off; because then the arteries fountained, the deep palmar arch and the princeps pollicis which feeds the thumb.

Angie shrieked, 'Stan-leeel!'

Stanley didn't really know what to do. But he dragged one of the sodden blankets from the bed, swung it around like Dracula's cloak, and hurled it over the boy-dog's back. It landed with a thick, felty slap. The boy-dog snarled and whiplashed, but Stanley took hold of its body and tried to heft it away from Gordon's hand. He could scarcely hold it. It was solid bunched-up muscle from head to toe, writhing, fighting and wriggling. He couldn't believe how much it weighed. Its claws lashed his knuckles, then his wrists. He gripped it as tightly as he could but then the blanket slipped away from its head and it twisted its head around and snarled at him and — *God almighty!* *It was the face of a boy!* — his fingers locked and he let it drop to the floor.

It retreated across the bedroom floor, growling softly, with the bloody rags that it had torn from Gordon's hand dripping from its mouth. Rusty-red splashes, instantly diluted with rainwater.

Stanley gave Gordon one quick, sickened, sideways glance. Gordon was lying on his side, too shocked to whimper, his right hand reduced to red-stripped bones, his left thumb pressed on to his wrist to stop the blood pumping straight out of his ulnar artery and all over the floor. He looked as if he had borrowed his eyes from Peter Falk: black, glassy, not quite focusing.

Angie said, in an off-key voice, 'It's not real, is it?'

'I don't know,' Stanley replied, picking up the wet-heavy blanket and holding it up in front of the Pit Bull boy like a cautious matador. 'Maybe we're dreaming, maybe we're not. Do you think you could make it to the door? Call an ambulance?'

'God, I'll try,' Angie told him.

'Gordon?' asked Stanley. 'Gordon, are you okay?'

Gordon stared back at him, desperate to speak, but shuddering too violently to say anything

coherent.

The boy-dog gagged down the rest of the flesh that he had torn from Gordon's hand with two sickening twists of his neck. As he chewed it, he watched Stanley with bulbous, suspicious eyes. Stanley lifted the blanket and shook it, trying to be threatening. The boy-dog took two or three paces back, his claws clicking on the floor, but he didn't look frightened. He was obviously more interested in finishing his meal than in attacking Stanley's blanket.

Shakily, Stanley challenged him 'What are you? Huh? Are you a boy, or a dog, or what?'

The boy-dog watched him and continually licked his lips and said nothing.

'Am I dreaming about you?' Stanley asked him. 'Are you a dream? Come on, let's have some honesty here. Dogs with boy's heads? No such creature! *A nechtiger tog!*'

The boy-dog swallowed and snarled a blood-bubbly snarl.

'Angie?' asked Stanley, without turning around. 'Did you call that ambulance yet?'

'Stanley,' Angie called him. Not loudly; a shade above a stage whisper. The rain still sifted down between them.

Stanley flicked his eyes sideways once; twice. And then he saw what was worrying her. Two more boy-dogs were standing in the doorway, blocking Angie's escape, one white and one greasy-brown, with human heads, their tails slapping noisily against their haunches. A boy who looked almost angelic, with bright blue eyes; and a darker boy with freckles and a mad serious look; as if he could happily tear out Angie's throat.

'Stanley...' moaned Angie. 'Stanley...'

Stanley backed away from the fireplace, still holding up the blanket, with the intension of circling around Angie and protecting her from the two boy-dogs in the doorway. But as soon as he took one step back, the boy-dog by the hearth took two or three steps towards Gordon.

'Stanley, for Christ's sake,' Gordon croaked, his hand all bones and blood. 'Stanley, he's going to kill me.'

The boy-dog snarled and barked; although it sounded more like a sharp, high-pitched human shout than a dog barking. The other two boy-dogs growled too, and came into the rain-drenched room with their teeth bared and their eyes bulging. Strings of saliva swung from their chins; and the boy-dog with the bright blue eyes began to foam around the mouth. Their claws chip-chip-chipped at the linoleum flooring.

Angie retreated until she and Stanley were standing back to back. She reached behind her and clung on to Stanley's rain-soaked coat. 'Stanley, I'm so bloody scared. Is it a dream, Stanley? Can't you wake me up?'

'Just take it easy,' Stanley told her. He could feel her shivering. 'So long as we don't make any sudden moves... upset them, or anything.'

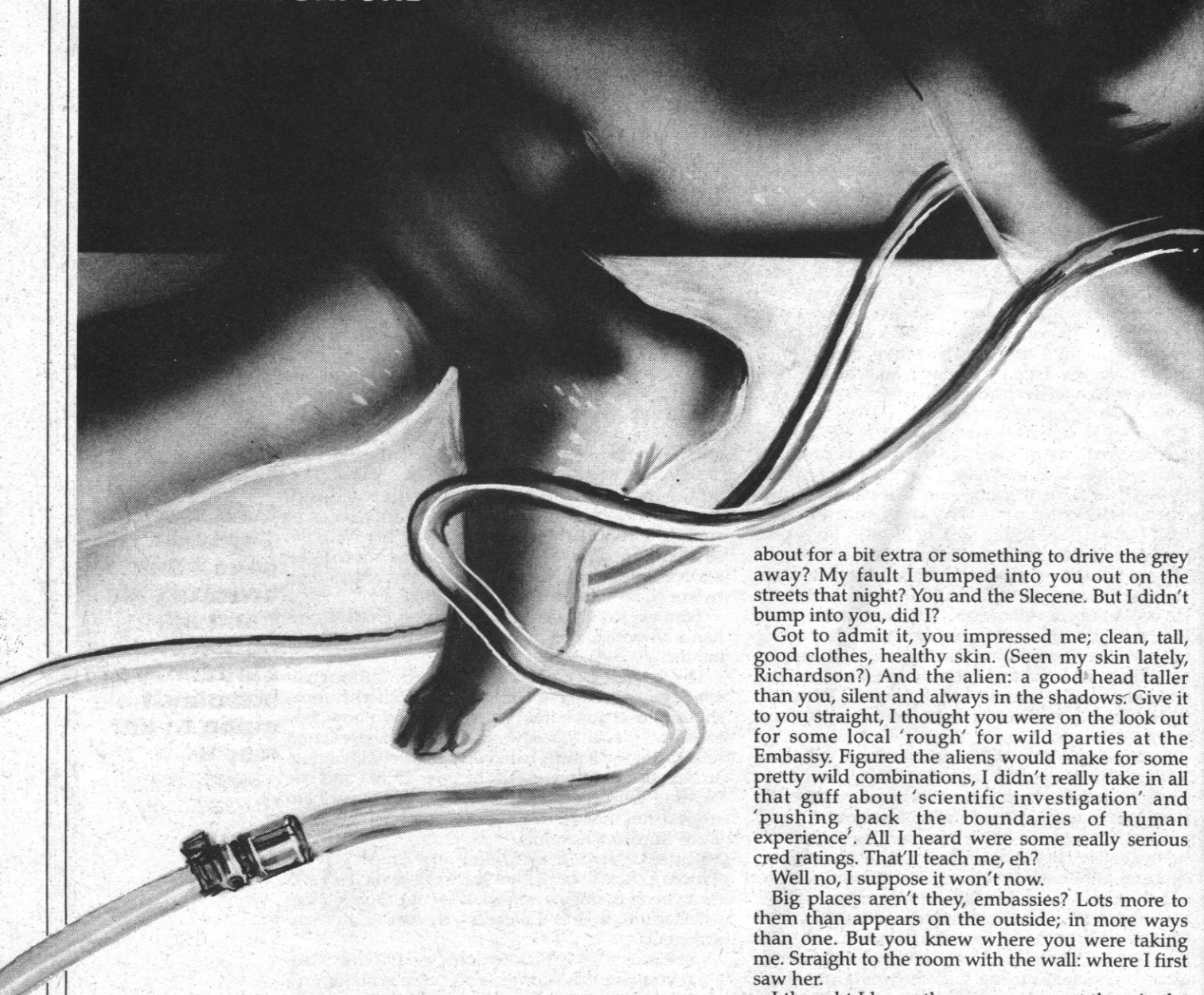
'Upset them? Bloody 'ell, Stanley, they want to kill us that's all!'

Stanley was numb with cold and soaking wet and his arms were already aching from holding up the heavy, wet blanket for so long. The boy-dogs edged closer still, never taking their eyes off them. It occurred to Stanley in a detached way that Angie was right, that the boy-dogs were quite determined to tear them to pieces, and that there was no hope at all of any of them leaving *Tennyson* alive.

"Stanley, for Christ's sake,' Gordon croaked, his hand all bones and blood. 'Stanley, he's going to kill me.'"

CELLMATE

BY STEVE BURFORD



I'd feel like laughing if I wasn't dying. Okay, enough. I can see that the 'corder's working. Decent of you to give me something I don't need to use my hands for, Richardson. Still, let's not forget that this record's more for you than me, isn't it? I want you to know that I'm thinking of you, Richardson. We both are. It passes the time while we lie dying.

Was it my fault? My fault I was young, an unemploy, living on dolecred cards and scratching

about for a bit extra or something to drive the grey away? My fault I bumped into you out on the streets that night? You and the Slecene. But I didn't bump into you, did I?

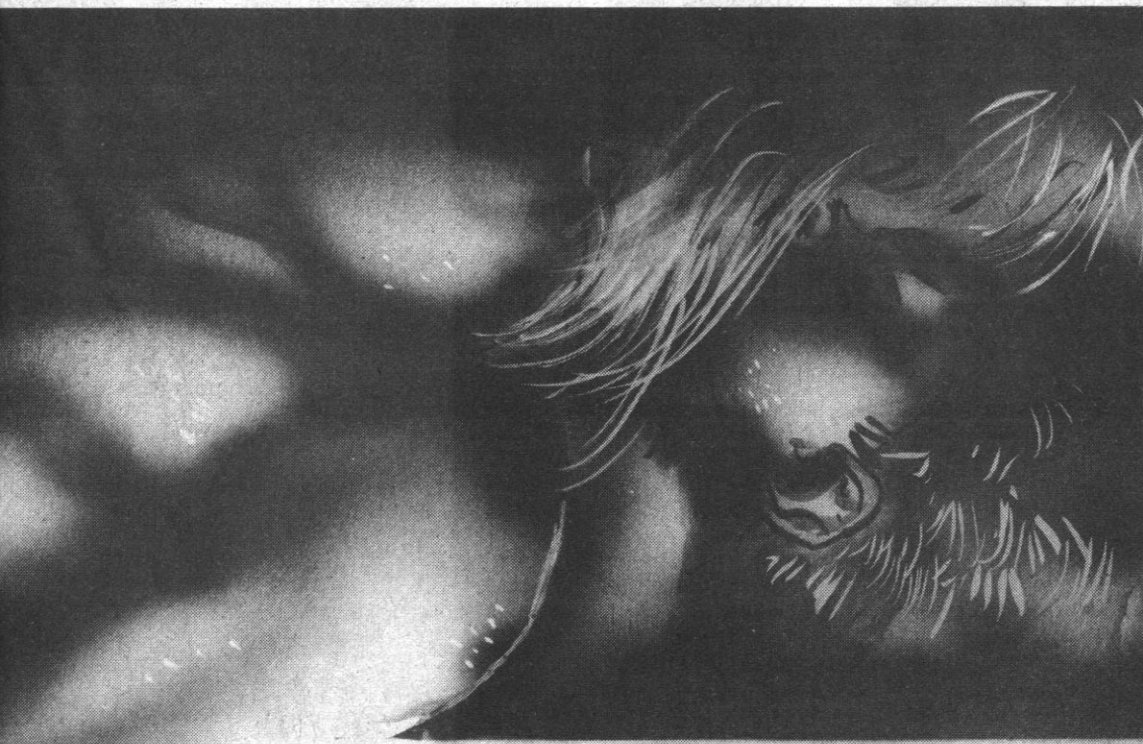
Got to admit it, you impressed me; clean, tall, good clothes, healthy skin. (Seen my skin lately, Richardson?) And the alien: a good head taller than you, silent and always in the shadows. Give it to you straight, I thought you were on the look out for some local 'rough' for wild parties at the Embassy. Figured the aliens would make for some pretty wild combinations, I didn't really take in all that guff about 'scientific investigation' and 'pushing back the boundaries of human experience'. All I heard were some really serious cred ratings. That'll teach me, eh?

Well no, I suppose it won't now.

Big places aren't they, embassies? Lots more to them than appears on the outside; in more ways than one. But you knew where you were taking me. Straight to the room with the wall: where I first saw her.

I thought I knew the scene as we sat there in the dark facing the wall: you, me, your Slecene buddy and one or two others that crept in quietly without a word being spoken. A few kinky films to whet the appetite then _ party time. But then she appeared out of the green mist in the wall, and after that I didn't have much of a mind for anything else.

'How did she make you feel?' You'll never know, Richardson, and part of me takes a great deal of satisfaction from that thought. How do you feel when you see a beautiful, naked woman? Does it



STEVE BURFORD lives in Malvern and is a graduate in English from Bristol University. *Cellmate* is the first horror story he has written in years and, having enjoyed the experience, he is currently working on a full length novel about the terrors of mind control and secondary school teaching.

So she was me. Not so much a missing link as a missing side. A clone, but not a copy: a complement. A female me. The perfect mate. The Slecene, you said, did it naturally. You made a joke about it. They wanted to see if it could be done with humans. You never said who *they* were.

She, my 'sister', was mostly alien gloop, modelled on my cell structure, but there was a good deal of me in her. Almost seven kilos in fact. She'd been syphoned through me, had seeped out of my skin and pulled herself together there. I was nearly sick when you told me that.

Seems our bout of passion shocked the Slecene. Apparently, they're really sensitive. That wasn't the way they behaved at all. It's the way we behave. Man's imperfect. So, sooner or later, we try to kill each other. But give man the perfect mate, one modelled on himself, and he'll screw himself into the ground. Ego, I guess.

It was about then that things really started falling to pieces, wasn't it? Firstly, the Slecene came in and told you that the experiment had failed, my sister had died. Then I went into convulsions and started to give birth to another. What would have happened, I wonder, if you hadn't got me back to the white room and linked me up to the slime pit again? Would my body have turned itself inside out in its effort to produce another mate? It think, perhaps, it would.

She was identical, of course, to the first. She took her share of my body and all of my mind. She died with her mouth on mine, and they had to pull her fingernails out of the skin of my back.

You couldn't look me in the eye, could you, when you told me that the Slecene were unable to stop the cycle they had started; that my body, driven by the lizard at the base of my brain, was going to turn out mate after mate until I was dead. And that I was going to be dead before the night was out? It was too like some cheap music hall joke. What a way to go!

She's cold now, my third sister, and already I can feel the fourth flexing her muscles. Soon she will be forced out into the cold of the delivery room. This time I'll be dead before the happy event, I know. What I still don't know is: why me?

She's coming now.

"And then her wet fingers were sliding up my body, the nails long but still soft, hardening as her hands made their way up to my chest, my throat, my face"

turn you on at all? I wonder. She was ten times more exciting than that, a hundred times. And you know why.

I was pretty shaky when you took me out of there into the second room. That drink they gave me, the Slecene in the white room. Was it part of the process, or did it just keep me quiet while they plugged me in? It hurt when they put the tubes in. I bled. But I didn't stop them. I let them strip me and plug me into a tank of alien slop. Was it the drink or was it her, filling my mind so no other thought was possible?

Then you brought her to me. It was so cold; cold down to my bones, cold in my bones, ice like slush in my veins. I felt as though I was drowning, as if the thick slime heaving in that tank was clogging my nose, sliding down my throat, filling my lungs. And then her wet fingers were sliding up my body, the nails long but still soft, hardening as her hands made their way up to my chest, my throat, my face. Her body was ice too, cold and hungry. We made love there on the table, wires and tubes tearing from my skin, while you and the others watched. Was that your scientific detachment? Or were you too appalled to move? I suppose you finally took her from me when I passed out.

That was the one time I thought you were nearly human, Richardson; later, when you wrapped me in a clean robes, sat me in your plush room on your velvet furniture, pressed a mug of hot soup into my hands, helping me to keep it there, and explained what you'd done to me. Of course, if you really had been human, you'd have explained it all to me before you set me up. Bastard.



CHIC CUISINE

BY BRIAN MILLS

Cellie was screaming again. Vase-shattering screams. Her tantrums were directed at the babysitter, Kathy Pitagorsky, but she wasn't impressed. Why, let her holler all she wants, Kathy thought, as long as she's asleep before the horror movie starts on TMC.

'Stop that, Cellie, you hear?' Cellie stared wide-eyed at Angie, her mother, knowing that she meant business, and substituted sobs for screams.

'Sorry about this, she doesn't normally misbehave. It's because you're a stranger, you understand?'

'No big deal. We're all strangers to somebody,' said Kathy, chewing a wad of gum whilst examining her nail varnish.

'Yes... Yes, I guess that's true.' For a brief

moment, Angie felt like screaming too, telling this weird-looking girl to leave her home and her child, but she didn't. She joined her husband in the bedroom. He was trying to fix a bow tie around his eighteen inch neck.

'Tom, maybe it would be better if you went on alone. I can join you later.'

'We've been over this.'

'I know, but I still don't see why we can't have our usual sitter.'

'Because they're the rules.' Tom examined his bulging belly.

Not much good worrying about that, he thought, with the meal of the century coming up.

'They're stupid rules.'

'Most rules are.' Tom turned and faced her. 'Did I ever tell you that you look like Crystal Gale?'

'No, you never did,' said Angie, rapidly blinking her ebony eyes and wiggling her hips, causing Tom to take her in his arms and kiss her. 'Tom, I don't like this babysitter.'

'Me neither.'

'So why don't we get rid of her? You know how much your sister enjoys sitting for us.'

'You've seen her references, they're excellent. Somehow it's important to them that we employ her. If that's the price we have to pay for exclusiveness...' Tom shrugged a reason. 'All I know is that there isn't a place like this in the whole world and we've been invited. We. Us. They didn't invite the Ziffs. They didn't invite the Shelinskys. They invited the Browns.'

'I know, but...'

'But nothing. We're not going to foul this up, Angie. This is the biggie. Having a duke and duchess to dinner will seem old hat compared to this.'

'All right, but try convincing Cellie.'

Of course Tom would charm their six-year-old daughter, persuading her by promising some outlandish gift in return for good behaviour. Sometimes Angie wondered where Tom's one-upmanship would lead them.

It was eight after nine. They were sitting watching a movie on television. Cellie had been in bed two hours, dreaming of the puppy that her father had promised her.

'You think they've changed their minds about inviting the Ziffs?' asked Angie, noting Tom's strained expression.

'I don't think that's funny.'

'No, nor do I.'

'What am I doing sitting here like this? Waiting? I never wait for anyone. I kick asses to stop waiting. So why am I waiting? Who needs this bullshit? They can shove their invite up their ass!'

'There's someone at the door, Tom.'

'So let them wait.' Lifting his bulk from the chair, he checked the crease in his pants, then turned to Angie. 'How do I look? I feel sweaty.'

'You look handsome.'

'I need an unbiased opinion,' he said, looking at Kathy. 'Young lady, how do I look?' Kathy, engrossed in the movie, didn't take her eyes from the set.

'What?'

'Never mind. Angie, where are you going?'

'Check on Cellie,' said Angie, disappearing into the bedroom.

'Can you believe that woman?'

Kathy, staring at a gory scene in the movie, didn't answer. There was another knock at the door. Tom studied Kathy's face, bemused by what

he saw. 'You like this stuff?' There was no answer. Tom opened the door.

'Mister Thomas Aaron Brown?'

'That's all of me.'

'Our car is ready to take you and your wife to Muava Kidogo.'

Tom thought that the man looked better suited to driving cattle than cars, but said: 'Okay, we're ready, Angie!'

'Right here,' said Angie, picking up an evening bag from the table and stopping only to address Kathy.

'Don't forget to check on Cellie.'

'Okay.'

'Enjoy the movie.'

'Enjoy the meal,' said Kathy with a devilish grin.

Yes, thought Angie, there was something about that girl...

They were ushered into the back of a black Cadillac. The chauffeur handed them two strips of black velvet.

'The management insists that you wear these.'

'They're blindfolds!' said Angie, staring at them.

'Some kind of joke, eh?' But Tom noticed that the chauffeur wasn't laughing or attempting to start the car. 'Come on, you can't expect us to wear these things.'

'The management insists.'

'Well, screw management!'

'Tom, it's another one of their rules. You know, like the babysitter?'

'Why don't you want us to know where the restaurant is?'

'Anonymity, sir.'

'Anon... Isn't that bad for business?'

'On the contrary, sir, it's good for business.'

'Why are we doing this?' asked Angie, putting on the blindfold.

'He just told you, it's good for business.'

'Will they spoonfeed us too?'

'No, madam, your blindfold will be removed the moment you step inside Muava Kidogo,' offered the chauffeur.

'You have no idea how relieved I am to hear that. I like to see and know what I'm eating.'

'If we don't know where the place is,' said Tom, still holding the blindfold, 'who will believe that we've ever been there?'

'Why, were you not told, sir? You will receive a souvenir of your visit.'

'Tom?'

'All right,' Tom said, pulling the blindfold over his head and eyes.

Tom felt the car take a right. If he concentrated, he might be able to figure out the route. His ears filled with the cacophony of New York's traffic, blasting horns, wailing sirens, shrilling whistles; a radio announcer reminding them that it was 49 degrees in midtown Manhattan. Another right. Must be heading east of Broadway. Music enveloped the other sounds: from the radio Neil Diamond sang, 'Love on the Rocks'. Tom's nostrils were a mean substitute for his ears: a whiff of hot dogs and a smell that reminded him of something, but he didn't know what. That's when the car pulled over. Stopped. Radio was turned down. Horns blasted. Chauffeur's voice loud.

'Lady, stop right there or the whole thing's off.'

'What are you doing?' asked Tom.

'I peeked a little.'

'You took off your blindfold?'

'All I saw was my dress. Can we go on, please?' The car moved away to a vociferous chorus from

other drivers, offering permutations of the word asshole.

'Are you trying to ruin the evening?'

'I just don't believe what's happening. We're paying 300 dollars for the privilege of being driven blindfolded to an unknown restaurant to have an unknown meal, leaving our child with an unknown babysitter supplied by an unknown agency. So I'm sorry if I'm ruining the evening, but so far it doesn't have a lot going for it.' Neil Diamond was singing again.

'Angie, we are the only people to be invited to this place. Even the President hasn't been here. It's a one-off. The ultimate in exclusiveness.'

'So why us?'

'Because we mix with the right crowd. Because I'm the best damn lawyer in New York. We seek the best of everything and we get it. That sort of clout turns handles.'

'Maybe it's a trick, someone having fun with us.'

'Why would anyone do that?'

'Why would anyone open a restaurant for one meal?'

'In a crazy city you find crazy people. But it was where we were born, where we'll die. Would you have it any other way?'

He felt her breath, sweet, warm, her lips touching his cheek. She snuggled close to murmur sweet nothings.

Seemed as if they had been in the car for hours. The car took another turn. Radio cut off. The engine echoed as though they had driven underground. And he didn't know where they were. And there was that smell again: musty, mildewy, like something... rotting.

Angie's heels clicked across the ground. The chauffeur was leading them by their arms. When he turned, they turned. When he stopped, they stopped. A door creaked open.

'This is it,' he said, taking off their blindfolds.

'Are my eyes open?' asked Angie, staring into inky blackness.

'Follow me,' he ordered. Down steps, through a passageway, left into a crimson lit room and there in the centre — one table draped in black with gold candleabra and cutlery. Despite the lighting, it was still dark, but their eyes soon grew accustomed to it; seeing the animal-skinned walls, the stuffed tigers glaring at them, the green foliage hanging from the ceiling. And something else. Distant drums.

'I guess the waiter must swing through the trees,' said Tom.

'If it's Tarzan, I don't mind,' mused Angie. The chauffeur seated them at the table and left. 'Tom, why have they set a third place? Did someone else get invited?'

'There'll be hell if they did.'

'And where's the menu?'

'Must be a set meal.' They sipped iced water, broke bagels and waited. And waited.

'Do you know how long that drive took?'

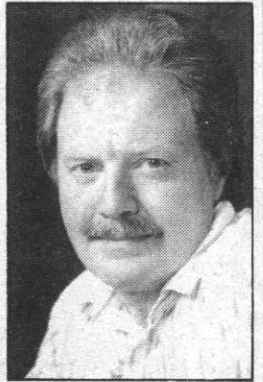
'An hour,' said Tom 'And the service stinks too.'

'Tom, please, no arguing.'

'Do I ever?'

When the meal arrived it came on a trolley pushed by a chimpanzee. They stared in amazement as the animal served soup. Behind him appeared a tall, tuxedoed African.

'Welcome to Muava Kidogo,' he beamed. 'My name is Shamadari. This is Segwana.' They watched as the chimpanzee placed a third bowl in front of the empty chair and sat down. Shamadari



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"It will be an experience that you will never forget; the purest of meats, the rarest of dishes"

shouted at him. Segwana snarled menacingly and left the table.

'What was that about?' asked Tom.

'Sometimes Segwana forgets he is a chimpanzee. I thought it would be appropriate for the chef and owner of this unique establishment to join you for this... this experience.'

'Well... I don't know about that,' said Tom, fidgeting on his chair. 'We didn't intend...'

'I would feel honoured to share this meal with both of you.' And without permission he seated himself at their table.

'You said owner, chef?'

'Yes, I am both of those.'

'And what's this?' asked Angie, inspecting the soup.

'Fupa. Like everything you eat this evening, a secret recipe handed down by my ancestors.'

'But what is it?' Angie pestered.

Shamatari led the tasting. Tom sampled it, noticing that the drums were getting louder.

'Hey, not bad,' said Tom, tasting more. 'This is very good, Angie. Go ahead, taste it.'

'I want to know what it is.'

'Tender stems,' offered Shamatari.

'You mean... like plants?'

'Plants. Yes, like plants.'

'All right,' said Angie, tasting the brownish liquid.

'Well, what do you think?' asked Tom.

'You're right, it's delicious.'

After they had finished their soup, Shamatari poured a dark red wine into long-stemmed glasses. He then removed their bowls, took their plates to the trolley, opened a silver dish and spooned steaming meat onto their plates. Another lid was lifted revealing vegetables. The meal was served, the aroma pungent.

'This beats steak and stir fries, am I right?' asked Tom.

Shamatari smiled, showing gold-capped teeth.

'You are about to taste a delicacy almost lost to the world. I have merely added a twentieth century touch in the preparation. It will be an experience that you will never forget; the purest of meats, the rarest of dishes. More I cannot say. Let your knowledge be your taste buds.'

'I have a question,' said Angie, bemused, yet in awe of the proceedings. 'Are we eating an endangered species?'

'No more endangered than man.'

'Is that a yes?' But Shamatari didn't elaborate.

Encouraged by Tom's eagerness to eat, Angie tasted the meat.

Tom thought that the wine was bitter, metallic. He thought the meat was tender, sweet. Relishing each bite, he wondered what beast he was eating. Rhino? Hippo? Lion? To hell with thinking what it was, he'd tell the guys at the River Club that it was rhino. He watched Angie pick at the meat.

'It's good, don't you think, darling?'

'Hmm. Different.' Angie didn't like it, but didn't want to spoil the meal for Tom, so she pretended to enjoy each morsel. It was, she thought, sickly, like meat she had once eaten in France. That had been horse meat. And the wine: Why were they drinking this muck when they could have had Chardonnay? And she wished... that someone would turn off the drums. She pushed away a half-eaten meal. But two plates were clean.

'Well,' said Tom, 'that was certainly something. What do you call it?'

'Mtoto. We call it mtoto,' beamed Shamatari.

Dessert was a kind of layered pudding smothered in a gooey sauce. They ate all of it. Tom ordered Strega for Angie, Drambuie for himself. The drums were getting louder. Chanting. Shamatari clapped his hands. Curtains opened in front of them, revealing a small stage and tribal dancers gyrating to loud drums. Each dancer was tall like Shamatari, their bodies covered in paint and feathers.

'What tribe is this?' asked Tom, fascinated by the spectacle.

'Bantu,' answered Shamatari, observing Angie's embarrassed expression. Angie thought that their costumes were immodest, but their dancing excited her. She had another Strega. She was feeling warm, erotic, wondered what it would be like to be loved by a Bantu. Quickly she glanced at Tom, hoping that he hadn't read her mind, but he was accepting a cigar from Shamatari. She stroked Tom's cheek. He smiled, then turned to face the dancers. Oh well, thought Angie, at least we made a beautiful child.

'I have a question.'

'Of course, Mrs Brown.'

'Why did you insist on sending your own babysitter?'

'Come on, Angie, let's drop it, eh?'

'I want to know.'

'Your daughter was my concern. She is the reason for you both being here, for being chosen. Her behaviour had to be monitored in order to find the ideal couple.'

Tom stopped chewing his cigar. 'What did you say?'

'What's Cellie got to do with us being here?' asked Angie.

'We were chosen because of our daughter?' frowned Tom.

'Look into the eyes of a child and see the hearts of its parents. You owe this experience to your daughter. Muava Kidogo means little flower.' Tom drained his fourth glass of Drambuie, while the drums competed with those in his head.

'Our receipt?'

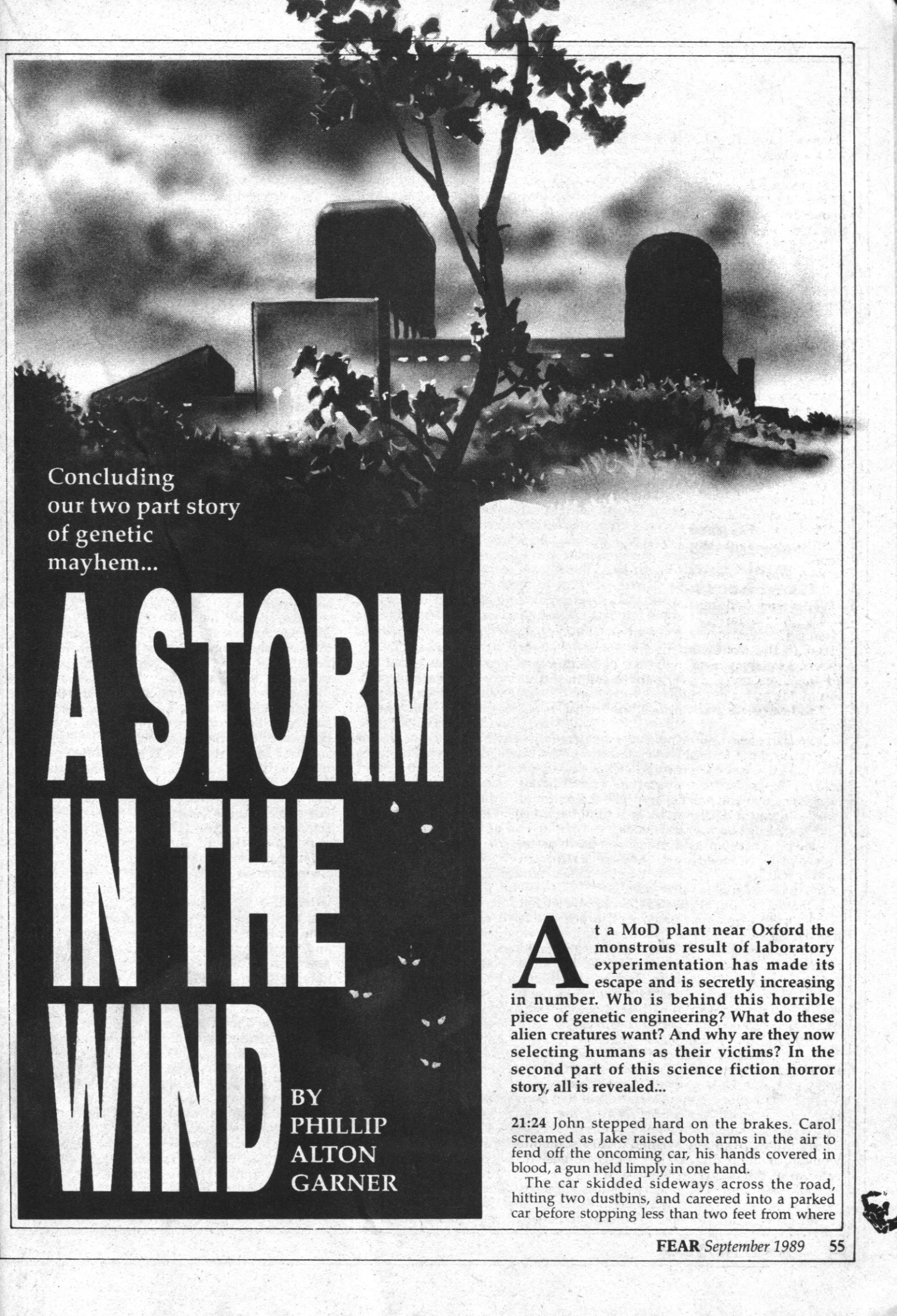
'The chauffeur will give you a personalised receipt the moment you arrive home.' And suddenly the chauffeur appeared as though telepathically summoned. They viewed the dancers for the last time before being blindfolded. An image remained before Tom's eyes: faces stained with blood.

Their apartment was a blaze of lights. Every room had been ransacked. In horror, they stared at the mess. Angie dashed to the bedroom.

'No! No!' she screamed. Tom found Angie standing in the middle of the room holding Cellie's teddy bear. Tom opened his mouth to speak but nothing came out.

'It's your fault, you persuaded me to go! I knew that girl was evil!' Tom rushed to the phone, words like kidnapped, murdered, hammering his skull. The envelope was by the phone. Receipt. Opened it. Cellie's keyring. Personalised. Like Daddy's. Something on the reverse side... scratched... one word... Sha...ma...ta...ri. Nothing like a highly pitched scream to clear the senses. Tom wished his legs didn't have to follow that sound. Wished his eyes didn't have to see what his mind imagined. But he walked. And he saw. Angie, standing in front of an opened refrigerator, holding a blood-filled bag — sightless eyes staring through plastic. Tom sank to his knees. And onto the floor he vomited pieces of... Cellie.

"An image remained before Tom's eyes: faces stained with blood"



Concluding
our two part story
of genetic
mayhem...

A STORM IN THE WIND

BY
PHILLIP
ALTON
GARNER

At a MoD plant near Oxford the monstrous result of laboratory experimentation has made its escape and is secretly increasing in number. Who is behind this horrible piece of genetic engineering? What do these alien creatures want? And why are they now selecting humans as their victims? In the second part of this science fiction horror story, all is revealed...

21:24 John stepped hard on the brakes. Carol screamed as Jake raised both arms in the air to fend off the oncoming car, his hands covered in blood, a gun held limply in one hand.

The car skidded sideways across the road, hitting two dustbins, and careered into a parked car before stopping less than two feet from where

“Carol screamed again and blood began to spray from her sides as the creature’s head moved towards her

Jake stood, terror written on his face. With a cry, he collapsed.

‘Jesus Christ, that was Jake!’ John yelled, pulling open the driver’s door and fumbling with the safety belt. He looked quickly at Carol, then climbed out of the car, his shoulder aching from the crash.

‘Jake, what in the hell’s happened?’

Jake looked up at him. ‘Get back in the car,’ he said, gasping for air, ‘let’s get out of here.’

‘Christ, you’ve been shot!’ John exclaimed, helping Jake to the car.

‘Don’t worry about me, I’m all right; but I’m being followed.’

‘Followed? Oh shit!’

John had forgotten about the car behind them. There was a screech of brakes and the sound of opening doors, followed by a single gun shot. The passenger window exploded. Carol found her voice and screamed again, as splinters of glass flew into her hair. She put her hands to her head as another shot was fired. The car that had followed them suddenly lost its windscreen as a bullet tore through it. Jake jumped into the back seat, his gun smouldering. Quickly regaining his senses, John leapt into the driver’s seat and put the car into reverse; then the air filled with gun shots. John began to accelerate backwards; there seemed to be smoke everywhere and he couldn’t see a thing. In front of the other car an internal security officer crouched, his gun trained on them. His finger worked at the trigger, unleashing a barrage of shots into the back of their car. Suddenly the car was on him and he began to rise to his feet. But he hadn’t left enough time.

‘Nooo!’ he screamed, as the car struck him in the abdomen, pinning him between the bumpers. Blood burst from his mouth and the two bumpers met, John’s car pushing the other backwards, the open doors knocking down two men as they continued to fire. John slammed into gear and accelerated away and down the street. The dead man’s body, hooked to the bumper, trailed behind the car, its legs dragging along the ground. The bottom of its torso split open and its innards spilled out onto the tarmac. Then the body ripped in two, its legs twisting and dropping, blood flying up in the air and staining the ground. The top of the body still clung to the car, pumping blood. Slowly, as the car accelerated, it began to slip down the boot, fingernails clawing at the paint-work. It struck the ground at full force as John’s car sped away, and from a house window a woman screamed a horrible, twisted scream.

One of the men picked himself up off the ground, the blood of his colleague staining his shirt. He watched in horror as the car dragged the corpse away, then turned away and vomited. When he was finished, he picked up a walkie-talkie. They had lost valuable time.

21:33 No one said a word as John drove away from where Jake lived; they were all oblivious to the death of the security man.

‘I don’t think they managed to follow us,’ John said, breaking the silence. ‘I’m pulling in.’ He turned the car down a side street which led to a pub called the Ship and Castle.

‘Let’s have a look at that leg.’ He killed the engine.

‘It’s nothing, honestly. The bullet must have gone straight through.’ Jake’s voice trembled as he spoke; he was obviously in pain, but at least the

bleeding had almost stopped.

‘Jake, just what the hell is going on? Gun fire in quiet streets... Just try explaining that one away! They want you bad, Jake; very bad.’

‘It’s not just me they want, it’s you and the girl too. They bugged your phone. You’re no longer safe. We don’t have much time, so I’ll explain as briefly as I can.

‘As you know, a couple of years ago I joined the team in Heatherford as genetic engineer grade three, quite a high grade, I know, but on the outside no big deal. Shortly after I started, they let me try out a few ideas that were running through my head. Baxter realised my potential and the funds came flooding in. Less than a year ago, my project had finally begun to take shape and I began to construct the creatures. Then something went wrong, something that I didn’t expect.’ Jake laughed out loud. ‘Yeah, something in true Hollywood tradition. The creatures self-mutated in a matter of weeks and most of them died, leaving only a few of the mutants alive. I couldn’t work out why they died so quickly, but the reason was obvious: they were unable to feed. We only found this out when I had them dissected. The creatures hardly had any organs that we could identify, they were completely alien to us.’

‘But,’ John interrupted him, ‘these creatures... shouldn’t they all have the same organs as the host you engineered them from?’

‘This was no normal host. It had been dead for years, millions of years. We found it after a freak meteor shower in South America. One of the meteors made it through the earth’s atmosphere, landed in a farm or something, I’m not sure. Something was inside it, frozen in space and heated up on re-entry. The warm fossil was passed on to a research student on a field course out there and through him and a few others we were able to smuggle it out of the country. After X-ray, we discovered that there was something inside and we carefully removed it from the asteroid. We couldn’t tell what the creature may have looked like alive, this could have been the entire creature or just a tiny part of it; it was just a mass of tattered flesh. But somehow the cells of the flesh still showed some sort of activity. We were able to use them genetically to try and recreate duplicates of whatever the creature was. As I have already said, they began to die and mutate. We tried feeding them on all sorts of food substances, but they wouldn’t — or couldn’t — eat. Up till then they had been completely isolated from all of us, never been in physical contact with or anywhere near anyone living. That was until recently...’ He paused and cleared his throat. His leg had begun to throb more violently.

‘A lab technician got curious one day and opened up the sealed door, thinking that one of the creatures had died. As soon as the door opened an alarm sounded and a few technicians came running into the room. The technician stood in the doorway, his hair on end. They pulled him away and shut the door. One of the creatures had indeed died, but the others had grown. Within an hour they had developed what looked to be optic nerve endings and soon each one had a pair of dark, unseeing eyes. The technician said he had felt them draining him of his strength, he was unable to move; what seemed to happen was that the creatures had somehow fed on his mind and imitated a part of him — his eyes. From then on, we began to let lab animals into the room and the

creatures simply fed off them, absorbed them and left their lifeless carcasses behind. They never touched them, they just seemed to take away their life force; it was as if they had suffered some sort of heart failure.

'Jesus,' John exclaimed, 'one of them has got out, hasn't it? It killed the janitor and this place covered it all up.'

'The creature was caught and destroyed.'

'Yes, but not before it could kill again, eh?'

'No, John. The creature was killed at the time of the janitor's death. You see, we couldn't risk any exposure of human life to the creatures, as they actually seemed to learn from any living being they absorbed, began acting as they did and taking on some of their characteristics.'

'You didn't get to the creature in time to stop it killing again.'

'Of course we did. It was destroyed that night. I was there!'

'Try telling that to Judith Knight, see if she agrees with you.'

'Her death has nothing to do with this, John. She just happened to have a heart attack. These things happen.'

'Heart attack! Like hell she had a heart attack! She was only twenty-eight, for Christ's sake!'

'The creature was destroyed, I swear.'

'I'm not listening to any more of your crap, Jake. Judith never had one grey hair on her head, but when they put her in that ambulance her hair was almost white.'

Jake's mouth fell open. 'Oh my God,' he murmured. 'It can't be true.' He shook his head. 'I saw them destroy it. There's no way it could still be alive; unless, that is, two creatures escaped, not just one...'

'John, we're in big trouble. God knows what thoughts it has picked up and changes it has gone through.'

'Are these creatures really killers?'

'I don't know. They never showed any kind of hostility towards each other. The only creatures they absorbed were domesticated animals. But absorbing the human mind, John, that's really dangerous. There's so much hatred, so much anger in the subconscious human mind... If they being to feel these emotions and ever get out of the compound, God knows what they'll be capable of!'

'We've got to get back there and warn the people.'

'We could be too late already. I've got to get to a phone fast.' Jake struggled out of the car and struck out towards the brightly lit pub.

21:58 Baxter reached forward and punched the red button. When he had received the call he thought that it was a bluff to draw the police to the plant, but there was something in Jake's voice that had nagged him. He had sat there after putting down the phone, giving himself time to think.

A panel in front of him lit up — **RADIATION ALERT** — as the alarm began to wail.

21:58 The wailing of the alarms played on the minds of the creatures and jumbled their thoughts. They began to scream at each other. The mother tried to calm her children but they crawled away into the thicker bushes. She followed one in an attempt to bring it back to the safety of their lair, but it soon vanished. She stopped and looked around. She was alone. Her tail thrashed the ground in a sudden burst of a

new emotion. Anger. She trained her mind towards her children's thoughts, her head expanding and pulsating. Suddenly her mind was filled with not simply her children's thoughts but a sudden surge of many more, all screaming, confined, shut in. Sorrow struck her like a huge hammer and her body shook. But sorrow was quickly replaced with hatred. Blind hatred. She made for the back of the building, sailing through the trees, swinging from branch to branch. Pausing only for a few seconds, she dropped suddenly from a great height and crashed through one of the ground floor windows in search of the new voices.

22:03 They left the car and forced their way against the crowd in order to get in through the main doors, the alarms ringing in their ears. The crowd was gripped with a dull panic; no one was screaming or running, but the fear was telling on every face.

'I'm going to search the grounds for it,' Jake shouted. 'Where are you going?'

'To the basement.'

'There's nothing you want down there.'

'I want to see exactly what's going on.'

'We haven't the time, we've got to find the creature.'

'You go. I'm going in.' John shouted back, and disappeared though the doors with Carol, his hand in hers.

The crowd pushed Jake out through the entrance and back towards the grounds. He decided to give up trying to get in; it was pointless. What would be would be. Now he had to find the creature and destroy it.

22:03 It followed the thoughts and only three beings had got in its way. It absorbed one and ate the other two. It didn't consume them entirely, just enough to stop them thinking, stop them moving. Their skulls lay clean, next to their bleeding bodies. It was hungry for more but the thoughts — so many — commanded it to follow.

It moved towards the entrance, a doorway that it recognised. The steps went down deep and a light glowed in the distance. The thoughts screamed. Down the stairs the sound of human voices could be heard; they screamed again.

Trembling with rage, the creature descended the stairs, both sets of foreclaws thrashing the air, its elongated neck swaying from side to side, its teeth dripping blood and tail following behind, wet and glistening.

22:09 In the confusion, John and Carol made their way easily down to the basement and into the corridor where John had previously been caught. They reached the door that lay at the end.

'It's locked,' said Carol.

'Yeah. Stand aside.' John kicked the door with his foot, striking it until finally it gave way under the continued assault. Icy cold air came rushing out. Carol shivered.

'Come on, follow me,' John whispered, and led the way down another set of stairs. At the bottom lay another corridor with numerous doors leading from it. John proceeded down the passageway, ignoring all the doors on either side of him. He had a gut feeling that something lay behind the furthest door at the end.

'What about these doors?' Carol asked as they passed them.

PHILLIP ALTON GARDNER is from Treorchy, Mid Glamorgan and *A Storm in the Wind* is his first short story, part one of which was published in **FEAR** last month.

"A juggernaut, with headlights full on and horn sounding, came careering from out of the darkness"

'They're probably just lab rooms. I've got a feeling it's got to be through this door.'

When they reached the double doors John grasped both handles and slowly, with a great effort, opened them.

'Oh my God!' he exclaimed. 'No... it can't be true!'

Trembling, Carol looked over his shoulder.

Before them, the room stretched out for what seemed to be miles. At intervals of four feet on both sides gigantic test-tubes were connected by two pipes to the walls. They were all full of green liquid which bubbled quietly and in each one hung a creature, a twisted gigantic foetus, partially humanoid, with its tail twisted around its legs. Where normally there would be one pair of arms, two pairs of limbs moved gently with the flow of the liquid. Tiny claws twitched at the end of each limb. Huge eyes stared out, unseeing. Some had their mouths open and rows and rows of razor sharp teeth glistened sickeningly through the liquid. Carol felt her legs go weak.

'There are hundreds of them,' she murmured, clinging to John who simply stared unbelievably.

'That's far enough, Richards!'

The voice behind them boomed in the stillness.

John and Carol spun around to face three security guards who stood in the doorway.

'Baxter said we might have a few unwanted visitors before the end of the evening,' said one of them, pulling a gun from his holster. John knew he could never reach his own gun in time. The guard began to squeeze the trigger. John took a step back and reached into his jacket pocket. The light at the end of the corridor dimmed and something growled. The three guards spun round.

The creature stood towering over them, its eyes glowing red, its mouth open and claws reaching out. One of the guards moaned and dropped down dead, his hands clutching at his heart, the colour of his hair fading. Another guard managed to let out a shot, missing the creature by inches. It flung out a claw and grasped the guard's gun arm. With a quick tug it tore it from its socket, blood burst from the guard's shoulder and covered the walls. The creature struck again and the guard's head smashed into the wall, splintering his teeth and smashing his nose, then it twisted its claw and snapped his head free of his neck, his legs thrashed about and his torso fell to the floor, blood gushing from every wound. The creature dropped the bleeding head at its feet.

John began to pump bullets indiscriminately down the corridor and into the carnage. The first hit the remaining guard in the shoulder, catapulting him against the creature whose head lunged down and bit deep into the guard's abdomen. It lifted its head and the screaming guard into the air, shaking him from side to side. The second shot hit the guard again. His brains spilled out and he stopped screaming. Another bullet hit the creature in the neck; it dropped the body of the guard and gave a terrifying scream. Then it was hit in the chest and in the head, its eye disappeared, blood spurted from the empty socket and grey matter exploded back down the corridor. It crashed to the floor as blood flowed down the corridor and a sickening, warm smell slowly crept along with it.

'Oh my God,' John said. 'It's dead. Thank God it's dead!'

Carol lay on the floor in a dead faint, John picked her up and, stepping over the remains of

the guards and the creature, headed for the door marked BOILER ROOM.

Gradually Carol came to, and John left her leaning weakly at the entrance; once he found the boiler he turned valves at random, steam began to shoot from various pumps and a needle on one of the displays began to rise slowly from green to orange, heading for the danger reading, red. He opened the last valve fully, and ran for the door.

'Come on, let's get out of here before this building goes up.'

22:13 Jake stood to one side of the drive. The creature was nowhere to be found and he dared not go into the bushes yet, he wanted to see it out in the open. It seemed that most of the staff had fled the building; what had been a steady flow of worried faces had diminished to a trickle.

A single scream from near the entrance suddenly brought him to his senses, and he ran back up the drive.

To the left of the main doors, in a small clearing in the thicket, the creature stood. At its feet lay the tattered body of what appeared to be a woman, torn and bloody. The creature was tearing on a limb held in its foreclaws. Jake stepped closer, his gun held out in front of him. He could not afford to miss. The creature swung around and spat the bloody arm from its mouth. Jake's heart began to race, faster and faster.

22:18 Baxter stood staring in disbelief at the bodies on the floor.

'Get these taken care of. Destroy the creature. Jesus Christ.' He shook his head. One of his men had thrown up on the spot but somehow he had managed to hold onto the contents of his own stomach. They must have bumped into Richards and the girl. The door at the end of the corridor lay open and Baxter rushed down to check that his creatures were unharmed. With a sigh of relief, he made his way back to the horrific scene.

'Get a group together, Thomas. Richards will be trying to escape. Search the grounds. Find them. Kill them.'

22:19 With John close behind, Carol ran out through the main doors, then stopped and screamed.

John took a sharp intake of breath.

The figure of Jake was before them and the creature loomed in the shadows. Blood trickled from Jake's nose, he fired three times and the creature fell, blood pouring green and red from its mortal wounds. Jake's hair had turned partially white. A branch in the tree above him groaned and a claw raised and fell in the blinking of an eye.

John's gun went off and the bullet ripped through the creature's head, tearing through the bone, and its brains rained down onto the cold ground. Jake's head was torn free from his body and the creature's claw, sprayed with blood, held onto his hair.

'My God, there's more than one!' murmured John. Behind him the double doors of the building opened and Baxter appeared, sub-machine gun loaded and ready. Carol's scream split the air.

22:24 The creature had crawled up onto the roof of the lower building and it hung by its tail above the doorway awaiting any movement. A figure came through the door and it shot out both pairs of claws and grasped the head. It dug in deep and its muscles flexed.

"Trembling with rage, the creature descended the stairs, both sets of foreclaws thrashing the air, its elongated neck swaying from side to side, its teeth dripping blood and tail following behind, wet and glistening"

22:25 A second after Carol's scream, Baxter's reflex action pumped bullets from the sub-machine gun's barrel high into the air. His intestines spilled out onto the concrete and steam filled the air. The creature opened its mouth and its claws pulled Baxter's body up to meet it. John fell backwards and blood spurted from his shoulder as one of Baxter's bullets tore a path through it.

Carol dug deep into her pocket, drew out her gun and took aim just as the creature swallowed Baxter's right arm. As she pulled the trigger the gun bucked and the force threw her to the ground, the gun falling from her hands. The creature dropped from the door frame to which it had been clinging, only its tail remained trapped and its body swung to and fro.

'John!' Carol cried, getting to her feet. Another creature appeared from the trees and gripped her around the waist, its mouth open wide, teeth glistening.

Carol screamed again and blood began to spray from her sides as the creature's head moved towards her own, its eyes open wide. A security man fired blindly, cutting the creature in two and Carol was thrown, sobbing, to the ground. From the doorway, the last creature seized the security man's gun arm and bit it in two. Carol pulled John to his feet and dragged him towards the car, helping him into the passenger seat; then she staggered round to the other side. She felt a hail of bullets skim the top of her head and glance off the car roof but she was inside now and turned the keys in the ignition, slammed the car into gear and accelerated off down the drive. Bullets cut into the rear of the car as it sped away. Three security men scrambled into their car and set off in pursuit; behind them the grounds lay in bloody ruin.

In the boiler room the needle neared red.

22:28 Carol drove through the main gate and, turning left, accelerated down the mountain road. The security guards' car was gaining on her.

'John, John... Are you all right?' she asked.

Beside her, John let out a low moan. She repeated her question, looking anxiously into his face.

John opened his mouth and screamed, raising his arms to protect himself and Carol's head snapped forward. A juggernaut, with headlights full on and horn sounding, came careering from out of the darkness.

Carol pulled the steering wheel sharply to the right.

22:29 The brakes screamed at the road and the car shuddered; the juggernaut driver pulled at his wheel and the two vehicles collided.

The horizon swapped positions twice as the car crashed through the fence and out into space. Then it hit the ground, bounced and struck a tree. John felt a sharp pain in his shoulder and chest, and he blacked out.

His mind misted, then cleared. His head ached. Next to him Carol moaned. The dust hadn't settled on the car but he could see tree bark against his legs which were suddenly numb. Carol sobbed.

'Oh Christ', John muttered. He looked into Carol's eyes and she smiled back. He laughed quietly. 'Thank God', he thought.

'Let's do all that again, eh?' he joked, reaching out a bloody hand to touch her cheek.

Then the car exploded brighter than a thousand suns.

22:31 The needle struck the red band. A red light flashed EMERGENCY CUT OFF, then the lights dimmed and went out.

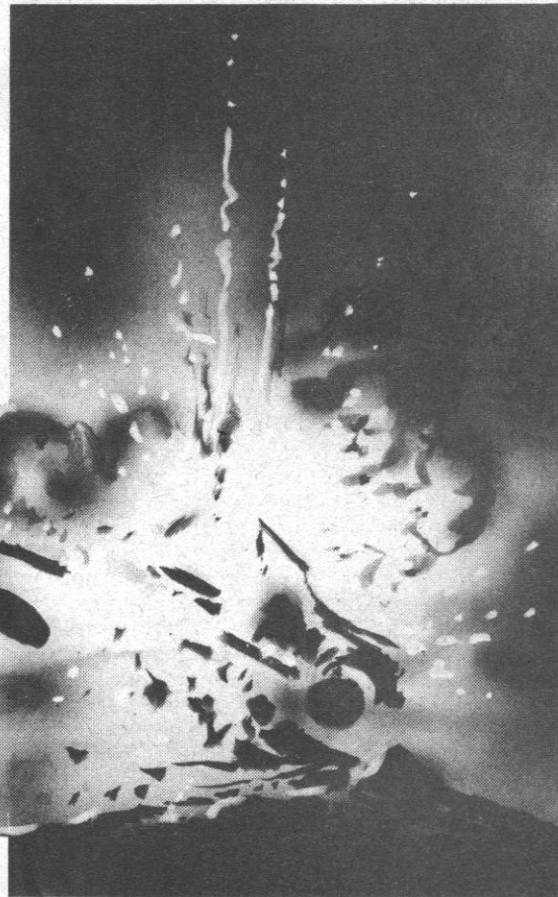
Gradually they came back on, the steam lessened and the needle swung down to orange. Away, behind a closed door, the test-tube liquid bubbled and a hundred thoughts joined together.

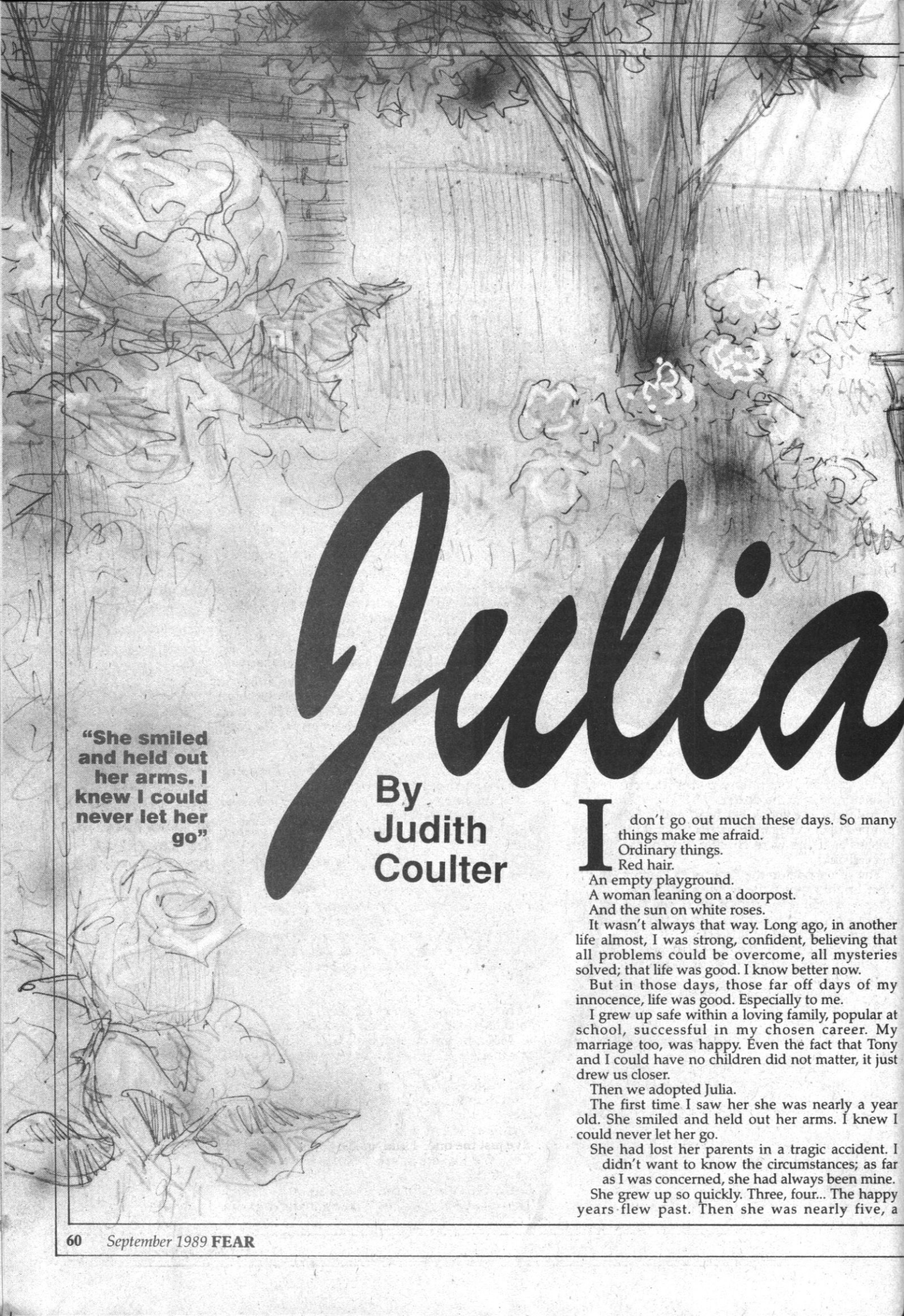
The needle moved to green and a sound filled the air, so sweet and gentle.

In the test-tubes the little creatures' hind legs rubbed together, their teeth shone through the green liquid. With a shriek, the glass splintered.

In front of each shattered test-tube, a creature stood hunched; and, as the seconds passed, they grew and grew and grew, the music from their thrashing limbs getting louder and louder... And louder...

"They were all full of green liquid which bubbled quietly and in each one hung a creature. a twisted gigantic foetus, partially humanoid, with its tail twisted around its legs"





**"She smiled
and held out
her arms. I
knew I could
never let her
go"**

Julia

**By
Judith
Coulter**

I don't go out much these days. So many things make me afraid. Ordinary things. Red hair.

An empty playground.
A woman leaning on a doorpost.
And the sun on white roses.

It wasn't always that way. Long ago, in another life almost, I was strong, confident, believing that all problems could be overcome, all mysteries solved; that life was good. I know better now.

But in those days, those far off days of my innocence, life was good. Especially to me.

I grew up safe within a loving family, popular at school, successful in my chosen career. My marriage too, was happy. Even the fact that Tony and I could have no children did not matter, it just drew us closer.

Then we adopted Julia.

The first time I saw her she was nearly a year old. She smiled and held out her arms. I knew I could never let her go.

She had lost her parents in a tragic accident. I didn't want to know the circumstances; as far as I was concerned, she had always been mine.

She grew up so quickly. Three, four... The happy years flew past. Then she was nearly five, a



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He laughed. 'It's easy to tell you grew up in a large family, love. Lots of only children invent a friend. Even I did.' He smiled. 'His name was William Phizackerly. He was a purple dragon, and we used to lay a place for him at table. He always got first pick of the cakes, as I remember.'

Why did I feel that Julia's friend was different. Different from a small boy's cover for his own greed. A big boy of twelve, she'd said. He knows about all sorts of things. Algebra and French. And matters of life and death.

A far cry, surely, from purple dragons.

'Who's David?' Tony asked her, when she sat on his lap before bed that night.

'Oh, just a boy,' she said, vaguely. 'He says that Arsenal will win the cup.'

'No chance,' Tony smiled. 'What cup is that, Julia?'

'The FA Cup, of course,' she said. 'Don't you know anything, stupid?'

Briefly, Tony's eyes met mine. The he swung Julia up to the ceiling, making her giggle. 'Come on, mastermind, to bed with you.'

'They pick these things up from TV,' he assured me later. 'She's bright, that's all. Ready for school. She'll stop all this business in September, you'll see.'

At first it seemed he was right.

Julia liked school, liked her pretty young teacher Miss McCann, got on well with her classmates.

She made a real friend, a solemn little girl called Lisa.

Lisa visited and in return, Julia went to tea.

'You are lucky,' said Lisa's mother, as we watched the two little girls run into the playground. 'A boy and a girl...'

'I've just the one,' I said, quickly. 'Just Julia.'

'Oh,' she looked puzzled. 'Julia talks so much about David...'

Again, I felt the faint prickle of unease.

'He's imaginary,' I said. 'I thought she'd grown out of him.'

"The uneasiness deepened and became a cold feeling in the pit of my stomach"

beautiful child with glowing auburn hair. She was good, too. She would play contentedly for hours, talking to her toys, the flowers, herself.

I watched her, one day, sitting under the white roses, catching the falling petals and chattering away nineteen to the dozen.

Suddenly, she shook her head and laughed. She jumped up and began to run in and out of the rose bushes as if she were chasing somebody. I heard her call out.

The sun shone on the flowers, the auburn of her hair, bright among the waving white petals. The dazzle of light made it difficult to see. Almost, for a moment, it appeared there were two red heads, separated by the white flowers.

Was there someone out there with her?

'Julia.' I went to the back door and called.

She came at once.

'Who were you talking to, love?'

'Only David.'

'Who's David?'

'A boy. His hair is like mine and he's got freckles too.'

'Is it someone in the street?' I asked.

'No,' she said. 'He's my special friend. No one else can see him.'

A cloud covered the sun and I shivered. 'Well, it's teatime. Come on in, now.'

She turned back and waved to the dancing shadows, then followed me into the kitchen, chattering happily.

I felt uneasy.

'This David business,' I said to Tony. 'Isn't she a bit big for that?'

'No. She's full of him,' Lisa's mother said. 'A tall boy... with red hair. Naturally, we assumed...'
'Naturally,' I echoed.

A picture formed unwillingly in my mind.
Sun on white roses, on red hair. Two heads, close together.

'Does Daid go to school?' I asked Julia.
She shook her head. 'He used to go to Bridge End, but he doesn't any more.'

'What does he do then?'
'Oh, he waits for me. Sometimes I see him at the gate.' She smiled a small, secret smile as if at some private joke. 'He goes away when you come. He doesn't like you.'

The uneasiness deepened and became a cold feeling in the pit of my stomach.

'Doesn't he?'
'No.' She held my hand. 'He says I don't belong to you.'

I found myself watching out for David. At the school gates, in the street. Even when Julia was safe in bed, I would stand at her window watching the autumn twilight fill up the garden, the pale glimmer of the last roses. Nothing. All safe.

Then one night, as I drew the curtains, I caught a glimpse of something: a shadow, a movement, just beyond my line of vision. I turned. Petals showered down from the white roses in the empty garden. The gate creaked in the wind.

The cold feeling in my stomach grew and grew until I was shaking from head to foot. I stood unable to move, till Tony came to find me.

'Love, you're letting this business get on top of you.' He put an arm round me. 'Look. There's no one there. I'll go out and check if it makes you feel better.'

I looked at Julia, safe asleep in bed, and shook my head. Tony was right. I was becoming obsessed. But the cure, the remedy, was in my own hands. Tomorrow, when Julia was safe in school, I would do what I should have done long ago: I would find out about her background. If some relation had turned up, was pestering the child, there would be things I could do.

Ordinary things.
Confront them. Call the police.
Tomorrow I would find out.

The young woman in social services was apologetic. 'Julia Faraday? I'm afraid we don't have much about her on our files. Only the facts. When she was taken into care, fostering and so on; your application for adoption; the court's recommendation.'

'But her family...' I murmured.
'There was none that survived,' said the young woman. 'And no others came forward. The most exhaustive enquiries were made...'

'What happened to them?'
The young woman ruffled the papers. 'There was a fire. Some electrical fault, I believe. Really, there's very little detail here. Some papers lost, I imagine. I haven't been here all that long myself.'

'The fire?' I asked. 'Where was it?'
'Oh, here,' she said. 'In town. Number 47, Larchwood Avenue.'

So. What else could I do? Take the car. Look at the house. Perhaps someone would remember.

The avenue dreamed in the afternoon sunlight. Number 47 was bright, new-painted. No brooding house of tragedy.

Next door, a woman watched, leaning on her

doorpost as I went up the path.

'There's no one in,' she called. 'They're at work all day.'

'Oh,' I stopped and looked at her. She was middle-aged, settled. If she had lived here long she might be able to help me. 'Actually, I want some information,' I said, 'about some people who lived here before. The Faradays.'

'The Faradays?' She looked blank for a moment and then said, 'Oh yes. Poor souls. I remember them. Dreadful business. Overcome by the smoke they were. Never stood a chance.'

'But Julia... The baby,' I said. 'How did she get out?'

'Her brother passed her out of the window. He went back to try and wake his parents. Died with them.'

'I never knew she had a brother.' I forced myself to speak calmly.

'Oh yes,' the woman nodded. 'Older than she was, but that fond of her... Talk to her for hours he would, while she lay in her pram. Arsenal 'll win the cup this year, he'd tell her. As if she cared. I can see him now,' she smiled. 'A tall boy with red hair.'

I felt as if the warm sun was blotted out. My teeth chattered so that I could hardly speak.

'His name...' I said. 'Please. What was his name?'

I already knew the answer.

'David. His name was David.'

David, who knew about everything. David, who waited at the school gates for Julia. David, who only went away when I came.

I almost ran to my car.

Dear God, let me be in time, I prayed as I drove through the sunlit streets. I passed a large school where the children were already coming out. I didn't need to look at the notice board to find out the name.

Bridge End Comprehensive.

David used to go there, but he doesn't anymore. David didn't go anywhere. David was dead, dead, dead, and waited outside the school gates for Julia.

A lorry driver hooted impatiently as I pulled out in front of him. The traffic was heavy through the town and I must have caught every light at red. I was frantic by the time I pulled up outside the school.

The playground was empty, quiet in the late sunshine.

Surely Miss McCann would not have let Julia go home alone. She would have gone home with Lisa; or be waiting for me in the classroom. Oh God — she must be!

Miss McCann looked up as I burst in. 'Julia,' I said, hoarsely. 'Is she...?'

'Oh, it's all right,' Miss McCann smiled. 'Julia's quite safe. Her brother called for her. They're very alike, aren't they?'

It was a nightmare.

They never found her though they searched for days, those grim policemen with their tracker dogs. And in spite of appeals on TV and in the national press, no trace of her was ever found. She had vanished.

In time the file was closed.

I don't go out much these days. So many things make me afraid.

Red hair.

An empty playground.

A woman leaning on a doorpost.

The sun on white roses.

"Dreadful business. Overcome by smoke they were. Never stood a chance"



THE TALE OF THE RED-EYED RAT

BY CHRIS WATSON

Garrun, the stand-in barman, brings another jug of ale to where Pormal perpetually sits by a roaring fire in winter. Now, though, it is autumn; the cold weather has come on strong and early. The wind shakes the big, old building to its foundations, making it rattle here and there; odd moans can be heard, and shrill wails. The sound of rain on the shutters and the occasional chill wind which penetrates even the thickest hangings make everyone but Pormal shiver. On a day like this, everyone equals almost none of the townsfolk. Only strangers huddle in the booths and about the round tables, eating stew and bread, downing great pewter pots of ale and waiting for night to come and sleep to beckon.

Pormal, his eye on the door, waits as usual. He came to Predeth some ten years ago, in passing, but he has never left. In the towns and cities of Karamalas he had made a poor living at his trade, for in truth he is a second, or even third, rate teller of tales. Here, however, he has found his place in life and, priding himself that he knows a good thing when he sees it, he has never left.

The door would bang open a dozen times a night, more often on windy nights, and people would soon become weary of looking up to see who came. Not so Pormal, for his comfort depends upon that banging door and the stranger who may be behind it. So when, for the umpteenth-time that night, the door bangs open, torn from some man's hand, Pormal's eyes are there.

For a moment he sizes the man up, and then he smiles, as he has never seen this man before. He is a tall, foreign-seeming man with dark hair and skin; his hood and cloak are thrown back and his clothing is of blue and black and well-tailored. At his side hangs a sword which is long and heavy and Pormal realises that the flab he guessed made the clothing bulge is a coat of some mail, and not fat at all.

"The witch had cursed him as she burned, cursed him to become a foul beast and snuffle in the refuse for his food"

Pormal's table is empty, for he is known to all in the room and they are either friends who avoid him, knowing his living, or enemies who avoid him for fear of his tongue or people he knows not but has seen often about the town, the company of whom he discourages, for they will not pay him to hear what they already know.

The tall dark man makes his way towards the fire, and Garrun, being free just then, comes to take his order. Pormal listens in on the brief conversation unashamedly and is not surprised to find the man speak the name of the inn; this is usual.

When Garrun goes, Pormal leans back and stretches his long legs towards the man who stares abstractedly into the fire in front of which he warms his hands.

Have you travelled far, my friend? Pormal asks him. The man glances disinterestedly at Pormal. *Not far; and you?*

For my part, I have lived here so long that I am growing old.

Oh? Then perhaps you could tell me a thing

Pormal smiles: *It would be my pleasure to relate to you the tale of the red-eyed rat — professionally, of course.*

The man's eyes widen for a moment: *How did you know what I was about to ask?*

Pormal gives a toothy grin. *Everyone asks, my friend. Everyone. Now, we must agree a price for the tale.*

Name it.

The man takes a seat across the table from Pormal, close to the warming fire and near enough to hear his words.

Ten shanki.

It is an outrageous price, even for an exemplary tale, and Pormal expects to have to haggle greatly. But it is not so, for without a word, the dark man withdraws the coin from his purse and places it upon the table, where it does not rest for long.

It happened this way... Pormal begins, after a swill of ale to loosen his tonsils. Then he pauses as Garrun chooses that moment to bring the man's order, a carafe of fine red wine which sparkles in the light of the fire.

It happened this way. The Burgesses of Predeth rule over eleven villages and hamlets in towards the mounts and 'twixt here and the Marchass to Kavaladak road. Being Uvar, they consider themselves to be a warrior elite. Pormal raises his hand to forestall an interruption from his audience: You are Uvar yourself, of course, and I mean no disrespect. It is simply that, when word came of the terrorising of a village in the east by a hag who stole away child and beast alike for her foul practices, the Burgesses were not slow to respond. The man smiles at the compliment and Pormal continues.

Five fine warriors were sent, sons of the Burgesses. Surely no more than five would be needed for the task? And the finest of them, the very pride of Predeth, was Stanis Putchave. A great tall warrior, he! Broad of shoulder, lean of waist keen of eye, strong of arm and betrothed to the fairest damsel of the land: Clarissa Mont Vanc, pale of skin and hair, fey as fairy folk. Indeed, the day of the wedding was set for just a week hence. Some said Stanis was a fool to risk himself at such a time, others said there was no risk, save to the witch! And this is your thought, too, I see. Pormal adds with a knowing smile.

Now, a witch can be a troublesome thing, but Stanis and the rest sought such advice as they could and wore what charms were available. Armed with the knowledge that such as she must be slain three times by three

elements before the job is fully done, and knowing, as they already knew, that no witch can spell a man lest their eyes meet, they set off with good hope.

Of course, the witch was slain — thrice, and each time by Stanis. Hearing word of their coming, she met them in the shape of a wolf and slew one of their number before Stanis swept the animal up in his arms and plunged with it into a nearby stream, there squeezing the breath from its lungs.

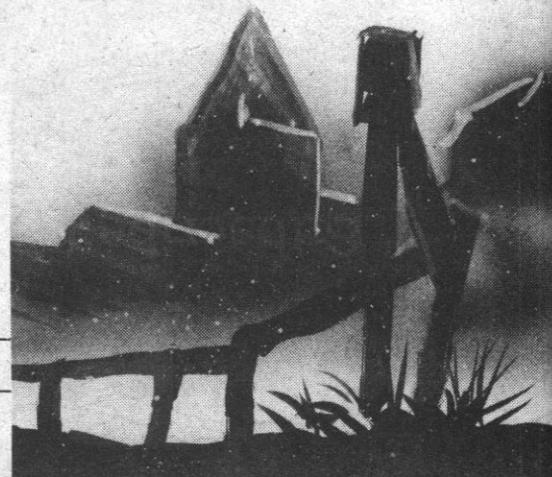
At the next encounter Stanis, having chosen his camp carefully, fled the witch, who was in the form of a black hind, and led her over a cliff which she could not see for the fog. Stanis himself survived only by jumping close to the face some ten feet to a ledge which he had spied and marked. When they came to the village of Subaray and the ruined keep where the witch made lair, he slew her again, this time by fire. Yet he did not return to the hero's welcome he deserved but chose exile, for the witch had cursed him as she burned, cursed him to become a foul beast and snuffle in the refuse for his food.

When his companions returned, Clarissa, his betrothed, was stricken with grief and would have it no other way but to go to him at once. This her family permitted so long as she do so with adequate chaperonage. To the surprise of all, Stanis seemed unchanged and, with his beloved there in person to persuade him, he relented as much as his fears would allow and came back to court for the wedding. Thereafter he returned to Subaray, the village having been given in fief to him and his heirs. For a while, all seemed well; the keep was restored and the village prospered.

In secret, all was far from well. Although Stanis had confided his plight to Clarissa before the wedding took place and begged her to find another, she would not have it. Though he be cursed to wear the form of a rat by night, she would stand by him and help him keep his secret. And this she did as best she could for many years. Though they were much talked about for their reclusive lifestyle, none learned of the curse until rumour of war in the north brought a Burgess and some knights to Subaray to examine the terrain and see the situation for themselves.

As host, Stanis was obliged to spend time with the knights and to hunt the forest with them. All might have been well, had not the northern folk who, as you know, are Velend and a harsh cruel folk, come to raid that day. Stanis and his party ran full into half a hundred Velend and a small battle ensued. This lasted but an hour, during which time Stanis was seriously wounded and repaired to a pavilion until he was fit to travel.

Though his wife came to him as swiftly as she might, it was not soon enough; the camp was in uproar when she arrived and a group of armed men stood without the pavilion, with weapons in hand and helms on their heads, crying out that a giant rat demon had appeared in the Lord Stanis' pavilion and consumed him, bones



and all. Almost ready, they were, to storm the tent and slay the beast, but the Lady Clarissa forestalled them and was forced to explain the truth.

In other times, he might have been stripped of title and lands, but in time of war no such action was taken. The truth was suppressed as best it could be, but by the end of the year every man for a dozen miles in any direction knew the truth. Lord Stanis of Subaray was a were rat, a creature of the darkness, a supernatural horror. He stalked the night, his wounded flesh healing as fast as water parted by the blade. The tale grew in the telling, but time passed and the folk of Subaray became used to their strange lord, and no harm came to any under his rule. Even in this town, people came to realise that a cursed man is not necessarily evil. Time passed and all would have been well again, perhaps, if not for Galonar the Sentrantian.

This one, the Galonar, came to Predeth a retired warrior from the east. He was a drunkard, a lout, a bully, a woman beater, and was altogether despised and loathed by any who knew him. He came to this very inn, the Golden Hind it was called then, and with what monies he had he gambled with the owner who soon found himself without an inn. Knowing Galonar, he probably cheated.

Of course, the tale of Stanis and Clarissa came to his ears and he could not accept that a woman would stay with such a one save under some magic spell. He could not get the idea out of his head that, if he slew Stanis, Clarissa would be free and would throw herself into his arms (when any woman with sense would sooner throw herself off a cliff). So he took up his sword and donned his armour and was off without a word.

At the keep of Subaray, a small and loyal body of men remained and a light guard was maintained in the tower and at the gate. Galonar slipped by them; the war was over and they were not vigilant. They may even have been asleep.

Galonar was a fool, but he was a cunning fool: knowing that Stanis would be almost impossible to kill at night, he hid in the keep near the master bedroom and waited until daylight. Sure enough, at dawn Stanis the man returned to the bed chamber looking for comfort in the arms of his wife. Instead he found the point of Galonar's blade and a swift and treacherous death such as he did not deserve.

Of course, Galonar then entered the bed chamber where Clarissa lay and declaimed that the foul monster who kept her in bond was slain and she was free to

follow her own will. She screamed like a Banshee and woke the house. Galonar was so disappointed at her reaction that he slew her too. Then he fled.

Returning to Predeth, he attempted to take up his life as though nothing had happened, but he was shunned and stoned and hunted by the Burgesses and again he escaped into the forest and hills about.

Pormal takes up his mug and drains it.

At that time, some said by coincidence but others knew better, a giant rat was seen at night in the streets of the town, hunting and searching amongst the refuse for food.

In the distance a bell begins to toll, telling the town that the sun is set and the day is at an end and that Galonar may soon be abroad in the streets.

Soon it became known that the curse passes from the killed to the killer; so no one hunted the red-eyed rat who was Galonar scavenging our streets at night. Ownership of the inn never passed to another, and at this time it was renamed. Sometimes, of course, the red-eyed rat would not appear on our streets, as Galonar hunted abroad.

I suppose that is where you met him earlier today?

The large, black-furred rat which sits on its haunches in the chair opposite him blinks its bright red eyes and nods once, perhaps coincidentally. With slow precision, it leans to one side and, reaching its short fore-limbs to the sawdusted floor, it slips slowly from the chair and walks across the room. Some kind soul opens the door and lets it out into the night.

Pormal's sigh competes with the wind as the only sound to be heard in the stilled room.

I suppose, now that Galonar is dead, ownership of the inn will go to the Burgesses. I just hope that they maintain the standard of the ale.

"He stalked the night, his wounded flesh healing as fast as water parted by the blade"





"He was upon her, his hot breath hit her face and his tongue started to lick her neck"

A TASTE OF BLOOD

By Kay Callahan

He was on her before she knew it. The green foliage had parted and there he was, big and strong. She couldn't escape, couldn't sidestep him and, if she ran back, he would catch her in a couple of strides. Perhaps she could stare him out by standing very still and he would change his mind and look for someone else.

She felt so helpless. She didn't have time to think any more. Then he was upon her, his hot breath hit her face and his tongue started to lick her neck, her blouse was ripped and her left breast was exposed. My God, what's next? She put up a fight, kicked with both of her legs as hard as she could, grabbed his neck and tried to twist his head away from hers.

Suddenly, a loud banging noise echoed through the trees. It startled him so much that he let go. With all of her strength, she wriggled out of his grip and got to her feet, blood pouring from the open wounds on her arms and body. Then she staggered up and ran as fast as she could down the pathway.



Kay Callahan, a grandmother in her fifties started to write short stories on moving to Cornwall several years ago. A nurse by profession, she has led a busy and varied life. Now retired, enjoying quieter pursuits in music, art and water sports.

She listened. Was he following her? No sound of crackling leaves or broken branches. Keep running, get home; it was only a hundred yards away. The path twisted and curved and seemed determined to hinder her. Hidden undergrowth tore at her legs and feet and her face was lashed by low branches. She scrambled on. Her shoe fell off and her foot became very painful as she trod on the hard stones. Silly things came into her head as she limped hurriedly along. Why did he choose her? Did she look so vulnerable that last time they met? There were other women younger and more beautiful than she; surely he would have fancied them more? She had always had a low opinion of herself, but there must have been something that had made him want her. Perhaps, deep down, he found her sexually attractive. Oh, no... not that!

Please God let me get out of this alive. The thought spurred her on. She listened. Muffled sounds were coming from the path behind her. Hurry. Hurry. If I can only reach the bungalow, I might still be able to do something... she thought, as reason tried to overcome the strong fear inside her. Her foot was bleeding badly but the pain had gone in her effort to escape.

At last, gasping for breath, she reached the bungalow and pushed the outer door open. In through the second door and to the rifle room. He had smelled blood, he wouldn't let her go. She grabbed the rifle off the wall, got the bullets out of the drawer, frantically pressed one into the breach and pushed it up the barrel. It wouldn't go in at first, her hands were shaking so badly, but eventually she managed it. The other bullets she dropped into the torn pocket of her skirt. She positioned herself opposite the door. It was half open and she knew he would follow the trail of blood from the path, up the steps... into the room.

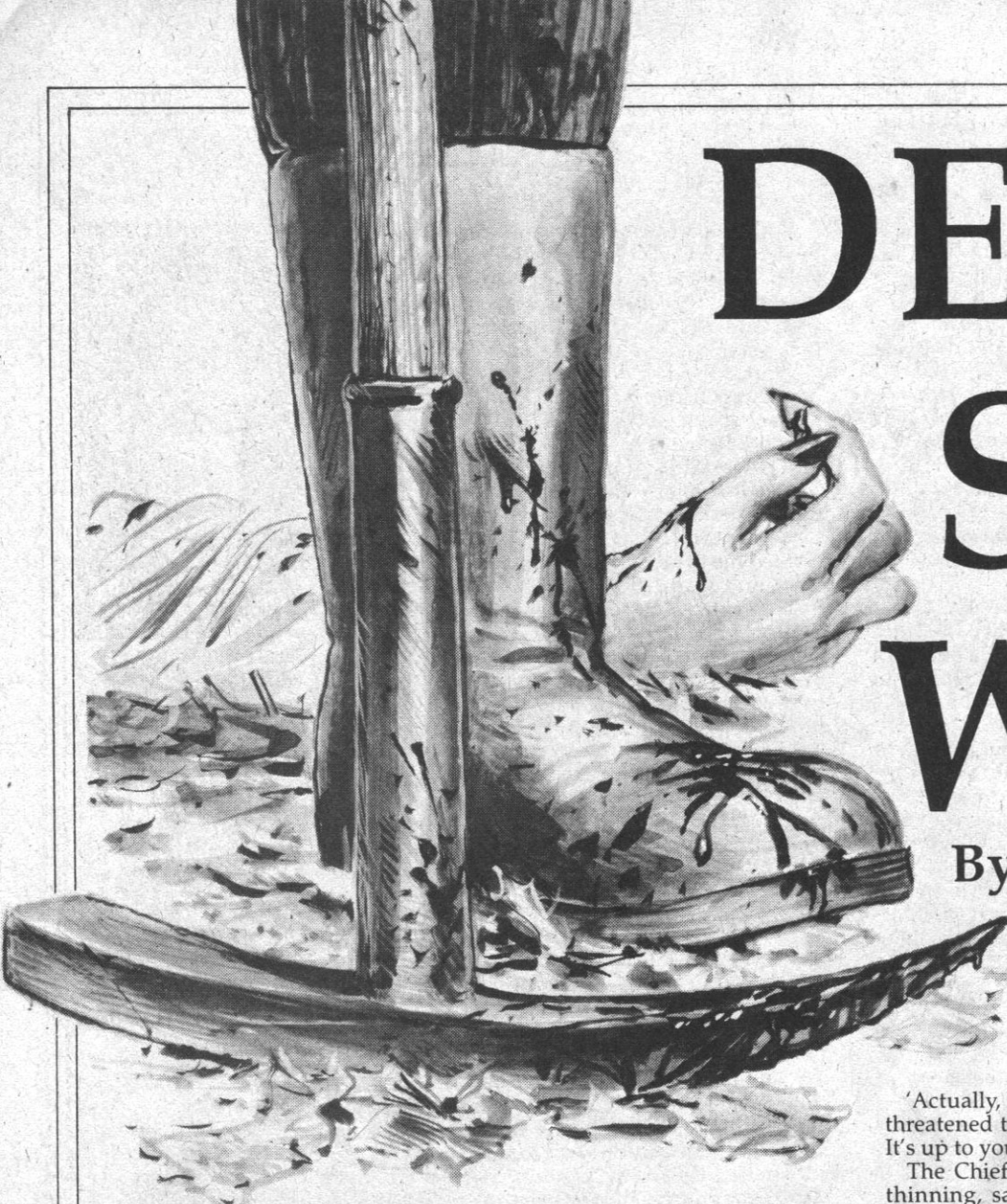
It was very quiet. Was he coming? Would she be ready and would she get him with that one bullet? A creak on the step. He was coming. Time seemed to stand still. She held her breath, her heart beating faster than a drum. Come on... Come on...

The sweat on her brow trickled slowly down her face. The door opened gradually and there he was, magnificent, his brown eyes looking malevolently at her. He got ready to strike. He took one step... two... got ready to pounce. She raised the gun and took aim. A shot rattled out, it hit straight between the eyes. He fell to the floor.

The trembling of her body wouldn't stop. Her shaking hand grabbed the whisky bottle and she poured herself a stiff drink. She looked at the body on the floor, still magnificent in death. Tomorrow, she decided, she would get one of the natives to skin it for her. It would make a nice tiger rug in front of the fire back in England; a permanent reminder that a supposedly helpless woman can overcome the biggest of obstacles with a little assistance from the gods.

She would never be afraid again.

"He had smelled blood, he wouldn't let her go"



DEAD SHE WAS

By Alison Brooks

"She carried her head at an odd angle, so perhaps the blow to the head had shattered her spine"

The Chief Inspector sat back in his chair and scratched his ear. 'Now, let's just check that I understand what you're saying, Mr Moore. You're here to report a murder.'

'That's right, I said.'

'Of someone you've never met or heard of while she was alive? You've not seen the body and you've not talked to anyone else who has or overheard anyone talking about it?'

The Chief Inspector sounded dubious. I could hardly blame him 'Yes! I'm getting tired of repeating myself. First to the sergeant on the desk, and then to all the officers. All the way up to you.'

'Well, you must admit, Mr Moore, that reporting a murder for which you've absolutely no evidence is a little... unusual.' 'But I told you about that. The...'

'The ghost of the young lady came and told you what happened and wanted you to report it.' Give the man his due, he was at least trying to avoid sounding as if he thought I was crazy.

'Which is what I've been trying to do.'

'Uh-huh.' The Chief Inspector flipped through the copious notes in his book. 'Description of the ghost; clothing, hair, injuries, and who she was, when and how she died. The grave. All very complete. But why should I believe you, Mr Moore?'

'Actually, I don't care if you do or not. The ghost threatened to curse me if I didn't come, so I came. It's up to you now. I'd just like to go home.'

The Chief Inspector ran his fingers through his thinning, sandy hair. 'Not yet. What's going to happen to you depends on whether the corpse is where you say it is. All sorts of cranks come in here claiming to know about every type of nonexistent crime, and I'm sick of it. So, if it's not where you say it is, I'll do you for wasting police time. If it is, Mr Moore... I don't believe in ghosts. If it is, then I'll do you for suspected murder.'

'But that's ridiculous. I didn't even know her.'

'So you say, Mr Moore. Now, shall we go through your story once more?'

Let me tell you the tale I told the Chief Inspector. I really don't blame his scepticism. It would have sounded implausible to me.

My name's Brian Moore, bachelor of this parish, as they say. I'm a computer programmer, so I'm comfortably off. I was at home, minding my own business one evening about a month ago, when the door swung silently open. It had been locked. The locked door opened.

The ghost appeared in front of the door. Funny, that. She could have come through the door, but instead she just appeared. It was a young woman. She'd been done to death with a pickaxe, I'd guess, to judge from the wounds. No, she couldn't have been alive, I'm quite certain of that, even though she looked quite substantial. Long wisps of blonde hair straggled across the gaping hole in the top of her head. Blood had streaked down her face and blood from other wounds stained her clothes. Her face was a classic oval, with a peaches and cream complexion, a beauty spot on her left cheek and

blue eyes. She carried her head at an odd angle, so perhaps the blow to the head had shattered her spine. She was of average height and slender. She wore bleached denim jeans, a bright blue silk blouse and a leather jacket. If she hadn't been dead, she'd have been a real beauty, but dead she was, no doubt about it.

Suddenly I noticed that the room was freezing. It was not just from the door being open on a cold night, either. Meanwhile, the ghost was standing there.

I remembered the old wives' tale about a ghost being unable to speak unless invited to do so by the living. 'Who are you?' I asked. I wasn't scared. I'd never believed in ghosts. The whole thing was more like a dream than anything.

'My name was Ann Walker,' she replied. Her voice was quiet, not eerie at all, more like the voice of a living person. Blood foamed from a cavity in her chest as she spoke. 'My name was Ann Walker,' she repeated. 'I want you to tell the people what happened to me. I was murdered.'

'By whom?' It did cross my mind that this might all be some bizarre hoax, but I couldn't see how they'd arranged it. When I examined the locked door later, there was no sign of tampering. She described it all to me. She'd been living with a man called Graham James. He was an odd-jobber, a hard drinker, and had been claiming dole for his entire adult life. He lived in an old caravan at the edge of Westley Woods (Westley was about twenty miles away from where I lived). It had been a stormy relationship. There were rows, even physical violence. She had threatened to leave him several times, but he persuaded her to stay. During one of their rows, however, she went too far. She compared James unfavourably to another lover of hers.

James' reaction surprised her. Instead of hitting her as he customarily did, he pushed her to one side and stamped out of the caravan. Thinking that he was going to attack her lover, Ann followed him. He went to a lean-to nearby, grabbed a pickaxe and drove it into Ann's skull. Not satisfied with this, he hacked at her corpse. He hid the body in a shallow grave in the woods near the house. He buried it with his boots, which had been covered with Ann's blood. If anyone noticed Ann's disappearance, they would have thought that she had finally left him, as she had so often threatened to do.

When she'd finished her tale, the ghost faded away. I was left with an open door which had been locked and in a room which, slowly, warmed up.

So what did I do about my visitation?

Nothing.

I wouldn't be believed. If the police checked on the story, and the body was there, I would be arrested. If it wasn't there, I'd be labelled as mad. I didn't believe in ghosts myself, and it wasn't too difficult to dismiss the apparition as a dream of some sort. So I did nothing.

One month later, Ann came again.

She wasn't a girl to put up with any nonsense, Ann, even as a ghost. She appeared just as before, but this time she didn't hesitate before giving me a piece of her mind. 'Now listen,' she said. 'You've been asked nice, but you haven't done what you've been told. No more chances. If you don't go to the police this time, I'll put a curse on you.'

'What sort of a curse?' I asked.

'A ghost's curse, stupid. I'll show you.'

She drifted towards me and touched me on the back of the hand with her index finger. All I felt was a sudden coldness there. Then she disappeared. I looked down at my hand. A small patch of skin had turned grey, where the ghost had touched me.

For the next few days, the patch remained on my hand, grey and dead, then it gradually regained its normal colour and sensitivity. It was obvious that the ghost wasn't joking; so I came to the police.

The Chief Inspector said that he wanted me to be there. Initial probing had confirmed that the ground had been disturbed recently in just the place I'd told him the ghost had described. He wanted me to be there when they dug.

I didn't want to be there. I knew what they'd find, but the Chief Inspector insisted. Perhaps he thought I might try to escape if he couldn't keep an eye on me. I'm sure it was against police procedure to have a civilian along like that, but the Chief Inspector was obviously not a stickler for procedure.

It was dawn. Even the trees seemed grey, dusted with dew, veiled with mist, pale in the pale light. The police seemed almost garishly out of place in their blue uniforms.

They talked in hushed voices amidst the cathedral of trees. It was an awe almost religious, not a little mixed with fear. Seeing a burly constable whirl at the sound of a scuffle in the undergrowth by an early bird in search of its proverbial reward would have been amusing elsewhere. Here, we all felt the same. The leaves had already been cleared from the place. They were piled up to one side, as though for a bonfire. The earth beneath was grey.

The photographer took a few snaps of the dismal scene, then the constables set to work. Wielding their spades with a will, they dug away but it was not long before one of them stopped.

'Got something, sir.'

It was the boots. The corpse was immediately beneath. I studied the nearby trees in the growing light until the Chief Inspector tapped me on the shoulder.

'This your ghost, Mr Moore?' he asked, leading me across to where the pathologist was making notes.

I recognised the hole in her head, the clothes — the cheap, silk blouse had rotted nearly away, wisps of blonde hair plastered across her face. Her face — I swallowed hard. The months had not been kind to that peaches and cream complexion. There was something crawling out of her mouth. I could see the rotting face even when I closed my eyes.

The Chief Inspector managed to drag me away, so that I was sick on a pile of leaves rather than directly onto the corpse.

'Pathologist wouldn't like it if you'd done that,' he reproved. 'Now was that her?'

'Yes, I managed.'

'Good. Now, you don't have to say anything unless you wish to do so, but what you say may be given in evidence,' he quoted.

'You're making a big mistake,' I said.

'Oh, we'll investigate, don't worry about that. But for now, let's get along back to the station, shall we?'

They let me go after a while. They had to. Apart from my reporting the crime, they had no grounds to suspect me. I could tell that the Chief Inspector was reluctant to give up on me. It was tantamount



ALISON BROOKS is a freelance writer who claims she's never joined the Foreign Legion, paddled up the Amazon or done any of the exciting things writers are supposed to have done. She wrote *Dead She Was* whilst on an enterprise allowance scheme and we hope you'll agree that her short story is almost as exciting as a trip up the Amazon, if not as exotic! Alison is thirty years old, married with no children and no cats.

"My name was Ann Walker," she repeated. "I want you to tell the people what happened to me. I was murdered."

to admitting that my ghost was real. But the alternative suspect proved even more satisfying to his policeman's plodding mind.

I had no great part in the rest of the investigation, and the Chief Inspector did not require me to take part in the trial. He obviously did not wish to be subjected to the ridicule of admitting that his case was founded on the say-so of a ghost. Besides, it would have given the defence a crack in the armour of the case. I didn't mind, I did not want to get up in court either. But I did attend the trial. I had enough of an interest for that.

The Chief Inspector noticed me but when I caught his gaze he looked away and did not speak. I suppose he thought it was morbid curiosity on my part.

The prosecution made a workmanlike job of a strong case. The defence did his best, but the case was cast-iron. The defendant sat there sullenly and snarled unhelpful answers to the questions of prosecution and defence alike.

How could the defendant explain the fact that his own boots had been found with the deceased, stained with human blood? He didn't know. They were his boots? Yes. So how did they get there? Didn't know. They'd disappeared, he volunteered. What about the pickaxe with human blood on it found beneath his caravan? Not his. How did it get there? He didn't know. What had happened to Ann Walker? She'd left him. Did he kill her? No. She was found within a mile of his caravan. So? Locals had testified to their violent quarrels and had frequently seen bruises on Ann's face. We had our rows, who hasn't? But he denied killing her? Yes. The outcome was inevitable, and when his police record of violence was read out, the judge had no hesitation in sentencing Graham James to life imprisonment for the murder of his common-law wife. Case closed.

I went home, locked my door and cracked open a bottle of champagne to celebrate. It had all gone perfectly. Graham James had convicted himself by his own truculence, just as I'd known he would. And Ann — sweet, sensuous, poisonous Ann — was a chapter of my life that was now closed.

I'd never believed in ghosts, but I'd read enough reports of police who reluctantly had taken the advice of psychic mediums as to the whereabouts of missing persons. The police didn't have to believe in something to be prepared to use it, if it helped their investigations.

Dear Ann was quite a match for her sullen lover. Oh, he lashed out at her sometimes, when driven beyond endurance. He had no other way to shut her up, but she was quite the expert at playing on the guilt he felt afterwards. She had him around her little finger, and he never knew it. Just as he never knew about Ann's other exploits.

Ann was an enthusiastic lover. I never minded sharing her with Graham James, or any of the others that she doubtless went to when James was away or down at the pub. She was like a bitch on heat, Ann. Uncomplicated. An uncomplicated bitch.

I first met her when I was driving through the area. It was a Sunday, and I was going nowhere in particular. She was walking along the road, and I stopped to ask her the way. I'd never thought such things happened in real life, especially to middle-aged computer programmers, but before I knew what was happening, we were driving down to a

lay-by in the woods, where we coupled. Made love, if you can call it that.

After that, I would drive down to the lay-by most weekends. Ann would come to me while Graham was down at the pub. It was a straightforward enough arrangement, and it suited me. After a few weeks, Ann began to tell me about herself and Graham James. She didn't realise just how much she gave away, about how she manipulated the poor bastard. Then she began to try and use the same tactics on me. When she found I wouldn't be used like that, she threatened to tell her man. Graham James, who had convictions for assault and grievous bodily harm and who thought that Ann was the centre of the universe. I couldn't allow that. Neither could I afford to let the bitch ruin my life.

It was quite simple. She had to die.

I encouraged her to think that I would go along with her ambitions. So much so, that we packed her things to move her out of the caravan, while Graham James was at the pub, as usual. Luckily, the caravan was well away from other houses, so no one could see the car there. Then I drove out to the lay-by.

'Why are we stopping?'

'It seems a shame to miss our last chance,' I said. 'Call it nostalgia, but I can't bear to leave without one last time. For luck.'

'Animal,' she said, but she was thrilled really.

We walked down to our usual place, Ann unbuttoning her blouse as we went. God, she was beautiful, but I couldn't allow my heart to soften. When we got to the place, I said, 'Just a minute. What's that?' and bent down to examine a patch of brambles.

Ann bent over to see, brushing her hair against my arm. By the time she realised what I was looking at, I had grabbed the pickaxe. I swung it round and it went straight through her skull. I hacked a few more times, for good measure, then carried her to the grave that I had prepared. I did her blouse back up. I didn't want the police to think it was *that* sort of a murder. In the event, it didn't matter, but better safe than sorry. I covered her up, then went back to the car to fetch Graham James' boots, which I had taken the liberty of removing from the caravan while we were packing. I smeared them with her blood, then added them to the grave and filled it in. With a generous armful of leaves thrown over the spot, it was just visible, but looked as though it was meant not to be.

I cleaned the fingerprints off the pickaxe and then walked through the woods to the caravan, and shoved the pickaxe underneath it.

Ann's belongings I incinerated back at my house.

I was sure that someone would be suspicious and that the police would be called in, but everyone seemed to accept that Ann really had just upped and left. Maybe her other lovers were as relieved as I was.

The safest murder is that which is not kept a secret, where the police are happy with the suspect they have apprehended. I would not be safe until Graham James was behind bars for the crime. So I came up with the idea of the ghost, and added enough irrational detail for it to sound convincing. It worked perfectly.

The perfect crime. I drained the last of my bubbly.

Then, silently, the locked door swung open.

"This your ghost, Mr Moore?" he asked, leading me across to where the pathologist was making notes"



"The point is that the world's in deadly danger, and you need to know about it!"

OVER THE TOP

By Duncan Adams

If I were alive, I couldn't be telling you this story. Nobody's actually *told* me I'm in hell, but I suppose I must be. I certainly deserve to be. I'm worried the paper will catch fire before I finish, so I have to be quick. Even if I *do* get it all written down before it burns, I don't know where I'll find a post box. But someone might get their hands on it. So, if you're reading this, then for God's sake pass it on to a Jungian psychologist.

My story may seem a bit confused, but that's because *I'm* confused and it'll take a psychologist to unravel it. I'm not sure what is reality, dream or insanity. Anyway, the point is that the world's in deadly danger, and you need to know about it!

This is what happened to me:

The last Friday of the month was when I usually went out for a drink with Ted and Janet after work. It was pay day. Clinical psychologists don't earn a fortune, especially when they work for the social services department, but just for that one evening we let our hair down a little.

Ted bought the first round, leaving me alone with Janet at the table. I was tempted to ask her then, but as usual my nerve went. With hindsight, I should have gone home, but how was I to know what was going to happen?

I didn't think of myself as a coward, but I did lack spunk where girls were concerned. At twenty-seven, I guess I was pretty inexperienced, but I hadn't really had the time, what with all the studying and everything. Janet was the first girl I'd ever really wanted, and I'd finally decided to pluck up the courage to ask her for a date.

Ted gave me a knowing smile as he came back to the table with the drinks. As a married man, he had no designs on Janet himself, but he knew of my intentions. I confided in Ted a lot.

Janet seemed particularly bubbly as we chatted about our workload of social failures, criminal recidivists and mental inadequates. They were unsatisfying patients and, in themselves, they were hardly worthy of after-work banter. It was our differing approaches that were interesting: Janet was a behavioural psychologist, I preferred the

"Carl Gustav Jung was standing at the foot of the bed, his old eyes gazing wisely at me from beneath the wispy, white hair"

analytical approach, and Ted mixed both.

'Anyway,' said Janet, suddenly rising from the table. 'Let's forget Freud and Adler. I've got a little surprise.'

Being gentlemen, neither of us liked the idea of Janet going to the bar to order the drinks, but she insisted. It gave Ted the opportunity to hiss, 'Have you asked her yet?'

'Jesus, man,' he said, when I shook my head. 'Look, time's getting on. When she comes back I'm going for a slash. That'll be your last chance.'

Then she took us both by surprise by reappearing with a bottle of cheap champagne and three glasses.

'What are we celebrating?' I asked.

'Men!' she said in that tone of voice women use that seems to explain everything, but doesn't. Shaking her head, she poured the wine.

'What do you mean, *men*?' demanded Ted, defensively.

'You're so unobservant. It's been under your noses all day, and neither one of you has noticed. Men!'

'What has?'

For answer, she held out the back of her left hand. I found myself wondering what was so special about the nail varnish. It wasn't until Ted said, 'Congratulations. Who's the lucky man?' that I saw the ring and gulped in its meaning.

After that, I didn't hear much of what Janet said. We drank the champagne, Janet *kissed* us both briefly, then dashed off to rendezvous with the bastard who had just turned my life upside down.

'Plenty more fish in the sea,' said Ted as he pressed a huge whisky on me. 'You weren't quick enough, that's all.'

I got very drunk. Ted lives in my street, and even though he knew his wife would complain, he stayed with me, and helped me home.

'We'll go shooting tomorrow,' he said as he propped me against my front door. 'Get it out of your system on a few rabbits.'

As my mother opened the door, I made a drunken mental note to do exactly that. 'Yeah, that'd be great,' I slurred, ignoring the abuse from my mother.

I didn't exactly climb the stairs to bed — she nagged me up them. Nor did I undress. I collapsed and slept.

I had always been a good sleeper, so it was unusual for me to wake in the middle of the night. My head hurt, my throat was full of gravel, and I had a vivid memory of a rather unpleasant nightmare.

I'd been a soldier in the trenches during the first world war, and I'd been ordered over the top. The nightmare had centred around my dilemma as to whether or not to obey. If I ran away, I would eventually be caught and shot as a deserter. If I went over the top, I'd be shot immediately. Patriotism wasn't in my mind at all, so absconding seemed the most sensible thing to do. But I didn't. Something strange seemed to happen to my brain. It was as though my own personal drummer changed his beat, or my mind slipped into a higher gear. Life and death ceased to be important.

So I went over the top. I awoke as the bullet tore into my heart. Or at least, I *think* I awoke.

'Why did you do it?' a quiet voice asked out of the darkness. 'Why not run away?'

'Who? What?' I fumbled for the switch on the bedside light. Its brilliance blinded me for a moment, but once I could see I began to suspect I

was still dreaming. I'm still not sure whether I was or not. Anyway, Carl Gustav Jung was standing at the foot of the bed, his old eyes gazing wisely at me from beneath the wispy, white hair. Jung, of course, was one of the greatest analytical psychologists ever, so I recognised him immediately. He died back in 1961.

'It's me. Carl Gustav,' he said. 'Please turn out the light.'

'You're dead,' I muttered. 'Piss off.'

'And you are very drunk, my friend. Turn out the light, close your eyes. Let me tell you something important.'

Because I *was* still drunk, (and because I knew or thought I knew) that it was all a dream, I complied. The darkness felt good. I closed my eyes awaiting a different sequence of dreams — perhaps something erotic involving Janet. No, better to forget Janet. A whore would be nice. Let my dreams bring me a whore.

'I ask you again. In your dream, why did you go over the top? Why not run away? You would have lived longer.'

'Leave me alone.'

'Tomorrow you will think it was the muse,' continued the thin voice at the foot of the bed. 'It happens that way, you know. Great men make great discoveries as they sleep. Problems weigh heavily on them and, while they sleep, the subconscious mind makes quantum leaps to solve them. Einstein and I did this. Albert was my friend, you know. He tried to understand the nature of matter while I struggled with man's mind and his soul. They are so similar...'

'Let me sleep.'

'Matter is composed of so many things. Atoms, electrons, energy and time. Albert understood these things. I believed a man's soul was also comprised of different elements: the persona, the shadow, archetypes, the universal subconscious and so on. Now that I am dead, I've confirmed that I was right and I've learned startling new things. I have returned to tell you something important, Paul...'

Then I heard myself begin to snore. Change into a whore, Carl Gustav. Leave me in peace.

'I have discovered another element of the mind,' the aged psychologist continued. 'I have called it *thanatyle* after Thanatos, the Greek God of Death. When a man is stressed with the imminence of death, the *thanatyle* descends on him like a great anaesthetic. It mantles him with a disregard for life.'

I grunted an appreciative noise, hoping now that he had said his piece, he'd go. But he didn't.

'The *thanatyle* is part of the universal subconscious,' he continued. 'During the Napoleonic wars a great deal of *thanatyle* was created, but that was nothing compared to the Great War. Then there were the Jews in the concentration camps: so much fear, so much death, so much anaesthetic needed. So much *thanatyle*. And now there is nowhere for it to go...'

'Good. I wish *you'd* go.'

'Patience, Paul. Hear me out. There is too much *thanatyle*, and it is destroying mankind. This is to be your life's work: understand *thanatyle*, and find a way to channel it safely away. Get rid of it. If you do not, there will be another holocaust. You must find a way, Paul. Now you may sleep.'

Then the whore came. She was good, and for a while I forgot Janet.

'Paul! Are you staying up there all day?' God, my mother had a strident voice. The sunlight hurt my eyes, and my brain exploded as I reluctantly sat up on the bed. I was still dressed. Why?

Memory limped back. Oh, shit! Janet! No, I didn't want to think about that. I staggered into the bathroom, took a huge leak, splashed cold water over my face, wished I hadn't, then lunged downstairs.

Mother had her rollers in her hair already. Why? The stupid old cow never went anywhere, so why bother? A cigarette dangled from the corner of her mouth. The ash dropped into the bacon she was frying for me.

'I'm not hungry,' I said. 'A coffee will do.' 'I've cooked this now, you ungrateful lout. Just look at you! And comb your hair! If your father were alive...' And so she went on, and on, and on.

Thanatyle. The word dragged itself through my aching head as I sipped the hot coffee. *Thanatyle*. Yes, it was a clever idea. It *was* the muse in me, working while I slept. An interesting concept — an anaesthetic against the realities of life and death. Yes, it explained why Jews went silently to their deaths and why soldiers went willingly over the top. And, since I held Carl Gustav Jung in high esteem, it was logical that my subconscious mind should make me dream of him. And yes, if a great deal of *thanatyle* had been needed, and if there was any of it still hanging around, it *would* need some sort of disaster on which to expend itself. Put simply, it was a holocaust looking for somewhere to happen.

'I sent that pile of records to the charity shop,' she said as she clattered around.

'Not my rock and roll albums?'

I dashed upstairs, stuck my head under the bed and learned the worst. The shotgun lived under the bed as well. I remembered I was going shooting with Ted, so I pulled it out. As I straightened, I banged my head on the edge of the bed. Blue and red lights danced in front of my eyes. 'Damnation!' I cursed as I nursed my head. Then I picked up the fallen shotgun, and I felt strangely different. Calm, almost. Automaton-like, I took the Barbour jacket from behind the door and slipped it on. Four boxes of cartridges fitted easily into the massive pockets. A hundred cartridges. No, only ninety-eight — I slipped two into the barrels.

'Going out?' she asked.

My first answer removed the left side of her face. The second transplanted her heart into the garden beyond the kitchen window. A drum beat set up inside my head as the sound of the shots receded. I remember quite distinctly that it was a snare drum, beating a slow rhythm, like in Napoleon's retreat from Moscow. There must have been a lot of *thanatyle* around at that time.

Josh Greenburg lived next door. He was the only Jew in the neighbourhood, and as I walked out of the back door, he appeared at his, a startled look on his face. It stayed there, presumably, until his funeral. A Jew? Concentration camps? The snare drowned out my thoughts, and I marched on. A face at a window. Bang! Breaking glass and screaming. Ninety-six cartridges left. Paper boy on his bicycle. The wheel span round for a long time after he stopped twitching. Ninety-five left.

I walked up to a house, the back door was open. A young man, his wife, two children. They screamed a lot, then silence. Ninety-one.

'Paul, for Christ's sake! What's going on?'

It was Ted, coming down his garden path with Barbara shouting from the front door for him to come back. I didn't kill Barbara, but I certainly blinded her. Ninety. Ted got two, both in the back. They didn't kill him, so I did him a favour by going in close and finishing him off. Good friend, Ted. I wouldn't want to leave him suffering. Eighty-seven. Where *was* everybody?

Another house. Two old people ran out of the front door as I went in the back. They died in their front garden. Eighty-five.

The snare quickened and I began running. There was screaming behind me, but it died away. I slowed again, the drummer moving my feet. A bus stopped, and I jumped on board. Eleven dead. Seventy-four. The driver was terrified of the gun at the back of his head, and he smelled like he'd shat himself. He probably had. He did as I said and drove me into the city. Then he died. Seventy-three.

Woolworths was full of people. Lord, how they screamed. I was on top of a big display, and I got everyone in the lingerie department. I remember a woman who was holding a pair of frilly panties, and I thought, *I bet Janet's are like that*. That was when I lost count with the cartridges.

Then I moved into the cafeteria, but they were already hiding under the tables. I took at least a dozen out before I got frustrated dodging around after them. Then I went back on the ground floor where the groceries were. It was deserted, but the street outside was full of flashing blue lights. Police and sirens. Noise. My head was bursting as the snare quickened again. An armed policeman slipped inside, then disappeared behind a display. I ran silently around a counter and caught him looking the other way. The shot didn't kill him, and when I felt in my pocket I had only one cartridge left, so I didn't finish him off.

Nothing happened for a while after that. I sat with my back against the counter, feeling sort of numb. I understood *thanatyle* clearly then, and it's important that you do too. It's a drug. A drug made by man's inhumanity to man. Not only does it remove fear of dying, it also removes the fear of the consequences of killing. Stress of any sort can act as a trigger, provided life and death somehow hang in the balance. Like I said before, it's a holocaust waiting for somewhere to happen.

There was someone on a loud hailer calling me by name. Jesus, I was a mass murderer! But I never hurt anyone in my life. I loved mankind, that's why I earned a pittance working for social services.

'*Thanatyle*,' I whispered, awed. 'Come back to me.' Like a long-lost friend, the snare came up to meet me. A kilted soldier marching proudly, beating the drum, with the pipers behind him, toiled up the heather-clad hill to where I stood on its summit.

There was a skirling of music — proud, fearless music — as I put the barrel in my mouth and pulled the trigger.

I wish they'd leave me alone. White coats and fire extinguishers everywhere. Jesus, be careful! You're getting foam on my story! I know I wasn't supposed to have matches. Sorry! No, not the strait-jacket again! Lord, it's hell in here.

What did you say? You're going to take my story away and show it to Doctor Jacobson? But he isn't a Jungian, he won't understand it!

All right, sod you then. I've tried to warn you. But if you won't listen...



DUNCAN ADAMS was born in 1943 and lives in Lancashire. Originally a bacteriologist, he became a private detective, 'retiring' from this in 1986 to take up forestry, explosive engineering and writing. He maintains his scientific interests by acting as a Home Office Scientific Adviser for nuclear, chemical and biological warfare.

"My first answer removed the left side of her face. The second transplanted her heart into the garden beyond the kitchen window"

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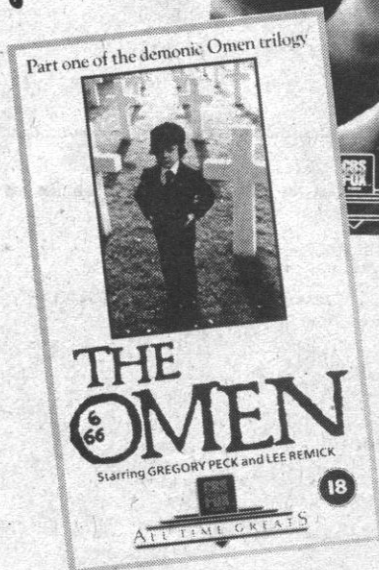
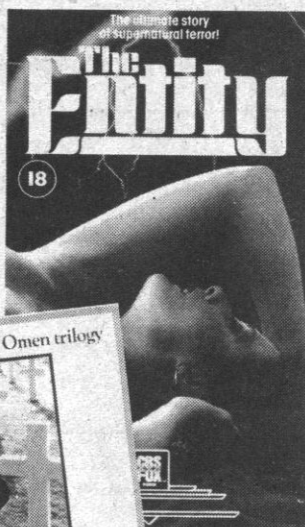
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THE HANGOVER

The convention season has just begun and it's time for journos and authors alike to get reacquainted with that serious medical problem, the hangover. Our FEARless correspondent braves the liquid bribes to bring you the latest wicked literary gossip and a rundown of the Bram Stoker Award Winners.

DATELINE: New York City, June 1989 . . .

Summer in the city, as I pointed out last issue, means one thing: movies, movies and more movies.

With my air conditioning on the fritz I have been spending many hours in the Big Apple's theatres, drinking up the summer films as much out of necessity as out of a passion for cinema-going.

Most of the season's big pictures have already opened and the outright winner is **Tim Burton's Batman**, which grossed around \$160 million in its first month. To say that America is experiencing *Batman* mania is an understatement. Darknight Detective merchandising is inescapable and seemingly 70 per cent of the population are sporting *Batman* T-shirts and baseball caps. DC Comics must be rubbing their hands with glee; then, so must **Jack Nicholson**. A recent news item in *The New York Post* calculated that, on the strength of his deal with Warner Bros, Nicholson is due to earn a cool \$100 million from his share of the box office takings and merchandising percentage. Nice work if you can get it . . .

Still to come in the next month, and destined to do good box office business, are *Friday the 13th Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street 5: The Dream Child*.

Word has it that the latest instalment in the *F13th* series is the worst so far, but at least the advertising campaign is entertaining and has been causing some controversy with the New York Tourist Board. The poster, one of the best to come out of Paramount's ad department for a long while, depicts **Jason** emerging from behind an 'I Love New York' hoarding, his machete slicing diagonally down the caption, his blood-spattered hockey mask blending with the remains of the red heart symbol that is used to signify the word love. This clever piece of artwork has totally freaked out the Tourist Board, who feel it will have a detrimental effect on the city's prosperity by dissuading visitors from venturing to the Big Apple, which

is clearly ludicrous thinking on their part. If the crime statistics themselves (twenty-four people shot dead during the first week of May alone, for example) don't deter people from visiting, nothing will.

CONVENTIONS, CONVENTIONS

The weekend of 17-18 June saw many top horror writers and artists in town for no less than two major gatherings, the second annual Horror Writers of America conference and Fred Greenberg's mammoth Great Eastern Comic Book Convention. So, as FEAR's man on the spot, I was kept away from my writing duties by numerous social engagements.

Freddy V

Events actually got underway on Friday, 16 June when most people arrived in the city and Berkley Books threw an opening party. At lunch, fellow FEAR correspondent **Stanley Wiater** rolled into town with illustrator/publisher **Steve Bisette** (see FEAR Issue 5) and they just had time to catch their breath before the fun and games began in earnest. Also on hand was British artist **Cam Kennedy**, famed for his work on *2000 AD* and currently attracting attention with his powerful work on Epic Comics' *The Light and Darkness War*. Kennedy, along with writing partner **Tom Veitch**, brother of former *Swamp Thing* writer/artist **Rick Veitch**, have successfully negotiated with Lucasfilm Ltd to revive the *Star Wars* comic, the first issue of which should appear by the end of this year.

Other Friday arrivees included **Doug Winter**, **Les Daniels**, producer/writer **Paul Sammon**, literary agent **Don Maas**, who specialises in horror, **Chet Williamson** and wife, **Gary Brandner**, cartoonist and

author **Gahan Wilson**, **Richard Laymon**, **Ellen Datlow**, *Omni* magazine's fiction editor, **Melissa Singer** of Tor Books, **Peter Straub**, **David Morrell**, artists **Charles** and **Wendy Lang**, **Joe R Lansdale** and **Charles L Grant** and wife **Kathryn Ptacek**, who, along with Berkley's ever energetic **Ginjer Buchanan**, were hosts of the night's revelry.

MAKE MINE A ZOMBIE

I had planned on making it a short visit, as Steve Bisette insisted that I participate on his early morning horror panel at the Greenberg Convention, but chances of an early night soon began to look remote, as **David Bischoff** (who recently wrote the novelisation of *The Blob*) continually refilled my glass, and **Thomas F Monteleone** informed me he had arrived with his usual convention partner - a bottle of George Dickle bourbon. Les Daniels was keen to converse about the infamy bestowed upon us as con-



tributors to Skipp and Spector edited zombie anthology *The Book of the Dead*, just published by Bantam (Les's story *The Good Parts* is one of the sickest in the anthology and comes with a high recommendation). Several copies of the anthology were circulating, so we were accused of being twisted souls not fit to be seen in public.

Just as midnight was approaching and I thought I could slip away, nocturnal scribe **Robert R McCammon** appeared out of thin air and insisted that several other twisted souls join him in the hotel bar as a tired Charlie Grant was picking up empty bottles and looking like he needed sleep. One minute I was on my way out, the next I was trapped in a gloomy hotel watering hole with Paul Samms, discussing his forthcoming book projects, which include a splatterpunk anthology. Richard Laymon, Gary Brandner and his wife, Chet Williamson, McCammon, and the always entertaining Joe Lansdale joined us. Also lurking in the vicinity were Peter Straub, David Morrell and Ellen Datlow. Yes, writers and editors love to drink . . .

But the hotel bar staff didn't seem to want to serve people beyond the witching hour and, since the staff were giving this gathering of scribes a hard time, McCammon insisted the crew venture to the infamous **Blue Bar** at the Algonquin Hotel near 42nd Street, a classic New York literary set drinking site. By this point, I knew I was in for a long night.

Or so I thought. To cut a long story short, your correspondent became separated from the group and ended up braving the subway back to Brooklyn alone.

HORROR TOO GRAPHIC?

On Saturday morning I joined Bissette and his fellow participants at the Greenberg Convention for the horror comics panel. Guest included former Epic Comics editor **Archie Goodwin** (now developing a new line of titles at D C); one of the originators of the forthcoming **Clive Barker's Hellraiser** graphic anthology book, his former partner in crime, **Dan Chichester**, who is now editing the Cenobite title and the *Nightbreed* adaptation at Epic; the irrefragable Gahan Wilson, whose macabre cartoons have enlivened many an issue of *Playboy* magazine over the years, **Cam Kennedy**, **Scott Hampton**, best known for his adaptation of Robert E Howard's *Pidgeons From Hell*, and *Tomb of Dracula* artist **Gene Colan**.

As panel discussions go

(especially first thing on a Saturday morning), it was fairly lively and grew more heated when the subject of censorship arose. Surprisingly, Gene Colan was highly critical of the current explicitness in horror comics, decrying most of the work in the field. Despite sound opinions from Bissette, Goodwin, Chichester and Wilson, Colan would not concede that it is the artist's right to determine just how far is too far in terms of explicitness. As is usually the case when censorship is discussed, no consensus was reached and instead of discussing other aspects of horror in comics the panel became log-jammed on the subject.

Although I had planned to return to the Horror Writers of America gathering for the rest of the day, unexpected comic book business arose and I found myself trapped in a hotel with 2,000 rabid comic fans, an experience which must rate as one of the most unsettling of my life. I thought being stranded in a New Jersey hotel with 600 *Star Trek* fans was bad enough, but this was definitely worse.

MISSING IN ACTION

On returning to the Warwick Hotel, the site of the HWA bash, in time for the end of the pre-awards banquet, I was met by Doug Winter, who informed me 'You're alive!' whilst on his way to the men's room. I had to wait a couple of minutes to discover why I wasn't dead and what this had to do with the convention. 'Joe Lansdale thinks you were kidnapped on 42nd Street last night,' Winter explained. Doug was only the first of many who informed me of this fact.

'Joe Lansdale thinks you're dead,' a jovial John Skipp stated while on his way out to eat.

'Phil, you're alive!' cried a clearly relieved Chet Williamson. 'Joe's convinced you were raped and butchered in Times Square last night.'

This went on for the next hour until I felt like Lazarus, freshly risen. It seems the avuncular Lansdale who, it should be noted, is from rural Texas, is worried by big city life and has been reading too many *Friday the 13th* posters. Joe saw me in the flesh following the banquet and was so shocked he nearly dropped his award for best short story. Thanks, Joe, my wife appreciates your concern . . .



Are we witnessing the beginning of a Clive Barker backlash? Our first letter this month certainly makes a strong case for one, most specifically in the pages of FEAR. What do you think? If you have a demon to exorcise, then write to RAISING THE DEAD, FEAR, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.

SICK OF FANCY

Dear FEAR

This letter is anonymous for a variety of reasons. I doubt that your editorial policy allows you to print such letters but that does not concern me. I would, however, like to raise the following points: When is the **Clive Barker** backlash going to start? I have absolutely nothing against the man; in fact, having met him, he seems like a thoroughly decent chap. But I am becoming rather disappointed with the lack of criticism of his work in the various organs which concern themselves with the horror/fantasy genre, **FEAR** included.

This, I suspect, is due to the fact that most of these publications are principally *fanzines*; nothing wrong with that, of course, but it does mean that most articles about Clive Barker are sympathetic at the very least, and downright *sycophantic* at their worst.

The issue of *Skeleton Crew* dedicated to Mr Barker would have been much better if there had been one article offering an unbiased assessment of his work.

Regarding **FEAR**, the worst offender of this sickening Barker-worship is the managing editor, Mr Gilbert. His review of *Cabal* was nauseatingly fawning. Furthermore, he seems unwilling to allow opinions which differ from his own to appear in the pages of **FEAR**; not, at least, without adding his own two-penn'orth.

I refer, as you may have guessed, to the review of *Hellbound: Hellraiser II* in Issue 7. Mark Salisbury writes a fairly objective (and, in my opinion, accurate) review of the film. Mr Gilbert, however, presumably unable to allow any-

one to write anything against his idol, tacks on a detailed list of the cuts made in the original version and ends by stating that they have made the film into a 'stronger movie'.

Another example of this puerile ingratitude was also in Issue 7. Barker's forthcoming novel, to be published later this year, is described as 'the best thing he has ever written'. This description is accredited to 'those who have read it', but *who* are these people and should we trust their opinions; if they include the aforementioned Mr Gilbert then I sincerely doubt it!

I realise that the preceding paragraphs read like a personal attack on Mr Gilbert; this is certainly not my intention. As managing editor, however, I feel that it is not unreasonable to expect a degree of neutrality. I suspect that if he were less of a *fan* and more of an editor, things might improve. A leaf taken from T E D Klein's book might prove beneficial.

If the letter from Dave Brown of Basildon in Issue 7 is typical of the letters you receive then you can feel quite entitled to throw this directly into the rubbish bin and continue to publish the barrage of subservient articles which have appeared in your magazine to date.

On the same point, are the letters which you print *really* typical of those you receive? If so, then I'm afraid that **FEAR** may well degenerate into a *Fangoria* clone. I would not expect to see academic letters such as those that appear in *Crypt of Cthulhu*, but I'm sure a happy medium could be struck. If I see one more letter like: 'Dear **FEAR**, I am a spotty, emotionally

THE BRAM STOKER AWARDS

Best Novel

Silence of the Lambs Thomas Harris

Best Novella

Orange is For Anguish, Blue For Insanity David Morell

Best Short Story Collection

The Collected Stories of Charles Beaumont Edited by Roger Anker

Best First Novel

The Suiting Kelly Wild

Best Short Story

The Night They Missed the Horror Show Joe Lansdale (from *Silver Scream*)

Lifetime Achievement Awards

Ray Bradbury, R Chetwyn Hayes

Following the awards it was time for the Tor Books party, but that's another story . . .

(Thanks to Charles L Grant, Kathy Ptacek and the HWA for entertainment, information and a hangover).

retarded teenager who wants to work in the prosthetics industry' then I shall scream (and scream!).

Two more complaints: firstly, how about publishing the results of your reader survey? I would be most interested to see this. If ninety per cent of your readers are spotty, emotionally retarded teenagers whose bedroom walls are plastered with posters of Pinhead then I will concede that my criticisms are unwarranted. Secondly, what happened to your gossip column?

It would be hypocritical of me if I were not to let you know that there are aspects of FEAR which I enjoy and that I will continue to purchase copies providing that it does not degenerate in the manner indicated above. I like the book reviews and have found them to be generally reliable (except for Mr Gilbert's contributions, of course!). The articles about authors are to be commended. The fiction is also quite good and I was pleased to note that one can now read the text easily.

So, in summary, I implore you to assume a less biased attitude to the fantasy, horror and science fiction genres. Try and reduce the gore/splatter content; leave it to the long-established magazines that specialise in this area. Finally, if Mr Gilbert cannot control his toadying then I respectfully suggest that he should be replaced forthwith.
'CD Ward'

John Gilbert replies:

The results of the FEAR reader survey were not originally intended for public consumption, not for any sinister reason but because we felt that our readers would prefer us to devote our limited space to horror, fanstasy and SF news rather than to news about themselves. However, since you ask, the readership appears predominantly to be made up of professional males aged between 18 and 30. Whether or not they are spotty and emotionally retarded is a secret that they and their mothers share.

In response to your point about letters, I would question how you arrive at a definition of a 'typical' letter. We regard enquiries from people interested in embarking on a career in prosthetics as entirely legitimate and an accurate reflection of the market that FEAR is aimed at. If other readers want to submit academic treatises we shall be glad to print them as well, space permitting.

The gossip column still exists in the shape of an irregular contribution from Dr Jack (see Issue 8). Jack is very close to the industry, closer indeed than The Spook (aka John Gilbert) could hope to be. Consequently, I am both surprised and touched that you mourn The Spook's demise.

Finally, I throw open the floor for discussion on the other observations made in your letter and make no comment but to point out that at least I add my name to my opinions. If readers would like me to stop running reviews, strip out personal comments from our correspondents and not list, or pass judgement on, the cuts in a

movie then please tell me and I'll move on to another magazine.

RATINGS WAR

Dear FEAR

Your notice about the syndicated *Twilight Zone* series in the July issue contains a number of very real errors of fact.

1. The CBS Network did not cancel the revival of TZ. For one thing, it didn't produce it. TZ3 was produced by CBS International and MGM/UA, in affiliation with London Films and Atlantis Films. The network had nothing to do with it.

2. Your assertion that the 'cancellation' came about 'due to low ratings' is also utterly untrue. First it was not cancelled. From the first day I and others were hired onto the show, it was made clear that MGM/UA would finance thirty new episodes and only thirty in order to fill out the syndication package (which would then total ninety-four episodes). Under no conditions would they produce more. Their reasoning (faulty as it is) was that to produce more episodes would just cost more in the short term, when they could be reaping profits the sooner they could get the package out into syndication. Why spend more money when they had what they wanted?

And that's exactly what they did.

3. In point of fact, TZ3 does not have low ratings. It is, instead, very successful. The show has jumped from a 4.5 rating to a 6 rating (an extremely respectable figure for a syndicated show) during the current cycle of reruns, a jump so substantial that MGM/UA has upgraded the cost to advertisers for commercials during the episodes. The weekly Los Angeles rebroadcast on Friday nights gets twice the ratings of the *Pat Sajak Show*, CBS's highly-touted talk show. It continues to score in the top ten syndicated dramatic series.

If you wish to examine the ratings books to verify this, I will be more than happy to provide them. Until then, a simple correction on your part will more than suffice.

J Michael Straczynski, Story Editor, The Twilight Zone, California

Hey, now wait a minute. Our feature was clearly talking about the original TZ airings, not reruns. We also said that TZ was made by MGM/UA, not the CBS Network, although I'm sure the network has something to say about what it screens. Philip Nutman, as usual, obtained his information from good sources, who may not have been so close to the project as you were, but we are nevertheless sad to see that no more episodes of this excellent anthology series are planned.

DISAPPEARING SEQUELS

Dear FEAR

Could you give me information on the following movies:

Friday the 13th: Part VIII (Jason in New York)

Hallowe'en IV

Hallowe'en V

Bladerunner II

Psycho IV

Creepshow III

Alun Pearson, Kilmarnock, Scotland

PS: Will you be doing a special on the *Friday the 13th* movies?

Right, in order:

1 See our *American Nightmares* section

2 Likely to be seen in the UK next year

3 In production 4, *Bladerunner II* is in limbo but could be made at Pinewood on a certain big set

5 We didn't realise that Mr Perkins was such a sucker for punishment

6 King's anthology may become a television series, more news soon

PS: Don't make that sort of suggestion near the editor.

INTERVIEWS WITH THE VAMPIRE

Dear FEAR

A number of years back I read the novel *Interview with the Vampire* by Anne Rice, which I thought was an excellent book. It was the followed by *The Vampire Lestat* and *Queen of the Damned*. Approximately two years ago, Jonathan King on Entertainment USA announced that the film of the first book was going to be released. Where is it? And, if it is going to be released, are sequels going to be created as well?
Mark Matheson, Aberdeen

Well, Mark, the movie has been on the cards for some time but as yet no pro-

duction details are available. The same goes for possible sequels. The books are, however, being turned into comic books - more on those in later issues - and we'll be interviewing Anne just as soon as her house has been renovated.

ART ATTACK

Dear FEAR

FEAR is an excellent magazine, the only fault I can find is your front cover illustration. (Being a bit of an artist myself I thought I would send you an example of my own work). Oliver Frey may be very competent at what he does, but I cannot say that I'm too impressed. Maybe you should run a competition for a front cover.

What I would like to see are interviews with top illustrators such as Jim Burns, Chris Achilleos, Rodney Mathews etc, as many of them fall under the category of SF/fantasy.

Also very pleased to see you are monthly and cheaper. Keep up the good work.

Paul Rafferty, Worksop

Art's such a subjective area isn't it? Actually, we thought Oliver's illustrations were rather good. Would anyone like to offer him some words of consolation? He's just gone and cut his ear off.



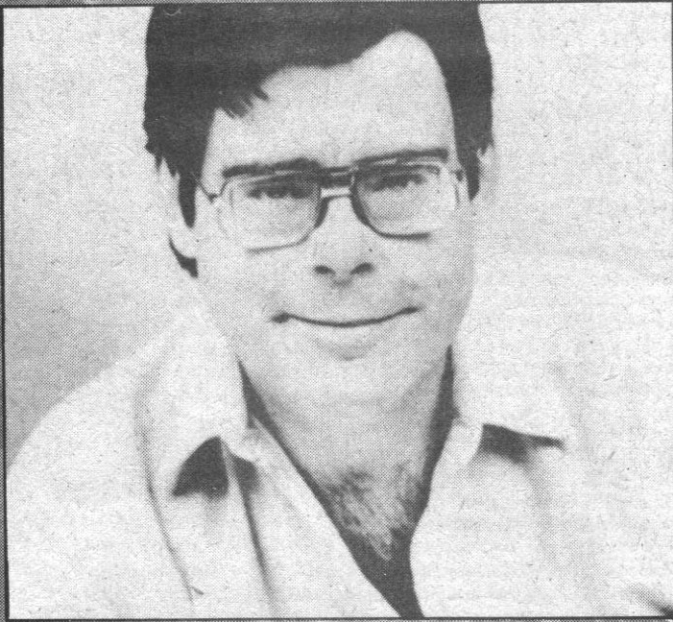
It's him again! Mr Rafferty of Worksop adds to the mountain of Freddy ephemera



FEAR

FEAR ISSUE No. 10 ON SALE September 21

FEAR PROUDLY PRESENTS
STEPHEN KING'S



THE DARK HALF

- IF YOU wanna be the first to read it, then next month's FEAR is a must! We've got an exclusive extract from the book all King fans are talking about. Also . . . A FEARful surprise for all his fans.
- PRIME EVIL: The short story competition is launched. FEAR/Transworld look for a new fantasy/horror superstar in one of the biggest short story competitions ever run. We interview Prime Evil editor and Panel of Judges member Douglas E Winter, give you some guidelines for the competition and tell you how to enter.
- THE ABYSS, James Cameron's ultimate underwater movie, is about to rise from the ocean and into the cinemas. We talk to the top guns.
- TANITH LEE, the renowned lady of dark and sensual fantasy, reveals more about her most exotic creations.
- ELVIRA, America's Mistress of the Dark, holds forth on the state of the horror movie industry, her new film, and her 'two biggest assets'. Need we say more . . . ?

AND THERE'S MORE . . .

- All our usual up-to-the-press previews, transatlantic news, and another massive anthology of fiction.

THE NEXT ISSUE

Meet fantasy in the flesh . . .



FEARFUL WINNERS

Did you enter one of FEAR's fabulous competitions in July? Yes? Then read on and find out who won, even if you didn't. (Never let it be said that we're not good sadists.)

WIZARD SQUARED COMPETITION

The six brainy readers who knew that the name of the wizard who died and thus caused all the problems in *Equal Rites* was **Drum Billet** each receive a copy of *Sourcery*, Terry Pratchett's hilarious new novel. They also receive a special *Sourcery* and *Pyramids* mug and a fabulous luggage box. The winners are: Allan Easby, Billingham, Cleveland; K McVeigh, Milnthorpe, Cumbria; Steve Lamb, Southsea, Hants; Gareth Wilson from Dronfield Woodhouse, Sheffield; Richard Steele, also from Sheffield and Y Taylor from Birkenhead, Merseyside.

PINHEAD POW-WOW COMPETITION

Six seven-foot standees and six glow-in-the-dark T-shirts go to those six lucky people (out of the hundreds who entered this competition) who told us that Barbie Wilde plays the female Cenobite in *Hellraiser II*. The winners are: Dominic Handley, Newton-Le-Willows, North Yorkshire; Maria Hoy, Penhill, Wiltshire; Paul Rose, Shipley, West Yorkshire; David John Hopkins, Wolverhampton; Mak Harr, North Shields, Tyne and Wear; and Sarah Wilmot from Cowplain, Hants.

HOT WAX COMPETITION

The six readers who knew that Bob Keen supplied the special effects for the film *Waxwork* each receive a copy of the video and a special commemorative candle. They are: R McColl, Glenrothes, Fife; A Davies, Rumney, Cardiff; Simon Cordell, Dunstable, Bedfordshire; Julian T Roberts, Preston Wynne, Hereford; M A Robertson, Ilford, Essex; and Selva Anandasivum from Potters Bar, Herts.



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executive producer DAC COSCARELLI produced by ROBERTO A. QUEZADA written and directed by DON COSCARELLI

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