

THE HORROR SHOW

An Adventure In Terror

HARRY O. MORRIS

- An In-depth Interview
- A Checklist of His Work
- A Pull-Out Poster!

FICTION

- Bentley Little
- Benjamin T. Gibson
- Ardath Mayhar
- Darrell Schweitzer



The Horror Show

An Adventure In Terror

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The Horror Show.

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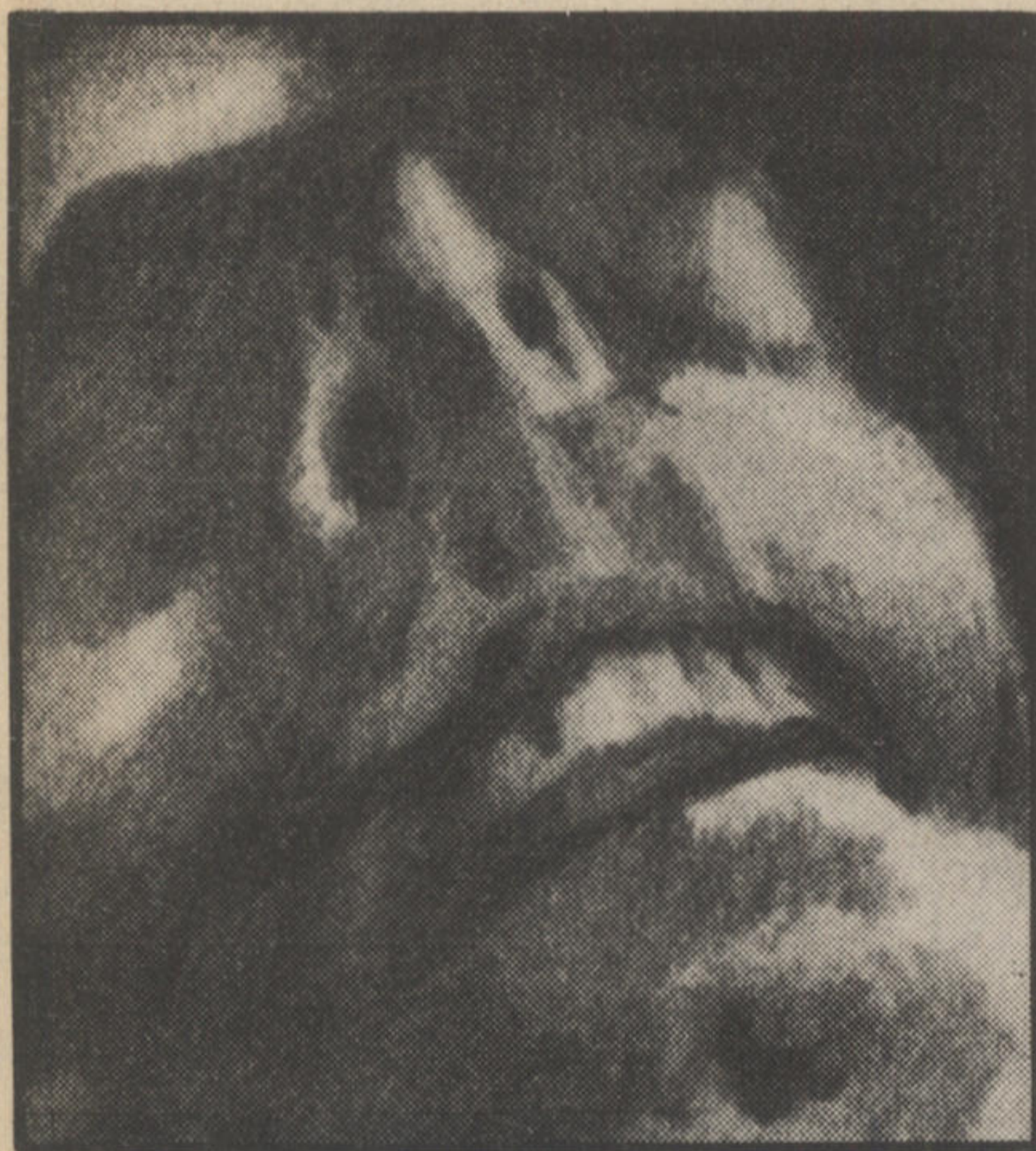
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HELLNOTES

DEAR FRIENDS:

I nearly shot my foot off last issue. You may have noticed. It would be nice if I wouldn't do these things in public, but I think I must have a masochistic side to me. The best I can do now is to try to patch things back together again, and see if they still work.

The goof? At the end of the *Nightmares* column I added a short section titled "Myths That Kill," and proceeded to tell you how important it is to subscribe to a magazine instead of buying it off the stands. The only problem was that somewhere in the process I dropped a line and--to quote--it came out like this: "The best way to support *The Horror Show* is not to take out a subscription."

A few friends, who understand the business end of running a magazine, got quite a chuckle out of that. And I suspect if it had been someone else instead of me, I might have had a good laugh out of it myself. But it was me. And I still smart a bit from the embarrassment and the potential harm from that major slip.

Life goes on, however.

So let me try again. Maybe I'll get it right this time.

If you picked this issue up from a newsstand or a grocery store or a bookstore, and it's your first time as a reader, then welcome to the family. *The Horror Show* is a small, very personal magazine, published four times a year, and exclusively dedicated to the contemporary horror genre. I sincerely hope you'll enjoy what you discover in these pages and remain a long-time reader. The more readers we have the better the magazine we're able to offer.

Readership grows through newsstand sales and through direct subscription sales. Those are the two primary avenues in which a publisher can hope to build a following. There are, of course, lots of little tricks of the trade that fall under each of these headings. That's why magazines run contests, or sign on with Publisher's Clearing House, or why when you open a magazine twenty or thirty blow cards fall out. We're always looking for a way to draw new readers into the magazine, with the hope that they'll enjoy what they find and stay on as devoted readers for many years to come.

The *ideal* reader is someone who discovers *The Horror Show* on the stands, loves it, sends in a subscription, then starts telling friends about the magazine. But too often, readers will come across an issue of *The Horror Show*, buy it, read it, love it, and then wait for the next issue to hit the stands. They pay more that way. Subscriptions are always cheaper than newsstand sales, because the sale is a direct line from the publisher to the reader. No distributors. No wholesalers. No retailers. Without these distribution networks, the magazine loses a very fundamental and valuable means of reaching new readers (and the distributors, the wholesalers, the retailers earn their keep, so please don't mistake my point here). However, the bottom line for a publisher trying to make it is always subscriptions.

If you like what you find in this issue, or if you've read past issues and you're still coming back to *The Horror Show* for more, then please give some serious thought to a subscription. A one-year subscription is only \$14.00. And if you'd like to sign on for an even longer stint, the price just keeps getting cheaper and cheaper.

Whatever you decide to do, I'd like you to know how much I ap-

preciate the fact that you're with us this issue. I hope you find it an enjoyable adventure that you'll look forward to again and again.

HARRY O. MORRIS

This is a special issue, dedicated to the work of our cover artist, Harry O. Morris. You'll find a wonderful interview with Harry, along with a checklist of his work, and as an extra bonus: a pull-out poster in the middle. Harry has been with *The Horror Show* for a year now, doing the front covers, and he's been a joy to work with. He's dedicated to his craft, and extremely professional in the way he works with the magazine. Both of these qualities were especially evident in the process of putting together this issue. Harry had to come through several times in the last minutes as I kept throwing new ideas and requests at him. He never batted an eye, just kept delivering time and again.

Hope you're proud of this one, Harry. You earned it.

WORLD FANTASY AWARD

The World Fantasy Convention was held in London this year. I didn't have a chance to attend (the truth be known: I couldn't come anywhere close to being able to afford to attend), and know of only a handful of people who did finally end up attending. As a result, I'm still in the dark about who won what. Hopefully, before this issue goes to press, I'll have some final word on that. Look for it in the *Nightmares* column.

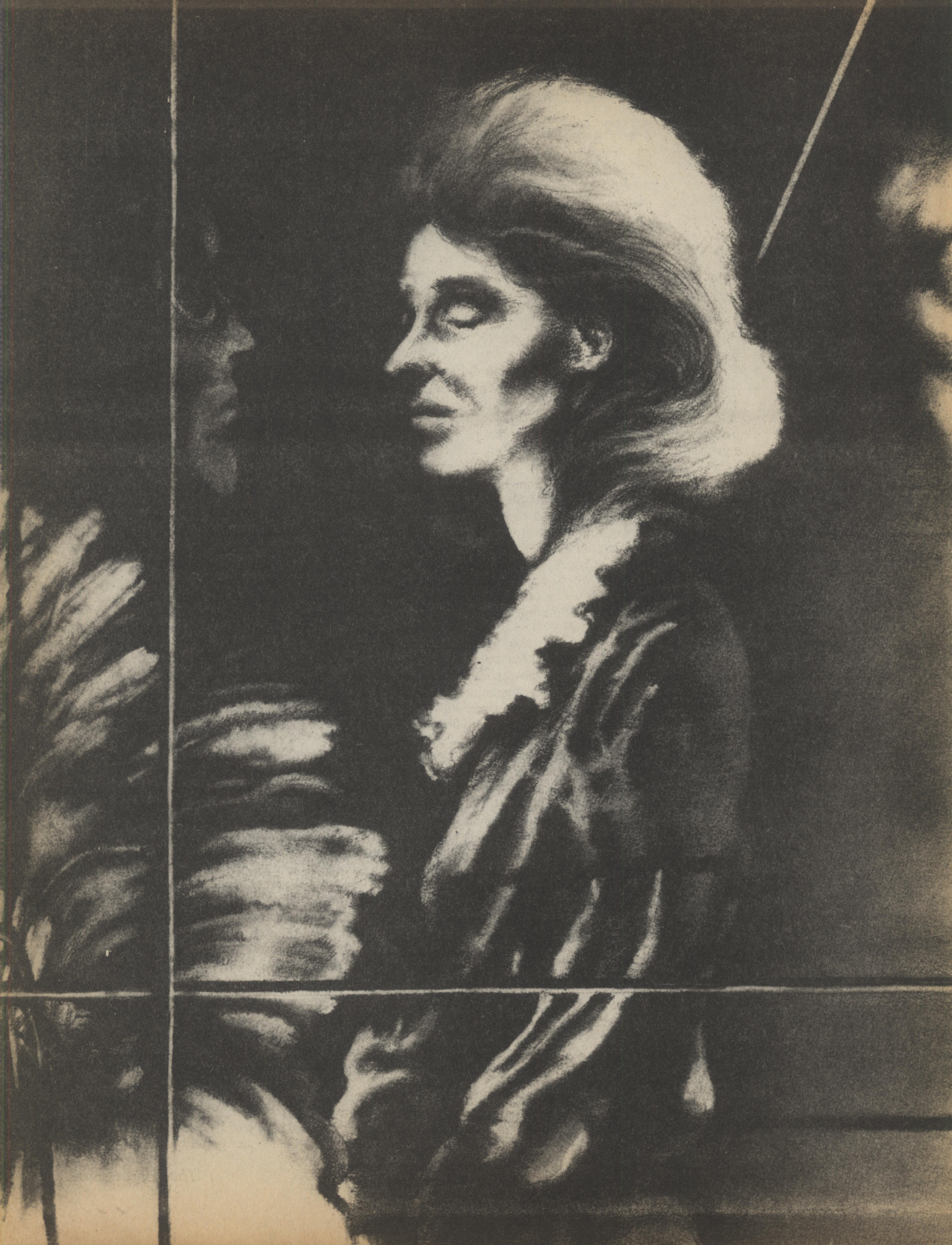
There is an aside, however. Again, I don't have any official word, but the rumor has it that *The Horror Show* pulled an award this year. That's nice to hear, mostly because it means this is a magazine that has begun to receive some respect and some notice from its peers, and from the professionals. It's also nice to hear because it gives me an opportunity to thank some of the talent that appears regularly here. These are all good folks who contribute because they believe in the magazine, in the genre, and are willing to forgo becoming millionaires to participate in what they believe in: Michael Arthur Betts, William J. Grabowski, G.L. Raiser, Rodger Gerberding, Alfred Klosterman, Harry O. Morris, A.R. Morlan, and Roger S. Seitzinger. Thank you all for your generous support and your marvelous talents.

COMING UP

Next issue we have a first for *The Horror Show*. Our featured writer is Kathryn Ptacek, who not only has written a number of novels but also served as editor for *Women of Darkness*, a collection of short horror stories written by some of today's top women writers. She'll be sharing a new short story with you, as well as an article focusing on the status of women writers in today's horror field. You won't want to miss this one.

Until then, remember: *better weird than plastic!*





WE ARE THE DEAD

DARRELL SCHWEITZER

At times
it seemed to him that,
for all her brilliance,
she was not a real
person at all,
but a reflection
of himself;
and his thoughts
were hers
and her thoughts
were his,
with all the chasms
of age and gender and
social background
between them
completely covered
over.

What Mrs. Dwyer and he had in common from the beginning, Jerry decided, was that they were both of indeterminate age.

He prided himself on this sort of conclusion. He was always the observer, the analyzer, the one who stood outside of his own life and looked in.

There were a lot of things he knew about himself: that at twenty-two he could still be taken for seventeen. He was smooth-faced and slender and lacked that assertiveness most people had by his age. He was still very much the adolescent and he knew it, and it was somehow less painful to know it. He was away from home for the first time, already making his mark as a scholar, completing his Ph.D program at an accelerated pace, with articles to his credit already and his notebooks full of fragments of what was to be his book, *The Byzantine Genesis*.

So he needed a quiet place to stay, so he showed up on Mrs. Dwyer's doorstep with a copy of the university newspaper in his hand.

"Um ... I've come to ask about the room you have for rent."

The old lady stood there for a moment, peering out through the half-opened door. He thought she was going to slam it in his face.

"If it's already taken, I'll--"

But her reply startled him.

"You'll do."

"I'll what?"

She opened the door all the way and retreated into the house. He followed, dubiously, closing the door behind himself.

His first impression of this woman was that she was enormously old, and he joked to himself, silently, that here was someone who had known Justinian and Theodora as contemporaries, or at the very least Leo the Third.

She walked unsteadily, with a slight stoop, and her hands were covered with liver spots.

It was very much an old person's house, the inside more a matter of years' long accretion than design, dark, the curtains drawn, antique furniture not always in the best repair. The lamps were electric, but modeled after 19th century kerosene ones, their glass shells almost black with dust. Lace seemed to be every-where. Faded photographs stared at him from darkened walls. Great heaps of worn and tattered books leaned on shelves, or just piled on surfaces. Here and there was a flash of color: flowers in a vase, some silver

knickknack, or a jade statuette. In a quick glance around the downstairs parlor, he made out a framed medallion of a dignitary who could well have George V or the Kaiser, and few more modern pieces here and there -- though for this place modern meant Art Deco, 1920s at the latest.

And he noticed that faint odor of age which has nothing to do with untidiness or uncleanness. When he was five, he had been lifted up to give his great-grandmother a kiss, and she had smelled a little bit like candlewax and a little bit like, as he had imagined it for years afterward, a mummy. That same, unmistakable smell was here, in Mrs. Dwyer's house.

She turned to him again and said the surprising thing over again.

"You'll do."

"I don't understand."

"You're about the same age as my son, and you look a little like him too. That's fine." She smiled gently.

He didn't know what to say. It was one of those awkward social situations he knew about analytically, but had no idea how to handle now that he was actually in it. He felt an intense urge to just run away and be done with it. But sheer embarrassment kept him where he was, and silent.

She grabbed him by the arm and dragged him out of the parlor, into a hallway, toward a flight of stairs. Her grip was surprisingly strong.

"Come on," she whispered in an amused, conspiratorial tone. "Let me take you upstairs."

Light flooded the stairs from a skylight. He noted, as they went up, the sealed off stubs of gas-jets in the walls. He noted, too, that here Mrs. Dwyer seemed much younger, maybe in her upper fifties. She climbed the stairs quickly, without any difficulty.

"Is this your first time away from your family?"

He stopped halfway up the stairs, not sure what to say.

At the top, she turned around and grinned broadly. "Oh, come on, young man. I won't bite." She laughed. Somehow, at that instant, he trusted her completely, as if she'd just cast a spell or broken one.

"Well, it's more that my family moved away from me," he said. "My Dad got transferred to New Mexico, and I needed to stay behind at the university, so here I am." He

shrugged and joined her on the second floor landing, then followed her up another flight.

The room she showed him ran the whole length of one side of the house on the third floor. It was spacious and well-lit, and modestly furnished with a bed, a writing desk, two chairs, and a stand-up closet. It was more than enough for his needs, he realized, almost luxurious by the standards of what he had been expecting, and the price was so unbelievably low he was astonished the place wasn't as crammed as an opium den with impoverished undergraduates.

"This was my son's room," Mrs. Dwyer said. "I think he'd like you to stay here."

Again the acute embarrassment. She seemed to see his difficulty.

"My son has gone away," she said.

And he felt, once more, complete trust, and gratitude for having been spared the difficulty of phrasing a tactful inquiry.

That was how he came to stay with Mrs. Dwyer. The same evening he got a great deal of work done, sitting among the suitcases and boxes he'd had brought over by cab. He was up very late, poring over texts of degenerate medieval Greek, parting spiderwebs of rhetoric until he came to a scene which had fired his imagination so many years before when he'd first read Bury's *Later Roman Empire*, in which the soldiers of the Christian emperor of the East, at the height of their death-struggle with the Persian foe, took a town and burst in upon the Abomination of Desolation itself -- a blasphemous idol of the mad Persian king surrounded by symbolic figures of the sun and moon and stars all bowing at his feet in adoration. Jerry imagined the soldiers standing there, in shocked, silent awe, and even the hero-emperor Heraclius speechless before the thing. It was one of those moments when time seems to stop.

He sat in a reverie, the turgidity of the ancient text forgotten. History had always had this vividness for him, a culmination of lives rather than dry names and dates, more real than the world outside at times, as if the past

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DARRELL SCHWEITZER has appeared before in *The Horror Show*, his last story, "The Young Man Who Did Not Know His Father," ran in the Spring '88 issue. More recently, his story "The Man Who Wasn't Nice To Pumpkin Head Dolls" ran in the December '88 issue of *Twilight Zone Magazine*. Darrell also serves as co-editor for the revived pulp magazine, *Weird Tales*, which long ago achieved pulp classic status.

were an open door only waiting for him to step through forever.

Then he heard a noise. He thought at first that it was a footstep outside his room. Something shuffled, scraped. A murmur came from below, as if Mrs. Dwyer were talking to someone -- on the telephone perhaps? -- in hushed tones.

He went to the door, opened it, and gazed down the now darkened stairwell. He listened for several minutes more and heard only the faint ticking of the grandfather clock downstairs in the parlor. Once a police car went by outside, rattling softly on the cobblestones, the rotating red of its roof-light flickering through the house.

He glanced at his watch, saw that it was part four in the morning, and went to bed.

It was indeed strange lying in an unfamiliar room in a strange house, far from his family for the first time in his life. Tired as he was, he couldn't sleep immediately, but stared at the ceiling and the faint shape of the window at the far end of his room, listening for that sound again, vaguely afraid the place might be crumbling or riddled with rat-tunnels.

He reached out and touched the wall. It seemed solid enough.

When he did sleep, he dreamt that he followed the sound downstairs into the parlor and somehow there were hundreds of people surrounding him in the darkness, a shadow here, a pale face glimpsed for an instant in the periphery of his vision. He turned, again and again, and they remained in the periphery, whispering in medieval Greek. They followed him along one hallway and then another, turning, turning as in the labyrinth of Daedalus, until at last he came to a huge room filled with ticking clocks and old pictures and crumbling books; and others cried out and covered their faces; but Jerry gazed straight ahead, guileless as a child at the idol that stood before the canopied bed, the huge, stone image of the Persian king who somehow looked like Mrs. Dwyer and spoke to him in a voice that was not hers, but deep, almost thunderous, yet muted as a distant wind in a mountain pass.

"We are the dead," it said.

He awoke, sweat-soaked for all the room was cold, merely puzzled rather than afraid. The dream had not frightened him. He had been no more than an observer, like camera eye riding on the shoulder of the main character.

He wasn't rested, but the clock told him he had a class in two hours. So he got up, showered, dressed, and stumbled downstairs.

Mrs. Dwyer had breakfast waiting for him.

"Oh, you needn't bother yourself," she

said, heaping pancakes and eggs on his plate. "I like having someone to cook for. You don't mind, do you?"

"No," he said.

"You see, I've gotten into the habit, and now that my son has gone away and ... well, you understand."

"Yes, I understand," he said meekly, for all that he didn't understand at all. There was, as a professional historian would put it, something wrong with the chronology. But there was nothing to be done now except to humor her.

"I dreamed about my son last night," she said suddenly. "It was amazingly real. Like he was right here with me."

All Jerry could say was, "Oh," and an awkward silence followed.

But as he ate she became quite talkative, and spoke of places she had been and famous people she'd either glimpsed from afar or actually met. There were a lot of them, places and people. She vaguely alluded to "the old country," and recalled how, when she was a child, her mother had taught her to be wary of Gypsies, "because they kidnap children, blind them, and put them out to beg. But that's not true. I traveled with the king of the Gypsies once. He looked into his crystal and saw my future clearly. But he wouldn't tell me what it was. He only said I was very, very special."

Perhaps it was obvious that he didn't quite believe her, because as soon as he was done eating she led him into the parlor -- leaving the dishes behind on the table, shushing him when he made to clear them away -- and there, with the lights on and the curtains drawn, layer upon layer of her past was revealed. He saw movie and theater posters from the flapper era, most of them framed, some hanging, some just stacked against the walls. There was even a photograph of Noel Coward signed, "To Vanessa, darling." The regal-looking medallion he had seen the previous day was indeed George the Fifth. Lying in an open desk drawer was a Victorian tintype in an oval frame, of a young man who did resemble him slightly, standing uncomfortably before the camera with his hand stuck in his waistcoat in the familiar Napoleonic pose.

The chronology made less sense than ever. It was a problem, a puzzle to be worked out in his detached mind.

He examined the books. Most were very old, many in calfskin with boards falling off, but others were fashionable novels from the '20s -- Ellen Glasgow and Michael Arlen, and a whole shelf of Joseph Hergesheimer -- accompanied by, surprisingly, a City Lights paperback of Allen Ginsburg's *Howl*.

There were piles of sheet music. Mrs. Dwyer started leafing through them.

"I used to sing these. I was the rage in

New York."

It occurred to him for the first time that she might have once been genuinely famous, now retired in obscurity. But before he could ask her, she winked and said, "I used a different name in those day, dearie."

He remembered his class.

"Will you be back for lunch?"

After some hesitation, he said, "Yes."

It was so easy to go on like that. His life had always followed a certain pattern, which had been broken when his parents moved away. No there was a similar one. He followed. It was incredibly easy, for all some part of his mind rattled clichés at him: *Get a life. Grow up. Get out into the world on your own.*

It wasn't good for him, he knew. He was like a smoker taking just one more puff before quitting.

Easy.

Mrs. Dwyer lived on one of the oldest streets in Philadelphia, where the 20th century had touched but lightly, and the narrow pavement was still cobblestoned and the house fronts were Colonial. It was only fifteen minutes from the university by subway. So he came home for lunch most days. When Mrs. Dwyer knew he'd be a long time in the library, she would pack something for him. She also did his laundry and made his bed, cooked his breakfast every morning, and, when autumn came and the weather grew harsh, she always saw him off, pattering with his scarf to make sure he was wrapped up properly.

So easy. He let her do it. He told himself he was humoring her, that it was for her -- he was letting her exercise her maternal instincts one last time.

Easy.

His world was there, in that little house on a back street, when it wasn't in his books and on the plains of Asia Minor as Heraclius drove the Persians into the dust. The other students were faces in a corridor, voices in the classroom. He couldn't remember their names. What mattered was that the faculty regarded him as the most brilliant and devoted novice historian they'd ever seen. *The Byzantine Genesis* progressed.

("But you should get out more," his graduate advisor said once, turning from matters strictly academic, "or you'll turn into something of a Byzantine icon yourself." Jerry shrugged. "I'm not joking," the man said.)

It astonished him that Mrs. Dwyer understood his work and even discussed it with him. She was certainly the only non-academic person he had ever met who knew who George of Pisidia was, much less had actually read some of the *Heracliad* and ac-

tually had her own theories of what the more obscure parts were about.

Again, it didn't make sense. She might have been an actress once, or a singer, or some sort of social gadfly, but social gadflies are not supposed to read Byzantine Greek. At times it seemed to him that, for all her brilliance, she was not a real person at all, but a reflection of himself; and his thoughts were hers and her thoughts were his, with all the chasms of age and gender and social background between them completely covered over.

But then, one afternoon in early December, as they sat side-by-side on the sofa sipping tea, she leaned over, put her hand gently on his wrist, and said, "Jerry, there is something I have to tell you. It's about my son."

She hadn't mentioned her son in over a month. Now she spoke with real urgency.

**Something answered
her,
its reply
a slur of gibberish
at first,
almost a mewling sound,
and the thought came to
him, Jesus God,
has she got
some sort of animal
in there?**

The adolescent fright returned. Jerry put his teacup down on the coffee table and said nothing at all.

"It's my son's birthday soon. He always loved his birthdays."

With a kind of desperate courage, he managed to ask, "What happened to your son, Mrs. D? Is he ... dead?"

"No. It isn't like that. I think he changed. He wasn't my boy anymore, after a while. I suppose you could say that I sent him away, without really wanting to."

"Well, where *is* he?" Jerry's heart was racing. He sat rigid, staring directly forward, at the coffee table, at the curtained window. For an instant he had a vision of Mrs. Dwyer's son as severely retarded or hideously deformed, raised here in complete isolation until he got too big to manage --

"Perhaps, somehow, I forgot him." The terrible silence returned. It seemed like an eternity before she finally said, "I've told you too much. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have."

He worked late that night, but could get little done. His mind returned again and again to Mrs. Dwyer and her mysterious offspring, who, he was no half-convinced, was some sort of lunatic or escaped murderer who was likely to show up on his birthday and carve the two of them into dog food with a meat cleaver. He was very close to packing his bags just then, and slipping out into the night, never to be seen by Mrs. Dwyer or her son again.

But he couldn't. He told himself it was because it would hurt Mrs. Dwyer.

He nodded off at his desk, then woke at the sound of something in the corridor outside. At first he thought it was breathing, someone gasping, out of breath, just outside the door. No, the wind. Then footsteps, definitely footsteps, tap, tapping down the stairs in the darkness.

He considered that this might be some kind of lucid dream, but didn't really believe that. He felt the cold floor beneath his stockinged feet, the draft from under the door. He heard the house creaking against the winter wind.

He slipped out, and down the stairs as quietly as he could and stood outside her bedroom door.

Mrs. Dwyer seemed to be sobbing, pleading with someone. He couldn't make out a word. Something answered her, its reply a slur of gibberish at first, almost a mewling sound, and the thought came to him, *Jesus God, has she got some sort of animal in there?*

Glass shattered. Something heavy crashed to the floor.

And the other voice spoke, more like a string-pull doll than something alive, "*Ma ... ma ... ma ... ma ... ma ...*"

He closed his hand on the doorknob.

The voice changed, faded into a whisper, then rose, and became distinctly his *own* voice, like a tape-recording of himself, babbling on about past times and events he did not remember.

Something else fell.

Jerry burst into the bedroom. Mrs. Dwyer screamed and was suddenly in his arms, her nightgown rustling, her cold thin arms clinging.

He struggled partially free and flicked on the light switch.

The two of them were alone in the room.

"Oh," Mrs. Dwyer sobbed. Merely that. "Oh."

Jerry looked around, over her shoulder. It was the first time he had ever seen the inside

of her bedroom. He felt like a trespasser.

The room was like the rest of the house wildly exaggerated. The bed was a four-poster with a dusty golden canopy. Three stand-up closets stood around it, one draped with a feather boa. The doors were covered with prints and posters of Broadway shows from long ago, and there were even crossed scimitars and a boar's head over the fireplace, the boar rather the worse for wear.

The clutter on the surfaces was awesome, like the inside of the most jammed, bizarre antique shop he had ever seen.

What surprised him more were the occult objects -- a statuette of an Egyptian god, a metal hand with astrological disks on the fingertips, and even -- signed to "Anna of the Light" -- a photo of Aleister Crowley in magician's garb, with 666 written across his forehead.

Jerry gently led Mrs. Dwyer around the room, to reassure her, and himself, that there was no one hiding anywhere.

The source of the crashing sounds was obvious enough. A glass-fronted cabinet lay smashed across the edge of a trunk, its contents -- antique china, odd Oriental figurines, porcelains dolls, silver -- spilled over the floor and mostly broken.

He let go of Mrs. Dwyer. She sat on the edge of her bed, her hands over her mouth as if she were a bad child who had said too much. She stared at him with wide eyes.

He righted the cabinet. It was so heavy he could barely lift it, even with the contents dumped out.

"You've got to tell me what is going on," he said.

"I wish I could. But you'd just think me a batty old woman."

"Please ... was it your son?"

"No, it was a dream."

"Dreams don't knock over furniture."

"Maybe mine do." She got up and nudged him toward the door. "Now scoot. Upstairs. Everything will be better in the morning."

"Don't you want me to help you clean this up?"

"Scoot."

He left reluctantly, bewildered, more than a little afraid of her -- and for himself.

He got no sleep at all that night, but lay in bed with the light on, listening to Mrs. Dwyer sweeping up the broken china downstairs, and then, later, to the silence of the house, to the ticking of the clock in the first floor parlor, to the faint rattling of the pipes, to the wood creaking as the house settled. The wind had died. There was nothing more.

That morning, they gazed at each other bleary-eyed over breakfast. Neither said a word.

When the dishes were cleared away, she said suddenly, "I have to go out. I won't be back till this afternoon."

He was too numb to be suspicious. He saw the opportunity and took it.

As soon as she was gone, he started searching her bedroom, as a historian would, examining the evidence and trying to piece a story together out of the bits and scraps.

But the evidence led only to more questions. The posters and playbills dated back to the 1880s. He found a copy of *Pearson's Magazine* from 1895 with an article about one of Sarah Bernhardt's appearances in Paris checked off on the table of contents. He turned to the article. Someone had written *A memorable evening!* across the top. He dis-



covered a sheaf of letters in a trunk, most from people he had never heard of, including a passionate proposal of marriage from a German count. There were also what seemed to be a handwritten note from George Bernard Shaw and another, addressed to "Miss Annette Dwyer," from President Ulysses S. Grant. Then again, a photograph showed a thirtyish woman who might possibly have been Mrs. Dwyer sipping drinks with Gary Cooper on a verandah overlooking Hong Kong harbor.

The chronology made no sense at all. Fascinated, he delved further and further, opening the large trunk the cabinet had fallen over, digging through heaps of jewelry -- strings of pearls, a necklace of Byzantine

coins, a pendant that looked pre-Columbian -- and clothing until he found a bundle of notebooks tied together with ancient ribbon.

The ribbon broke in his hands. The books formed a diary. He opened the first volume and started reading, with no sense of invading someone's privacy, as if he were an archaeologist entering a tomb.

Some of the handwriting was virtually illegible: tiny, written with a quill pen, almost Elizabethan. But he skimmed through the more legible parts and concluded that the text had to be fiction. Mrs. Dwyer could not have met so many people, gone to so many place, or *lived as long* as the diaries implied.

It was quite impossible. The chronology. Everything.

He put the diaries back where he found them, wrapping them as best he could in the broken ribbon.

He felt something else underneath.

It was a scrapbook, far more convincing and terrifying for its lack of elaboration.

The first page showed a table with a high chair set at it. A bib was laid out, a baby's rattle, and a cake with one candle on it. The caption read simply, *First birthday*.

He turned the page, and again found a photo, labeled *second birthday*. A third followed, and a fourth, and so on, each of them changing as the "boy" grew older. She bought him a very old-fashioned bicycle for his fourteenth.

Then the pictures stopped.

He went back and looked at them again. Nowhere in any picture was anyone present. Just cakes, tables, gifts.

Suddenly the door to the bedroom opened and Mrs. Dwyer was there. She dropped a shopping bag onto the floor.

Jerry let out a startled squeal and jumped to his feet, spilling the scrapbook and the photos.

"I -- I'm sorry. I'll just go, okay? I know I have no business here. You don't have to bother throwing me out. I'll--"

He couldn't control himself. He started to cry.

She took him gently by the hand.

"No, Jerry. Don't go. I wanted you to find all this. I wanted you to understand. Do

Another night passed in hopeless paging through books, in even more hopeless attempts to sleep, in listening to the house, to Mrs. Dwyer talking to herself in the room below. Sometimes she was singing. The tone was wrong. It was like a string-pull doll. Sometimes she seemed to be terribly, terribly afraid, sometimes merely sad.

He finally did sleep and dreamt of the Greek soldiers in the labyrinth of the house, in the clutter of Mrs. Dwyer's room, searching for that terrible idol of the Perisan king. He was pushing his way through them, desperately trying to get out, but the corridors went on and on and he could never find the door. Sometimes he heard voices through the

right beside him. He could smell the old-age smell, and the tea steaming in her cup. But he couldn't see her, not quite. He turned, turned again, and she was always just beyond the edge of his vision.

After a very long time, it was simply easier to remain there and listen to her.

At the very end, he was face to face with the idol, and the stone mouth spoke. But he shouted and broke the spell of the dream, and awoke before he could make out the words. Somehow he knew that if he did hear those words, he would never awaken.

He left at dawn, without showering, without breakfast, grabbing his coat and a few books to make the pretense look right. Outside, the wind was blowing hard along the narrow street and tiny specks of sleet rattled in the semi-darkness.

He wandered for a while, only barely aware of where he was. Then, later, when the day had completely dawned into bitter grey, he stood in a phone booth, fumbling through his pockets for the one plausible scrap he'd found among Mrs. Dwyer's papers.

It was a letter, dated six months previously, from someone who genuinely seemed to be her brother. There was a return address on it.

After some arguing with Information, then with a switchboard operator and a receptionist, he got through to a retirement home in the Germantown section of the city.

"Mister Dwyer, you don't know me, but I rent a room from your sister, Vanessa--"

The answer was gruff, angry. "My sister's name is Jocelyn."

"Please, sir, don't hang up on me. She says she used another name once. But there's this problem about her son--"

Jerry heard a sharp intake of breath at the other end of the phone connection.

"Young man, you had better come and see me right now."

Mr. Dwyer must have been in his eighties at least. He was shriveled and hunched-over, almost completely bald, and liver-spotted not merely on his hands but over most of his scalp too.

Jerry pushed Mr. Dwyer's wheelchair out onto an enclosed porch, an observation deck on the roof of the retirement home closed over with glass like a greenhouse. Before them, Fairmount Park was a black mass of leafless trees revealing the contours of hills. Far away, sullen beneath the grey sky, another castle-like mansion rose out of that dark sea, no doubt converted, like the retirement home, into some lesser use.

Beyond that, television towers stood like needles.

"What you have to understand about my sister," Mr. Dwyer said, "is that she has never



you understand now?"

"Yes," he said, lying desperately.

She hugged him hard, and for the first time ever, kissed him on the cheek.

"It's my son's birthday tomorrow. But you know that, don't you, Jerry?"

"Yes," he said, lying again. She had never told him when her son's birthday was.

"I want you to be there."

It was one more situation, one more intrusion into the comfortable pattern of his life that he had no idea how to handle. All he could do was lie.

"Okay. But I have some things I have to do at school. Maybe if I leave real early, and take care of them in the morning--"

"That would be fine, Jerry."

walls, his parents speaking to him as if he were a small child, or people he knew at school; sometimes it was only the traffic noise of the city. He tried to follow those sounds. After hours of exhausting struggle, he came to a window, and his father's voice, just then, was very loud.

He opened the window and climbed through, regardless of what story he might be on, how far he might fall.

But there was only more corridor on the other side, and he was all but buried by Mrs. Dwyer's amazing accumulations, the books, the pictures, the dolls, jewelry, the moth-eaten boar's head.

He heard her voice now, wordless, soft, like the cooing of a dove. She was with him,

gone anywhere or done anything. What you have described is merely the accumulation of a lifetime of fantasy. Those mementos, they're all fakes. Admit it -- you don't know what Noel Coward's handwriting looks like. She could easily have signed that picture herself."

"I guess so, sir."

"She was a dreamer as a girl, but she didn't grow out of it as she got older. She wasn't, as the kids put it today, *all there*, ever. She preferred to imagine glamorous adventures for herself rather than go out and take any risks. So she didn't do anything for real. She never dated and was an old maid by the time she was twenty-five. For a while, our parents thought of putting her in an institution, but they couldn't bring themselves to do it. So they let her dream on. It is an intensely *destructive* thing to dream like that, a soul-destroying cancer--"

"Well, yeah. Complete escapism," Jerry started to say, then hesitated, unsure of what he really was trying to say.

"No!" The old man slammed his fist onto the armrest of his wheelchair with startling vehemence. "It is *not* escapism. Someone like my sister doesn't escape. She has spent her whole life in a prison she has constructed for herself. She had buried herself alive in her own mind. I don't think you can really comprehend what she has done to herself."

"No, sir. But I don't understand either about her son--"

He sighed and said softly, "My sister never had a son. She never married."

"Excuse me, sir, but that's impossible. I saw -- *something* knocked over the cabinet. She couldn't have done it herself. I mean, how do you explain it?"

Mr. Dwyer closed his eyes and was silent for so long Jerry thought he had gone to sleep. He gazed down at the old man with growing alarm.

"Sir?"

Mr. Dwyer opened his eyes suddenly and said, "I can't explain it. Unless you want to believe in ghosts and poltergeists. Maybe my sister is such a powerful believer that it was just what she said it was -- her dreams knocked the cabinet over. Maybe she ... *created* something with her mind."

"I can't believe that," Jerry said.

"Can't you?"

He left the retirement home slowly, walking down the stairs instead of taking the elevator. He wept for Mrs. Dwyer, for her insane, wasted life. He wept for himself.

Hours passed somehow. He remembered, vaguely, walking through endless streets, trying to reach a decision, to set himself on some definite course.

Nothing made sense. The detached ob-

server, the historian, was at a a dead end. There was only pain.

The sleet had become snow. It fell heavily, smothering the sounds of the world, closing off the city to him, little by little, as if behind curtains.

It was late in the afternoon by the time he returned home. The sky was turning a dark, metallic blue.

At last thought he knew what he had to do.

He found her upstairs, in the bedroom, sitting on the edge of the bed.

"Mrs. D.?"

She didn't seem aware of him at first. She was, perhaps, listening to something faint and far away.

"Mrs. D.?"

She looked up.

"I was afraid you wouldn't come."

"But I promised."

"It's ... your birthday."

Jerry stood over her, gripping one of the bedposts firmly.

"Look. I went to see your brother. He told me everything."

"I can imagine. There would have been no surprises for me in your conversation with him."

"How can you know?"

"Jerry, do you think I *don't* know what has been going on all throughout my life? I'm not that oblivious. My brother told you that I've built a prison for myself in my mind. He used to say that a lot. Well, it's true. And if you've built a prison, brick by brick, you can't lay that many bricks without being aware of what you're doing."

"This is crazy," Jerry said. He helped her to her feet, then rummaged through one of her closets until he found a suitable winter coat for her. "Come on. You ought to go out. I'll take you to a movie. Just get out of the house. It's time for a jailbreak."

She only muttered as he led her down the stairs, but when they neared the front door, she pulled back hard. He stopped.

"Do you know why I laid all those bricks, Jerry?"

"To avoid pain. To avoid living."

She smiled. Somehow that gentle smile was more terrible than the expression of the idol in his dream.

"We are the dead, Jerry," she said softly. "That's the whole truth of it. We are never more than half alive, you and I. We were never really born. We only entered the world part-way, then retreated, and built our own little prisons. You did. I did. You understand because you're just like me."

He took her by the arm and dragged her toward the door.

"No. That's crazy. You're just as alive as I am."

"Exactly, Jerry."

"We have to go. Today. Now."

"Jerry, I gave birth to my son in my dreams, and raised him in my dreams, but somehow I lost that dream and he went away for a time. An old woman forgets. You can't imagine how horrible it was for me, to realize suddenly that I had inexplicably *forgotten* my dear boy. But then you came. I brought you here. I dreamed you into existence, to make my dream whole again."

They stood before the door. He fumbled with the lock. She shook her head sadly.

He spoke with desperate deliberation, to avoid tears. "My father is Joseph Gardner. He's an electrical engineer. My mother's name is Eleanor. She teaches school. I remember--"

"I remember a lot of things, Jerry."

He considered heaving her over his shoulder and hauling her out of the house in a fireman's carry.

"Come on!"

"I can't go out anymore, Jerry. Nor can you. We are dead. There's nothing out there for us."

He let go of her and flung the door open. The cold air blasted his face. But beyond the doorstep there was nothing to be seen, not even snow. The city was gone. He stared out into grey empty space.

He blinked and rubbed his eyes, and reached out into the void, feeling only the air.

Mrs. Dwyer was pulling in his arm. He caught hold of the doorway with one hand and held on there, just briefly, while she spoke to him softly, soothingly. He knew he was somehow drowning, dying, but in the end he let go, because it was so much easier, and he fell back with her into the endless labyrinth of the house, among the shadows and the thousand whispering voices. His death came silently. He couldn't even scream.

"Happy birthday, son," the Persian idol said.

"I love you, Mother."



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PAPERWORK

BENTLEY LITTLE

Wind buffeted the car as they drove through the desert. Josh could feel it as he held tightly to the steering wheel, though it was not noticeable from the unmoving branches of the desert plants. There were no other cars on the highway, and he was not sure whether he should pull over and wait out the wind or try to continue on. The car swerved a little to the left as an especially obnoxious gust of wind pushed against the Blazer, and his grip tightened on the wheel. He didn't want to end up overturned on the side of the road--particularly not on this desolate stretch of highway--but he didn't want to stop either. They were late as it was and wouldn't get to Tucson until well after check-in time at the hotel.

As if reading his thoughts, Lydia turned down the cassette player and turned toward him. "Shouldn't we pull over?" she asked. "That wind's kind of strong out there."

He shook his head. "It's not that bad."

They drove for a few moments in silence. There had been a lot of silence on this trip; not relaxed comfortable silence but tense awkward silence. Josh had wanted many times to talk to Lydia, to really talk, to recapture that close camaraderie they had once shared, but he had not known how to do it, had not known what to say. He felt that same need to communicate now, but once again his desires and words did not match. "We have to get gas at the next town," he said lamely. "We're almost out."

Lydia said nothing, but turned up the cassette player again, as if in answer, and stared out the side window away from him.

Fifteen minutes later they reached a town. The tiny green and white sign said, "Willis. Population 1298. Founded 1943." Like most of the small desert communities they'd passed through since leaving California, Willis was dirty and run down, little more than a collection of cafes, gas stations and storefronts stretching along the sides of the highway, with a few shabby homes and trailers behind them to give the town depth.

Josh pulled into the first gas station he saw, a Texaco. The station looked abandoned. Where the paint on the building wasn't peeling, there were large spots of blackened soot or rot. The windows of the office were so covered with dust and grime that it was impossible to see inside, and small dunes of paper trash had collected on the windward side of the old pumps, but the prices on the

swinging metal sign were current, and the open garage door indicated that the station was still in operation.

There were no full or self-service islands here, just two lone pumps, and Josh drove across the length of rubber cable which activated the station's bell, pulling to a stop in front of the unleaded pump.

The wind was blowing strong. Josh looked toward the building. The man who emerged from the office peered first around the edge of the opaque window before stepping nervously outside. He was wearing an old Texaco uniform, with pocket patches that carried the promises of two slogans ago, and he wiped his hands compulsively on a greasy red rag. His face was thin and dark, topped by a grey crewcut, and though his features were unreadable from a distance, as he drew closer Josh could see that the man was terrified.

Such naked fear triggered some sympathetic reaction within Josh, and his first instinct was to take off and get the hell out of there. The man would not be frightened for no reason. But he knew that his reaction was stupid, and he got out of the car and stretched, bending his knees and raising his arms after the long drive, before moving forward. He nodded politely at the attendant. "Hi."

The man said nothing, but his eyes shifted back and forth across the length of the highway, on constant surveillance. He grabbed the nozzle of the pump before Josh could reach it, and with trembling hands lifted the catch.

"I'll get that," Josh said.

"No, I'll get it." The man's voice was old and cracked, whispery with age, and there was a tremor in it.

Josh unscrewed the gas cap, and the attendant inserted the nozzle.

"Get out of here fast," the old man whispered. "While you can. While they let you."

Josh frowned. He glanced instinctively back at Lydia in the front seat. "What?"

The attendant's eyes widened as he looked over Josh's shoulder. "Here comes one now!"

Josh turned to look but saw only the empty street, dust and gum wrappers blowing across the sidewalk, propelled by the wind. He turned back. A stray scrap of Kleenex blew against the attendant's leg, the wadded piece of white tissue clinging to his sock, and the man suddenly leaped backward, scream-

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ing. The nozzle dropped from his hand, falling to the cement, and a trickle of gas spilled out before stopping.

The Kleenex was dislodged from the man's foot as he leaped about, and it went skittering along the ground toward the open garage door, but he did not stop screaming. He continued to jump up and down in a panic dance, arms flailing wildly, scuffed workboots scraping hard against the ground.

Josh backed up slowly until he was at the door of the car, and he quickly got in, locking the door.

"Let's get out of here," Lydia said. She was staring out the window at the gas station attendant, her face pale.

Josh nodded, putting the key in the ignition. The attendant pounded on the window. "I'll send you the money we owe!" Josh yelled through the closed glass.

"The papers!" the man screamed.

Josh turned the key in the ignition, pumping the gas pedal, and the engine caught. The attendant was still pounding crazily on the window, and Josh pulled away slowly, afraid of running over the old man's feet. The attendant did not follow them across the asphalt as they'd expected, however. Instead, he ran immediately back toward the office where he slammed shut the door.

Josh looked over at Lydia. "What the hell was that all about?"

"Let's just get out of here."

He nodded. "It's a Texaco station. I'll write to Texaco, tell them what happened, send them the money. It's only a buck or so. We'll find another gas station."

They moved slowly down the highway through town, past a closed movie theater, past an empty store. The wind, which until now had been constant, suddenly increased in power, and the heavy cloud of dust which accompanied it obscured the road like brown fog. They could hear the tiny static scratching of dirt granules on the glass of the windshield. Josh turned on the headlights and dropped his speed from thirty to twenty and then to ten. "I hope it's not going to scratch up the pain job," he said.

They were moving against the wind, and he could feel the Blazer strain against the pressure. The buildings were dark shapes, silhouetted against the dim sun. As they moved closer to the edge of town, the dust cloud abated a little, though the wind continued to blow strong. A sheet of newspaper flew up against the windshield, flattening in front of Josh's face. He could not see at all, and he braked to a halt, hoping to dislodge the paper, but it remained plastered on the glass. He opened the door, got out and pulled it off, crumpling it up and letting it fly.

It was then that he noticed the bodies on the ground.

There were four of them, and they lay face-down on the sidewalk as if they had simply fallen there while walking down the street. The three bodies closest to him were entirely unmoving, trash and light debris piled up by the wind in drifts against their sides and shoes, but the body furthest away--that of a young woman--seemed to be trying to get up. Josh took a quick step forward.

"No!" Lydia yelled at him from the car.

He looked back at his wife. Her face was bleached and terrified, her eyes wild with fear.

"Let's call the police!"

He shook his head. "She's alive!"

"Let's get out of here!"

**He was digging
through a pile of
overturned keychains
when,
from the back
of the store,
Lydia screamed;
a shrill hysterical cry
so unlike any sound
Josh had ever heard
her make
that it took his
burdened brain a second
to make the connection.**

He waved away her protestations and moved quickly forward toward the struggling woman. But she was not struggling. She was not moving at all. The head he had seen trying to raise itself was merely the fluttering of a paper sack which had caught on the woman's hair. The arms which had been attempting to push the body upward were junk food wrappers which had blown against her side and were gyrating in the breeze.

Josh stopped. In a strange objective instant, he saw the entire situation as though it were happening to someone else--the abandoned town, the crazy man at the gas station, the bodies on the sidewalk--and it suddenly scared the hell out of him. He backed slowly

up, then turned around, hurrying.

Lydia jumped out of the Blazer, screaming, hitting at her legs. His heart leaped in his chest as he rushed forward. "What is it?" he demanded. "What happened?" But he had already seen the pieces of lipstick-stamped tissue clinging to her legs. He peeked around the open door, looking into the car. The empty McDonald's bags on the floor were moving and writhing, making whispery crackling sounds. A bent paper straw thrust its way insinuatingly upward through the mess on the floor.

He slammed the door. "We have to get out of here." He pulled the tissue from Lydia's legs and felt the thin paper twist sickeningly in his hands. He threw the tissues to the wind, which carried them away, then wiped his hands on his pants, grimacing. "Come on." He grabbed Lydia's hand, leading her down the street. She was still crying, and he could feel her muscles trembling beneath his fingers.

They ran across the asphalt.

And stopped.

A line of paper was inching toward them, moving against the wind, toothpick wrappers riding atop lunch sacks, crumpled envelopes and discarded Xerox sheets creeping in tandem along the ground. Josh swiveled around. Behind them, pages from magazines, spent teabags, cigarette butts, price tags and grocery sacks rolled with the wind. Above them, in the sky, fluttering Kimwipes and paper towels swooped low over their heads then looped upward to make another dive. His pulse raced.

"In here!" He pulled Lydia to the other side of the street, across the sidewalk and into a convenience store. Or what was left of a convenience store. For all of the racks and shelves had been tipped over, thrown into the narrow aisles. Rotting food lay on the floor, smashed preserves and spilled soft drinks hardened into glue on the white tile. The store was dark, the only light coming through the front glass wall, but it was quiet, free from the maddening howl of the wind outside, and for that they were both grateful.

Josh looked at his wife. She was no longer crying. There was an expression of resolve in her face, a look of determination in her eyes, and he felt closer to her than he had in a long time. Both of them moved forward spontaneously and hugged each other. Josh kissed her hair, tasting dust and hairspray but not caring. She nuzzled his shoulder.

Then they pulled silently away, and Josh grabbed a nearby display, pushing it against the door. He shoved another small fixture against the door, pressing it hard against the glass. The makeshift barricade would not hold forever, but it would buy them a little time, allow them to think. This was crazy and un-

believable, but they would be able to get out of it if they used their wits.

"Think!" he said. "We need to think! What can we--"

Fire.

"Fire!" he cried. "We can burn them! They're just paper."

Lydia nodded enthusiastically. "We can kill them. It'll work. I'll look for matches. You check by the counter for lighters."

"And charcoal and lighter fluid," he said. "See if you can find any charcoal or lighter fluid."

She moved toward the back of the small store, stepping over and through the mess, and he hopped the front counter, rummaging through the pile of impulse items on the floor. He noticed that there were no paper products anywhere near the register.

He was digging through a pile of overturned keychains when, from the back of the store, Lydia screamed; a shrill hysterical cry so unlike any sound Josh had ever heard her make that it took his burdened brain a second to make the connection. Then he was off and running, vaulting over the front counter and dashing down the nearest aisle to the rear of the building.

She was standing before the row of wall refrigerators which lined the back of the store, mouth open, no sound coming out. He followed her gaze. Behind the glass doors of the refrigerators which had formerly housed beer and milk and soft drinks were the dead naked bodies of eight or nine people, crammed together like sardines. They were facing outward, eyes wide and staring. Toilet paper was wrapped tightly around each of their mouths and wrists and ankles, making them look like hostages.

He instantly grabbed her around the waist, turning her around, away from the sight. He clenched his hands into fists, letting his fingernails dig into his palms, concentrating on the pain in order to clear his mind of fear as he stared through the frosted glass at the bodies. There was terror in each of the dead eyes looking back at him, terror and an even more horrifying fatalism, as if, at the last moment, all of the victims had realized the inevitability of their deaths.

He pressed closer, and it was then he noticed the cuts. Paper cuts--some long and straight, others short and curved--crisscrossed the chests, legs, and faces of the naked men and women. There was no blood, and the cuts could only be seen at certain angles, but the patterns they formed looked too regular to be random, too precise to be anything but deliberate.

The cuts looked like writing.

Josh put his hands on Lydia's pliant shoulders and led her up the aisle toward the front of the store, away from the refrigerators,

looking back as he did so, afraid of seeing a stray movement out of the corner of his eyes. But the bodies remained still, the toilet paper wrapped around them unmoving.

"Stay here," he said, leaving Lydia by the front counter. He dashed quickly up and down the chaotic aisles until he found a book of matches and, buried under sacks of charcoal, a tin of lighter fluid. He ran back to the front of the store. Papers, he saw, were conglomerating against the window and door, fluttering in the wind.

And fluttering against the wind.

He opened the red plastic childproof cap of the lighter fluid. He wasn't exactly sure how he was going to do this, but he was damned if he was going to let the papers get either him or Lydia. He glanced over at her. She seemed to have recovered somewhat and was not dazed with shock as he'd feared she'd be. She seemed cognizant, aware of what was happening, and he thought that she was a hell of a lot stronger than he would have given her credit for.

He pulled away one of the fixtures he'd used to blockade the door. "We're getting out of here," he said. "Think you can make it?"

She nodded silently.

He pulled away the shelves. Just in time, he noticed. There was a line of used and dirty Q-Tips coming into the store from under the door, sliding silently along the floor, swab to swab, like a giant worm.

Here was a chance to try out his weaponry. He took out a match, struck it, then poured lighter fluid on the Q-Tips and tossed the match. The tiny swabs went up in flame, twisting into charred blackness. There was agony in their death movements but no sound, and the unnatural sight sent a cascade of goosebumps down his arms. He took a deep breath.

"Let's go."

He pulled open the door and leaped back, expecting a flood of paper to come flying into the store, but there was nothing, only wind and dust, and he realized that the papers must have seen his fire demonstration. He looked at Lydia. "Can you hold the lighter fluid?"

"Yes," she said.

He handed her the container, took out a match and grabbed her hand. They walked outside. Around them, above them, papers fluttered and flew in the strong wind, but there was an empty circle surrounding them, and the circle remained the same size as they moved across the street toward the car. The newspapers which covered the Blazer fled as they approached, and they both got in the driver's side, quickly shutting the door. The McDonald's mess on the floor had disappeared.

He reached for the keys in the ignition, but they were not there. He checked on the

floor, patted his pockets, looked over at Lydia. "Do you have the keys?"

She shook her head. "You didn't take them with you?"

"I left them here. Shit!" He slammed his hand against the steering wheel, causing the horn to blat loudly. They both jumped.

Outside, the papers were swirling closer, junk food wrappers inching forward along the ground toward them, ripped posters creeping alongside.

"Let's get back to the gas station," Lydia said.

Josh nodded. "I think they need another demonstration to make sure they leave us alone, though. Get out on my side."

They got out of the car, and he doused the front seat with lighter fluid.

"What are you doing?" Lydia demanded. "That's our car! We need it! We'll never get out of here without it!"

"We'll get out." He lit a match and threw it onto the front seat. The cloth seatcovers went up in a woosh of flame, and the papers on the street, obviously agitated, whirled in incoherent frenzies, widening the circle around them.

Josh grabbed his wife's hand again, and they started back toward the gas

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station. Dust blew into their eyes, stinging. They were halfway there when he saw a car coming along the highway toward them. "A car!" he said excitedly. He moved quickly to the center line and waved his arms back and forth in the classic distress signal.

The car came closer.

"Help!" he yelled. "Help!"

The car sped by, honking its horn.

"Asshole!" Josh yelled in frustration, holding up his middle finger. "Goddamn son of a bitch--"

Lydia put a restraining hand on his arm. "Come one, let's go to the gas station. Maybe that old man can help us."

"He can't even help himself. If he could, he wouldn't still be here."

"There will be other cars. This is a major highway. Someone's bound to stop."

"If we create a disaster," Josh agreed, nodding. He smiled grimly. "Let's go."

The gas station was empty. They searched the office, the garage, the men's and women's bathrooms, but there was no sign of the attendant. It was now nearly five, and though neither of them said anything, they both real-

ized that it would soon be dark. Although the highway itself was clear save for a few stray pieces of windblown trash, the desert surrounding the gas station was covered with papers and was growing more crowded by the minute.

"What are we going to do?" Lydia asked.

Josh unhooked the hose from one of the gas pumps. "Start a fire."

"What if--?"

"Don't worry," he said.

He pressed down on the handle of the nozzle and poured gas all over the dirt and cement surrounding the two pumps. He stopped pumping and handed her the matchbox, saving a handful for himself. "Go up to the road and tell me when you see a car coming. If anything starts moving toward you, use the lighter fluid and torch it."

She started to say something but saw the look of almost fanatic determination on his face and decided against it. She moved slowly across the pavement toward the highway.

Josh continued to pump gas onto the ground, soaking the entire area around the pumps. The hose was not very long, but he moved as close to the building itself as he could and watered the cement with it. The papers surrounding the gas station swirled crazily, frantically.

"A car!" Lydia shouted. "A car!"

Josh dropped the hose, ran toward the edge of his gas pool and struck a match on the pavement.

It caught, then sputtered out in the wind.

"A car!" Lydia screamed.

He struck another match, dropping it, and the ground exploded in a rush of fire, singing his face. He ran toward Lydia, feeling the hotness against his back, and the second he reached the edge of the highway, there was a thunderous explosion as the pumps blew. The ground shook once, and a moment later pieces of metal fell from the sky. A small hot chunk landed next to Josh's foot and another near Lydia, but none of the fragments touched them.

"Come on!" Josh ran into the highway. The car was not coming from the north but from the south, and he stood in the middle of the northbound lane, waving his arms, frantically pointing toward the burning gas station.

The car pulled to a stop a yard or so in front of them. A middle-aged man with greying black hair and a mustache stuck his head out of the window. "What happened?"

"Explosion!" Josh said as he and Lydia ran forward. "We need to get help!"

"Hop in fast," the man ordered. "My wife's going to have a baby, and we don't have time to waste."

They got into the back seat of the car. Looking out the window as the car took off, Josh saw angry papers swarming over the

spot where they had stood. Others flew around the spiraling smoke which billowed up from the fire.

He hoped the whole damn town burned down.

Josh reached for Lydia's hand, held it, smiled. But she was frowning, looking forward. In the front seat, the man and his wife were silent. The man was concentrating on the road. His wife, next to him, was bundled beneath a heavy blanket, though the temperature in the un-air-conditioned car was so warm it was almost stifling. "You're going to have a baby?" Lydia asked.

"Yes, she is."

"Where's the hospital?"

"Phoenix."

"But isn't Tucson closer?"

The man didn't answer.

Lydia scooted forward on the seat. "Mrs--" she began.

"She's asleep." The man's voice was sharp, too sharp, and Lydia moved back, chastened.

Josh's heart gave a warning leap in his chest. Sitting next to the window, directly behind the passenger seat, he had a perfect view of the space between the wife's seat and the door, and he craned forward to get a better look. His muscles tensed as he saw the sleeve hanging off the edge of the seat beneath the blanket, saw the fingers of gum wrappers, the packed tissue paper palm.

But he said nothing, only held Lydia's hand tighter.

"Hope we make it in time," the driver said.

"Yeah," Josh agreed. He looked at Lydia, his mouth dry.

The car sped through the desert toward Phoenix.



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"Nearly all my finished photcollages have some airbrush work on them. Mainly I do simple airbrushing, changing a tone, making a portion of the picture fade off into darkness, adding highlights."

HARRY O. MORRIS

INTERVIEWED BY DENIS TIANI



Harry Morris has been active in the small press field for over 15 years. Starting out publishing, editing and printing *NYCTALOPS*, one of the most respected small press magazine, then expanding operations, under the *SILVER SCARAB* label, to include publishing other magazines, novels, short story and poems collections, scholarly critiques, art portfolios, and distributing books and prints from other publishers.

Though it has been four years since the last issue of *NYCTALOPS* appeared, and two years since the last *SILVER SCARAB PRESS* book rolled off the press, Harry has not been idle. Early examples of his illustrative skills first appeared in *NYCTALOPS*, developing with each issue. His early, sometimes crude but always interesting and moody, ink drawings gave way to sometimes crude but even more interesting and moody collages made by cutting up and reassembling 19th Century engravings, producing results which not only hook the eye but also the mind. His images have the uncanny ability to cut through rational

thought, opening windows that look directly into the unconscious landscape of the mind.

As his work evolved, the 19th Century engravings were replaced by photographs. The engraving-collages became photo-collages. No longer restricted by the limitations of the public domain for source material, Harry began collaging, or otherwise altering photographs, producing some of the most original, haunting and quietly disturbing pictures ever made.

Always experimenting with new techniques, his work continues to improve.

Though the crudeness of some of his earlier work is no longer present, still, there remains, below the sophisticated, high-tech surface, a primitive power that can force itself off the page and into the memory of the viewer. If you could take a camera into dreams you would probably come out with pictures like these.

THS: What happened to *NYCTALOPS*? The last issue was in 1983 wasn't it? Number 18?

MORRIS: Number 19 is still in the works. I've been able to find one reason or another not to get it out. But I would like to see the magazine continue, maybe with a greater emphasis on art and the darker side of horror.

THS: How about some background on *NYCTALOPS* and *THE SILVER SCARAB PRESS*?

MORRIS: Let's see. I began *NYCTALOPS* in May 1970. I wanted my life to take some kind of direction at that time, I was fascinated by H.P. Lovecraft and thought a magazine devoted to him and his writings would be a good idea.

THS: How old were you then?

MORRIS: 21.

THS: And what about the *SILVER SCARAB PRESS*?

MORRIS: That came about a year or so later. E. Paul Berglund thought up the Silver Scarab name when we were planning to expand beyond the magazine and go into publishing books.

THS: *NYCTALOPS* took a turn to the surreal with number 13. Before that it was pretty much HPL and the *Cthulu Mythos*. What happened?

MORRIS: I almost burned out on *NYCTALOPS* after printing the double number 11/12, which was 122 pages ...

THS: You do all your own printing, don't you?

MORRIS: Yep. Started with a mimeograph machine, then moved onto photo-offset.

THS: Where did you learn to run an offset press?

MORRIS: Got a job in a small print shop called Graphic Services run

by Dick O'Dell. Learned a lot from O'Dell and he still helps me out when my press breaks down, or whatever.

THS: *When was that?*

MORRIS: What? When my press broke down?

THS: *No. When you got the job.*

MORRIS: 1970.

THS: *Go on.*

MORRIS: Well, learning how to operate a press helped me turn out a better looking *NYCTALOPS*, and learning how to operate a copy or process camera led to my experimenting with engraving collages, and eventually to photographic collages. The heart of my darkroom is still my copy camera.

THS: *So you burned out on number 11/12 ...*

MORRIS: Then new inspiration and direction came with number 13 with friends who were into surrealism. Number 15 through 18 have been attempts to combine portions of HPL, surrealism, and schizophrenic/suicidal states of mind.

THS: *Were you losing interest in HPL's work?*

MORRIS: I'm not as fanatic about Lovecraft as when I first discovered him, but he still remains an inspiration. There were so many magazines devoted to him now thought that I don't feel *NYCTALOPS* is missed in this regard.

THS: *The last SILVER SCARAB book was Thomas Ligotti's SONGS OF A DEAD DREAMER. That was in 1985, right? Any more books in the works?*

MORRIS: Nope. Just *NYCTALOPS 19*.

THS: *You've been doing some good work for SCREAM/PRESS lately--how did that come about?*

MORRIS: JK Potter sent some of my collage prints to Jeff Conner at *SCREAM/PRESS* in 1984 and that led to my getting the *TOPLIN* assignments, which in turn has led to work for other publishers.

THS: *So what's it like working for Jeff Conner? He puts out some pretty funny fliers and seems to enjoy his work.*

MORRIS: He's a smart guy and easy to work with.

THS: *Does he give you a lot of freedom to do what you want with the illustrations?*

MORRIS: Yeah, he allows pretty much complete freedom to illustrate scenes from the work but will add input, suggesting changes if the picture doesn't communicate the point clearly.

THS: *And you just finished a cover for ARKHAM HOUSE?*

MORRIS: For Michael Shea's *POLYPHEMUS*.

THS: *ARKHAM HOUSE is legendary. Like most HPL fans I'm sure it has a special place in your imagination. How does it feel to be part of the history?*

MORRIS: Like a dream come true, to join the ranks of the illustrious *ARKHAM HOUSE* artists.

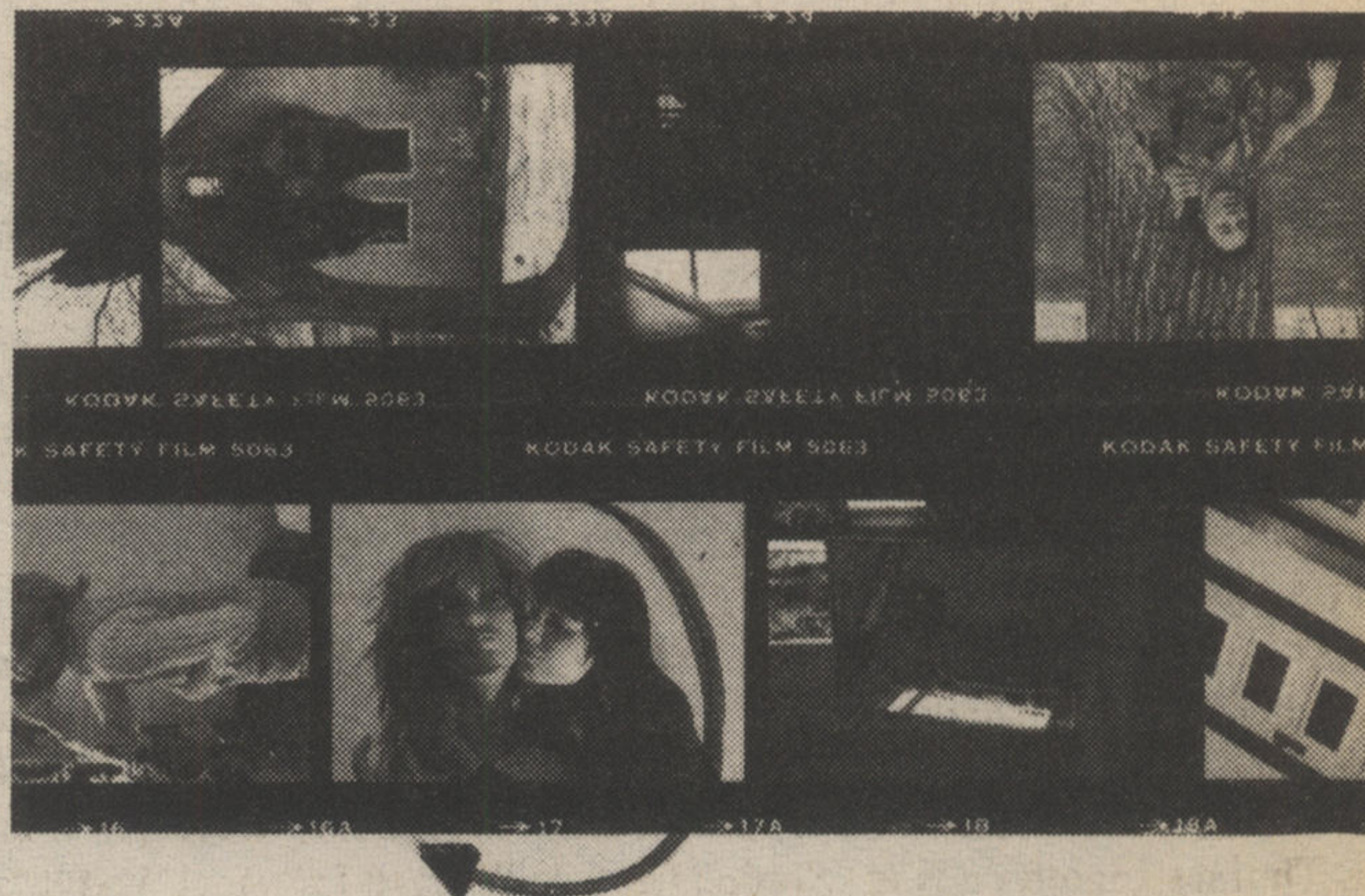
THS: *And how did that come about?*

MORRIS: I had a number of alien landscape paintings in my booth at the 1986 World Fantasy Convention and Jim Turner saw them and got the idea to connect me with the *POLYPHEMUS* thing. He had just used a Max Ernst painting for an *ARKHAM HOUSE* book, and my

landscapes look similar to Ernst's. I'm using a technique similar to his Decalcomania paintings.

THS: *That's an old surrealist's trick, isn't it?*

MORRIS: Oscar Dominquez invented the technique in the early or mid '30s, but it was Max Ernst who took full advantage of its chance effects. I don't work them up as they did. I used the technique on the *ARKHAM HOUSE* cover to add sky and clouds. No photo elements in this one--just the Decalcomania and some air brushing.



[The idea begins with this image of two heads as seen while looking through my file of 35mm negatives and contact prints.]

THS: *Do you use the airbrush much?*

MORRIS: Nearly all my finished photocollages have some airbrush work on them. Mainly I do simple airbrushing, changing a tone, making a portion of the picture fade off into darkness, highlights. Just generally trying to smooth things out a bit. Some stencils, but only for common shapes, like masking tape for straight lines, circles and ellipse and french curves. Or I'll cut one out of acetate. Some freehand airbrushing, too.

THS: *You've been influenced by the early surrealists then, or at least you're working in a similar direction.*

MORRIS: I discovered the surrealists through a book by Patrick Waldberg in 1969 at a time when I had grown completely disenchanted by being a part of the so-called hippie movement of the period. This inspiration along with my interest in HPL allowed me to set a course of my own at the time, a more inward and literary oriented direction than some of my friends were able to appreciate, so it caused quite a change for me.

THS: *What was it about the hippie type psychedelic surrealism that you found incompatible with the earlier Dadaism?*

MORRIS: In terms of history repeating itself, I see the punk movement as corresponding to Dada and the hippies to the later surrealists. Only the sequence is reversed. Surrealism with its hope for a revolution sprung from the nihilism of Dada, whereas in the later part of the century the ideals of the hippies turned into a blank generation of punks.

My interest in surrealism wasn't linked with hippies or drugs. I liked the contradictory image the surrealists projected--dressing like businessmen yet doing all this experimenting with thought and language without the aid of drugs. At least Breton, in his Manifestos, speaks out against the use of substances to induce visions.

THS: *Andre Barton was the head of the Surrealist movement?*

MORRIS: He defined surrealism in a way that had nothing to do with Dada and the two movements went their separate ways.

THS: *Do you consider your work surreal?*

MORRIS: Some of what I'm doing is a kind of forced surrealism. Not as obvious as some of those Madison Avenue type illustrators who have ripped off Magritte over and over, but nevertheless I am fairly premeditated about what I do. I guess this goes along with the purposes of illustration--the picture bends to fit the story.

THS: *I don't get the feeling you're forcing any kind of surrealism out of your images. Just the opposite. There's a kind of restraint about your work, like it's just the top of the iceberg. Lot of undercurrents and suggestions. On the surface they illustrate the text of the story, but underneath they seem to be telling their own story.*

MORRIS: I like to hope that underneath the conscious exterior there are unconscious elements at work that I'm not aware of. Sort of like a bad Mexican horror movie--like *THE BRAINIAC*--is unintentionally surreal.

THS: *Describe the effect you're trying to achieve.*

MORRIS: Well, I've heard people say they find it otherworldly and somber. I think somber is the one I'm trying for. I will usually feel satisfied if I can achieve a feeling of loneliness or melancholy. The best is to combine loneliness with horror which can create a feeling of dread, as Thomas Ligotti calls it. Sometimes I will strive for shock value, but am not usually successful.

THS: *What are you trying to accomplish beside just making good pictures?*

MORRIS: Basically to open up a little hole into another world of reality. A nightmare or hell world. To make visible the things that flop around in the dark and make me fearful and uncomfortable.

THS: *Some of your early Decalcomania stuff in NYCTALOPS is pretty abstract, and there's a lot of abstract texture in your photocollage illustrations--would you let these abstract elements become more dominate if you weren't illustrating stories?*

MORRIS: No. I'm usually more concerned with telling a story through images than in vague shapes and colors and textures. I can't see my work becoming any more abstract than it currently is, even if I had complete freedom. I can come up with any number of interesting abstractions with different photographic process, and most of my initial experiments tend to turn out abstract. The difficult part is trying to incorporate or change such abstractions into more objective, readily identifiable, images in order to tell a story or create a mood.

THS: *So what's your opinion of abstract art?*

MORRIS: Generally, I can't appreciate abstract art unless I can see it as an extension of an artist's vision when they have reached the limits of representational work. Dorthea Tanning's work reflects this evolution and has a plan. Too many abstract painters, writers and musicians merely say to hell with the rules, let's work without restrictions. But right away they're faced with a whole set of other limitations of the medium itself, and their own physical limitations, and fall into repeating the same thing over and over. I feel that more interesting and varied results can be found by plugging in the wrong thing here or there to see what will happen. Basically this is just giving some control to the chance accident, but I think the control is an important part of any experiment.

THS: *How do you work? Fast, slow?*

MORRIS: I'm a fairly fast worker, in that photocollage lends itself to

many changes in a short period. But like anything else, sometimes good things can happen in an instant, and at other times you can spend hours fighting with some arrangement which doesn't work.

THS: *Do you like to start with a sketch or some idea of where you're going or, like some of the early surrealists, do you prefer to let a random element get things started and go from there?*

MORRIS: When illustrating a story the text gets things started, still, I can start with a preconceived idea and then get sidetracked with something unexpected appearing in the arrangement of images. This can happen several times during the course of the work. Things usually go faster if I stick to the preconceived idea, then it's just a question of technically coming up with images to match the idea.

THS: *Working the way you do gives you the opportunity to work an image up to a certain point, copy it, then take the copies in different directions to see what happens. Do you take advantage of this, or just go straight ahead and work it out on one sheet of paper?*

MORRIS: Theoretically that sounds good, but in practice it doesn't work too well because every time you rephotograph an image it loses something. For instance, the original might have a dark gray wall with subtle designs on it--try to copy it and you might just wind up with a plain black wall.



[A 5X9 print from the above 35mm negative is made and the background is added by drawing on the print randomly with a light pen while the print is in the developer. The print is then lightly solarized.]

THS: *What about when it goes to the printer?*

MORRIS: Same thing. I'm still learning how to make originals that will reproduce well.

THS: *Do you work on one illustration at a time, or do you like to have more than one in the works?*

MORRIS: I tend to work on just one image at a time, although I think there is a better chance for success when working on two or more at the same time. I can become obsessed with just one picture and become unable to see what's wrong with it because of looking at it too much, but when two or more pictures are in the works you're able to take a break from one to work on the other.

THS: *How did you come to develop this photocollage stuff--or*

whatever you call it?

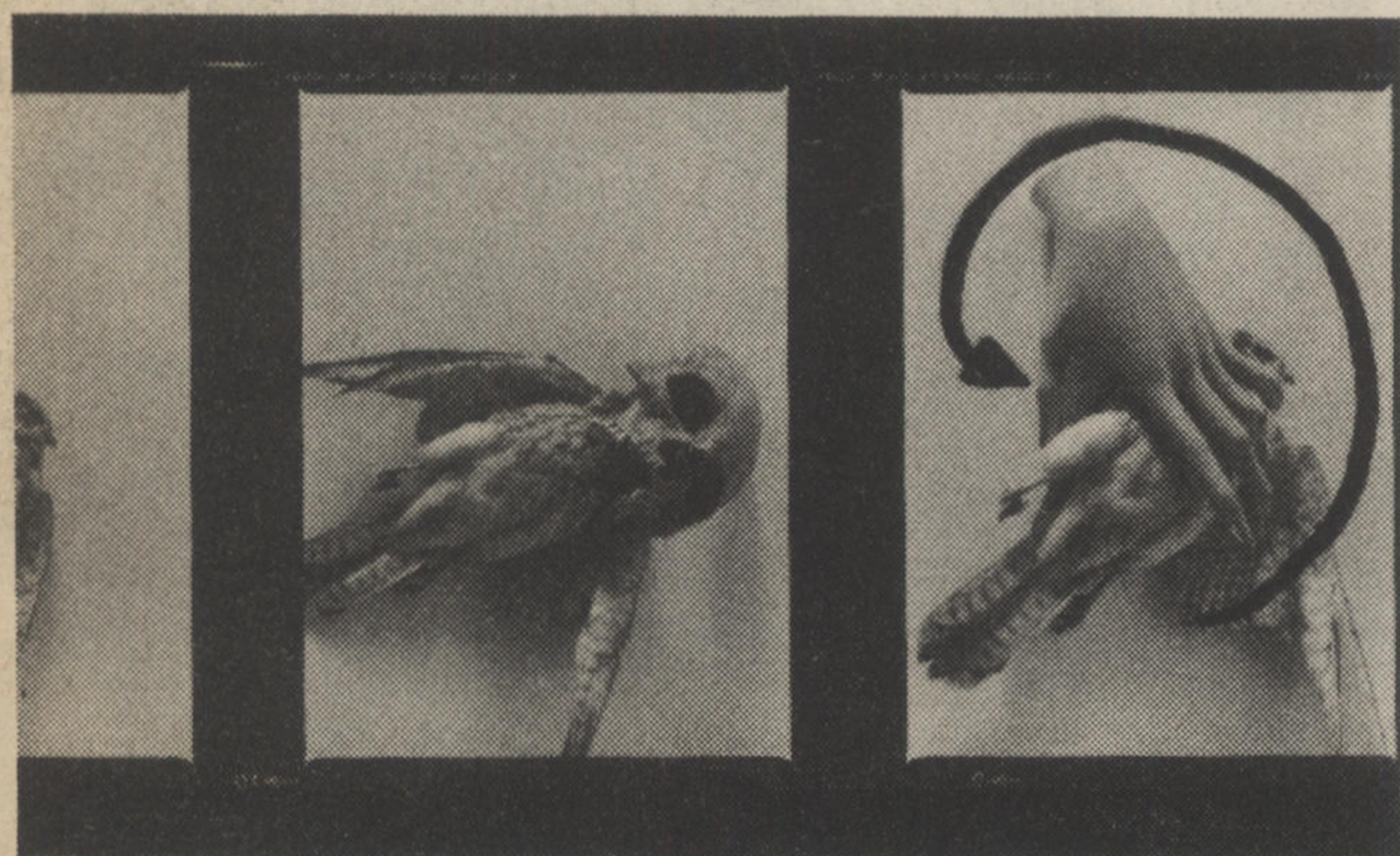
MORRIS: I started experimenting with engraving-collages because they were able to capture images and feelings inside my head better than anything I could draw or paint. I love the element of chance juxtaposition which collage offers and feel it is a direct route to the subconscious or the unexpected. Photocollage offers more control over the process and is better suited for adding elements of one's own choosing--the artist has the option to create the elements used in the collage rather than be restricted to found elements. Further control or changes can be made through retouching and painting, and this is a direction I'm interested in developing. I have been spending a considerable amount of time on drawing, really going back to the basics and working on being able to draw a mannequin figure in any position. When I can do this without thinking about it too much I'll be on the way to working toward more finished things.

THS: Let's take a fast run through what goes into making an average photocollage. You get the story, read it, pick out which parts you're going to illustrate ... then what?

MORRIS: First I do a rough sketch, then look through my negative files to see if there are any shots on hand I can use. Then set up the photo session--select props, models, arrange lights ... Usually my wife, Christine, helps out with these shooting sessions ...

THS: Do you have to draw up some kind of contract, or something, when you're shooting people?

MORRIS: I manage to get model releases from about 95% of the people I've photographed for illustration purpose. Most of the models are friends or friends of friends, but you never know.



[Contact print of a hand from a 645 negative on file. The hand is enlarged, cut out and collaged onto the above solarized print.]

THS: Do you enjoy these photo sessions?

MORRIS: It's one of the most difficult things for me to do, but once it's underway everyone seems to have fun.

THS: Before I interrupted you, you were getting a photo session set up, with your wife's help ...

MORRIS: Right. Set up the scene, take the shots, develop the film. Then it's down to the basement lab to make contact sheets ...

THS: A contact sheet--what's that? Like a large negative?

MORRIS: No. A contact sheet is--sandwiching camera negatives onto a sheet of photo paper.

THS: Just little positives, you mean?

MORRIS: Yeah. Proof sheets. Same size as the negatives exposed in

the camera. From the contact sheets I pick out the elements I want to work with, make different size prints and start cutting and arranging the photo elements.

Sometimes I can get the effect I want without cutting and pasting--by sandwiching two negatives together, or by putting the negatives in different enlargers and superimposing them, moving the paper from one enlarger to the next. Then I do some retouching after the composite image is developed, and that's it.

If the picture requires cutting and pasting it gets rephotographed in order to touch up the cut-lines. On the *TOPLIN* illustrations I went to extra lengths rephotographing the collages--making a series of five or six separate negatives of each picture to combine with various exposures to create different effects; outline effects, partial reversal, etc.

THS: How much retouching, or drawing into the photograph, do you normally do?

MORRIS: It's about 90% photographic work and 10% retouching. But as I say, I'm starting to do more drawing and painting so in some of the more recent things that percentage may be reversed, 90% of it being painting. Also, the negatives can be retouched to combine drawing and photography in the finished print.

THS: Can you give us an example of something with a lot of retouching?

MORRIS: The cover for the Fall '87 *Night Cry* is about 90% painting, 10% photo. It started as a light sepia toned photo of the girl then got completely painted and airbrushed over.

THS: What kind of paint do you use for retouching?

MORRIS: On the *Night Cry* cover I used everything but the kitchen sink.

THS: Why didn't you use that?

MORRIS: I needed it to wash out the brushes.

THS: Don't you run into trouble mixing different kinds of paint like that?

MORRIS: Yes. I had some problems with that *Night Cry* cover. I ended up using oil and watercolor over the same area and printer's inks for the background. Twelve hours later the ink was still wet. Spent several hours with my wife's hair dryer trying to get it to dry.

THS: Da Vinci had a similar problem with *The Last Supper*.

MORRIS: Yeah, only he wasn't so lucky. Had me worried for a while, but it eventually set up.

THS: Do you spend a lot of time setting up shots, or is most of the work done in the darkroom and at the drawing board?

MORRIS: In most cases more time spent in the darkroom than on the photo sessions. Also, I have a larger selection of stock photos to work with now, so the shoots are less a part of the work than when I started.

THS: Do you lug a camera around with you a lot?

MORRIS: No. I don't usually take a camera out unless I intend to use it.

THS: What about this computer/video stuff? I've seen some of your early experiments and you've got some of them in *Night Cry* and *SCARS*.

MORRIS: I've been experimenting with computer generated stuff for a while now. Actually they're more like electronically scanned images which are then altered further in the darkroom and retouched. It's the closest I've come to being able to turn photographs into what look like

drawings.

THS: *You mention working to improve your drawing skills, retouching, putting more brush work into the finished picture, and now altering the image by computer to further remove it from the photographic look, are you trying to get away from having pictures look like photographs?*

MORRIS: I like to try and get the picture to where it's difficult to distinguish whether it's a photograph or a painting.

THS: *What kind of equipment do you need for this computer/video stuff?*

MORRIS: I have two video printers--both manufactured by Mitsubishi. One produces, approximately, Polaroid-size images on thin thermal paper, with an image quality and resolution somewhat better than Xerox. The other one produces six by eight inch prints and uses either regular or super thermal paper ...

THS: *What's thermal paper? Is that like heat sensitive paper?*

MORRIS: Yeah. It used to be popular back in the 50s. It's not used that much anymore. But it works.

THS: *And what's super thermal paper?*

MORRIS: That's better than regular. With the super grade the image quality can nearly equal a photograph, although it still has a fine computer structure to it. The best thing about the printers is that the process is so quick. About 20 seconds after pushing the buttons you have a finished print of the image that was just on the tv. In a way this is a modern equivalent of what Max Ernst was doing back in the 1920s, replacing his material with an endless source of tv images. Also, I've used the printers in connection with a special effects generator--mainly to pseudo-solarize the tv picture and ...

THS: *Wait a minute. What do you mean by pseudo-solarize?*

MORRIS: That's sort of like regular solarizing--it looks like a solarized image only it's electronically simulated.

THS: *And what's regular solarizing?*

MORRIS: That's a darkroom special effect ...

THS: *Is that where you get those weird negative-like effects with the outlines?*

MORRIS: That's it.

THS: *How do you do that?*

MORRIS: Well, you develop your print like normal, only part way through the developing process you shine a white light on the paper ...

THS: *What? While it's still in the developing solution?*

MORRIS: Yeah, while it's in the tray--you shine a white light on it for a second and strange things happen.

THS: *And that's it? You don't use any special chemicals or anything?*

MORRIS: Nope, not unless you want to. There is a developer on the market especially for solarizing, the manufacturer claims you get better results with it. But you don't have to use it. Just your standard developer will work.

THS: *Hm. Is that a controllable effect?*

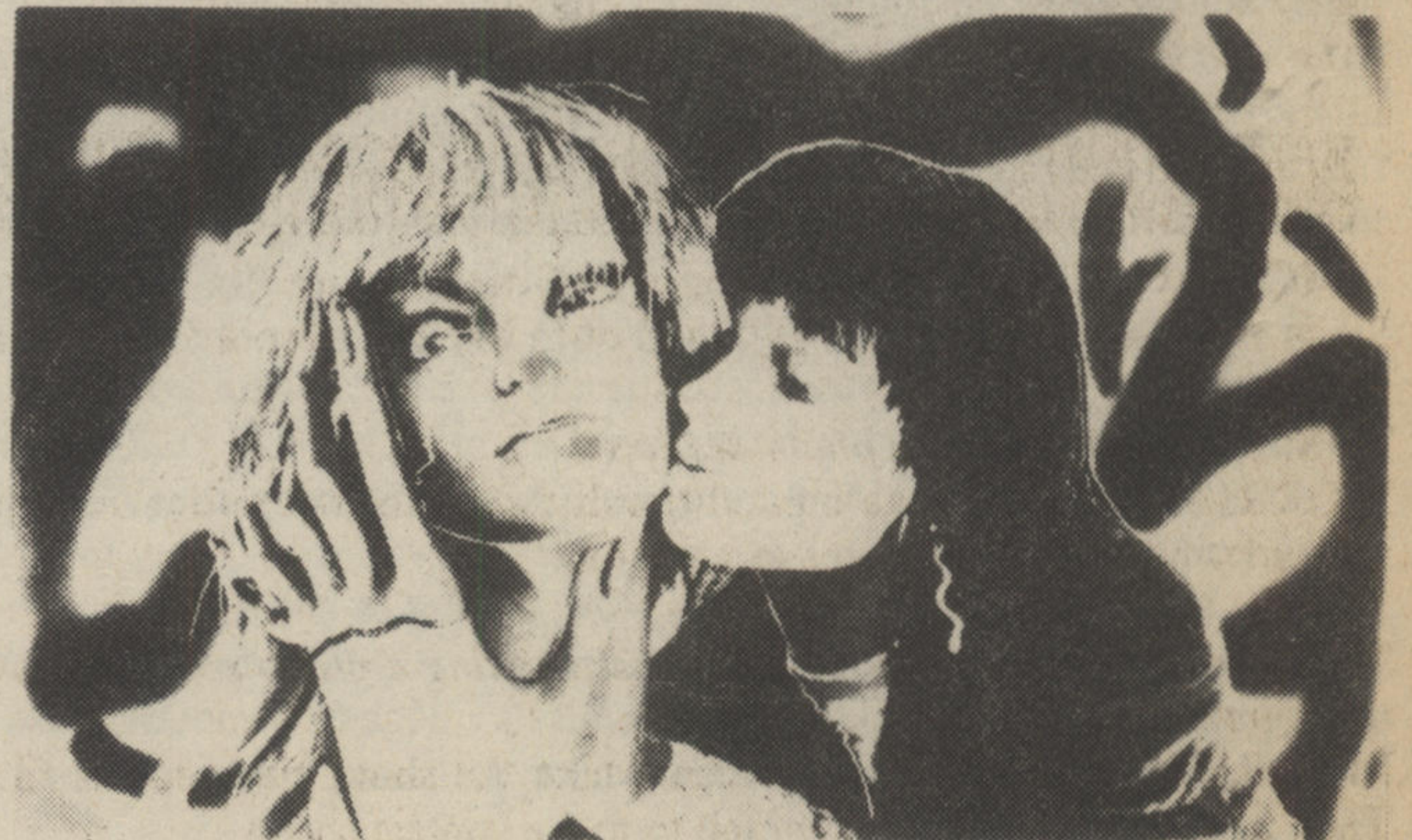
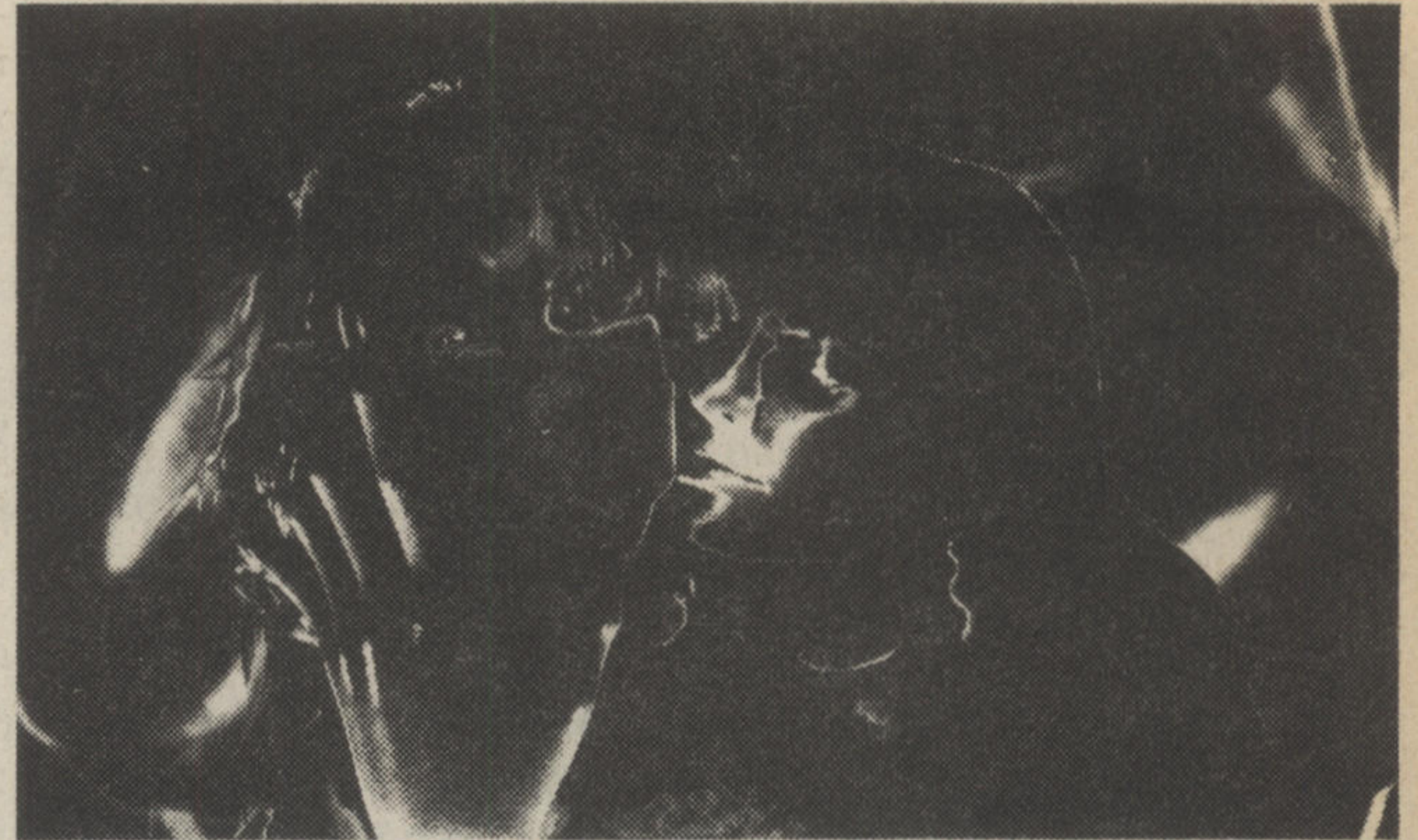
MORRIS: Pretty much. It takes a little getting use to and sometimes you get surprises, but generally you know what to expect.

THS: *Okay, I interrupted you. You were talking about the video printers ...*

MORRIS: I was just going to say, you can also use a video camera for live action pictures. You hook up the video camera to the computer ...

THS: *What kind of computer?*

MORRIS: In this case an Amiga 1000. You hook up the video camera to the computer with a direct video-out connected to the video digitizer



[B&W tone separation negatives are made from the collaged & cropped print of the women & hand. These are projected in register to make a large size print on which cut lines are retouched out and details are added with brush, airbrush, and pencils.]

THS: Stop. What's a digitizer?

MORRIS: The digitizer converts the video image into something the computer can work with. Sometimes it's called a frame-grabber. Basically you just turn on the video camera, focus it at whatever you want, then plug the video-out cord from the camera into the digitizer which plugs into the back of the computer. Then you put the software which comes with the digitizer into the computer and a menu appears on the screen and gives instructions for which keys to push to start the scan for digitizing the image that the camera is seeing. See?

THS: Go on. I'll catch up with you later.

MORRIS: After the image is digitized it can be loaded into the computer memory and then altered with the paint programs.

THS: What's a paint program?

MORRIS: The paint program is the thing you use to alter the digitized image in the computer memory. Or, if you want, you can move the picture, or whatever's in front of the video camera, while it's being scanned.

THS: Why would you want to do that?

MORRIS: Because if you move whatever is in front of the camera while the computer is scanning it from left to right--the scanning shows up on the computer monitor--and if you move it while it's being scanned you get some interesting distortions.

THS: I'll bet you do.

MORRIS: I've always been interested in fun-house mirror distortions but have had limited success using regular photographic methods, like putting bent pieces of clear plastic under the enlarger lens, or tilting the easel during exposure--that sort of thing.

THS: Just regular darkroom stuff.

MORRIS: Yeah. There's things you can do while you're shooting too. Like using a sheet of mylar and bending it and ...

THS: You mean those thin plastic mirrors?

MORRIS: Yeah. You have your model stand in front of it, then bend the mylar and shoot the reflection. You can get some interesting effects. But the computer scan allows for greater and more controlled distortions, and without all the expense of film and having to make a print each time to see what it looks like because you can see what the distortion effect looks like on the monitor before printing it out. So it's a lot faster and cheaper than 35mm still photography. And with some manipulation the image can be made into an interesting cross between a photograph and a drawing.

It sounds more complicated than it is.

We just got the computer. I'm pretty excited by the possibilities. Video taped images can also be digitized by plugging the VCR into the digitizer instead of the video camera. Then by putting the VCR into freeze frame or slow motion you can create distortions that way too.

I've been using the smaller printer to get images either to draw from or to work out a pose, using the video camera, which will later be photographed with film. The larger printer's images I sometimes use as backgrounds in finished photocollages, or just incorporate portions of them into collages.

THS: Well, I guess that's it then. Can you think of anything else?

MORRIS: Aren't you going to ask me what my favorite movie is?

THS: Okay. What's your favorite movie?

MORRIS: Roman Polanski's *The Tenant*. It's been a great source of inspiration.

THS: As long as we're on the subject, why don't you rattle off some favorite artists and artistic influences?

MORRIS: Can't say there's any one artist who's my favorite, although H.R. Giger comes close. I admire and am influenced by a lot of different, sometimes opposing schools of artists. I like the dream-world of the surrealists--writers as well as painters. I especially like Max Ernst, Paul Delvaux, Oscar Domingues, Hans Bellmer, Leonora Carrington and Remedios Varo. I like a great number of American illustrators too, from N.C. Wyeth and Dean Cornwell up to Robert Vickery. I especially like the Famous Artists School of illustration, like Norman Rockwell, Albert Dorne, Al Parker, Jon Whitcomb. Also like those sleazy, lurid paperback and pulp covers from the '40s, '50s, and '60s.

THS: How about your contemporaries?

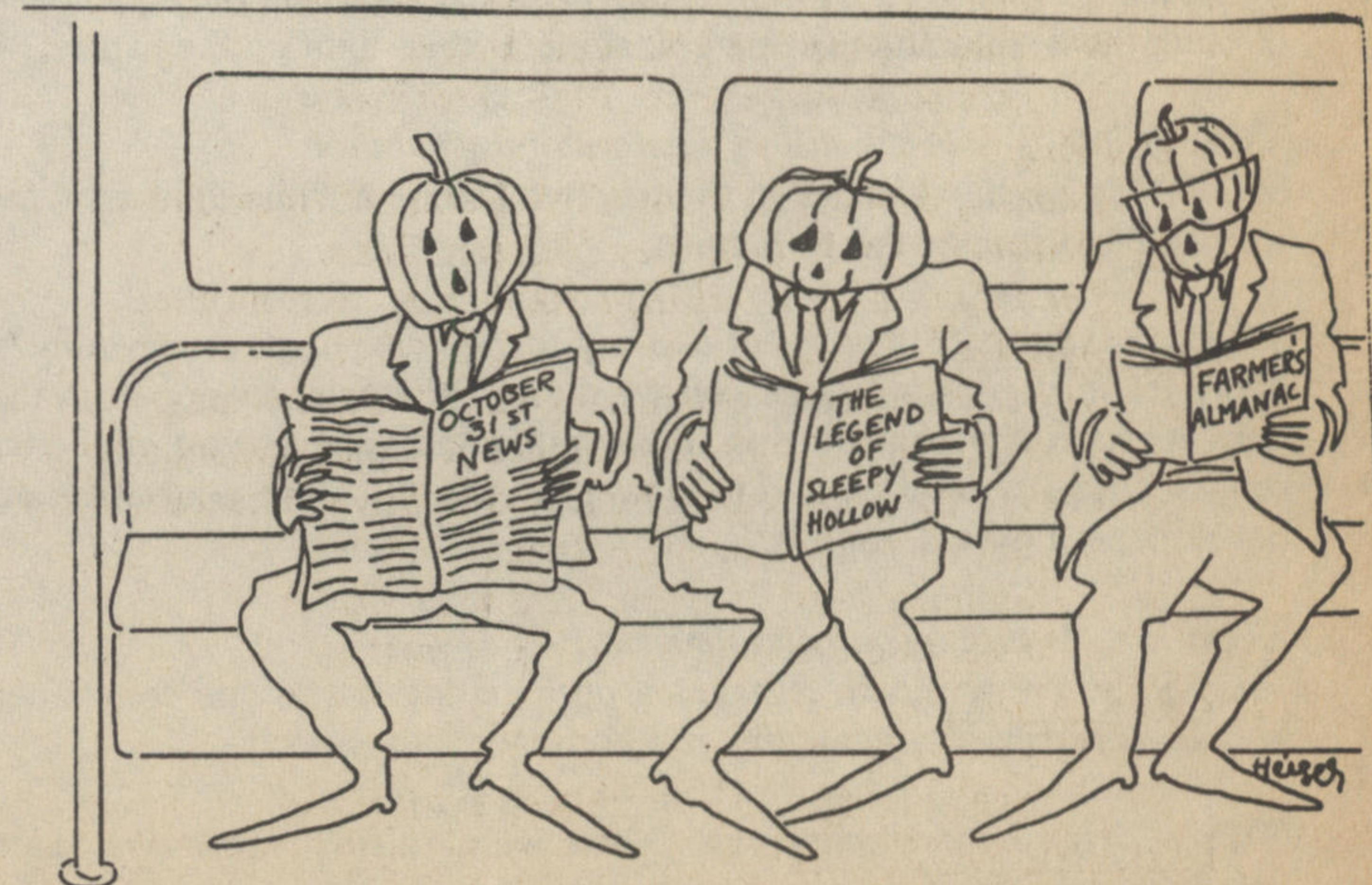
MORRIS: Leslie Hall, J.K. Potter, R.K. Sloane, Teri Corbin, and my wife, Christine. They've all had input into what I output. And Bil McCabe. I met and became friends with Bil around 1976. That changed my artistic outlook. He died at age 42, but up until then did countless drawings and paintings as good as any of the slick commercial stuff in the high circulation magazines of the time. But he was living on the edge of a surreal dreamworld which denied him commercial success.

And I like your stuff too. First saw your work, around 1971 or '72, on the cover of *The Dark Brotherhood Journal*. It was like the first good art I'd seen from a "real" person. All the other great art I'd seen up to that time had been done by phantoms as far as my limited scope of reality was concerned.

THS: On that note, we'll close.

MORRIS: There is one last thing I'd like to say ...

NURSE: I'm sorry, Mr. Tiani, but visiting hours are over.





[From Michael McDowell's *Toplin* - Scream/Press 1985]

ILLUSTRATIONS

HARRY O. MORRIS A SELECTED CHECKLIST

USA

BOOKS

- The Illuminoids* by Neal Wilgus.
Sun Books. 1978. Cover.
- Toplin* by Michael McDowell.
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- Books of Blood I-III* by Clive Barker.
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- Songs Of A Dead Dreamer* by Thomas Ligotti.
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Strange Company. 1985. Interiors.
- Unholy Trinity* by Robert Bloch.
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- Hardwired* by Walter Jon Williams.
TOR Books. 1986. Jacket photo of author.
- Scars and Other Distinguishing Marks* by Richard Christian Matheson.
Scream/Press. 1987. Cover and interiors.
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- Polyphemus* by Michael Shea.
Arkham House. 1987. Cover.
- The Silver Pillow - A Tale of Witchcraft* by Thomas M. Disch.
Mark V. Ziesing Books. 1987. Cover and interiors.
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Maclay & Associates. 1987. Frontispiece.

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Fall 1987, Volume 2, Number 5. Cover and interiors.
- The Horror Show* edited by David B. Silva. Phantasm Press.
Spring 1988, Volume 6, Issue 1. Cover.
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- Halloween in Arkham*.
Selket Images. 1979. Fifteen color plates.

LP ALBUM COVERS

- Cheepskates* "Second and Last."

Midnight Records. 1986.

The Iguanas "Reptiles, Lust and Dogs."

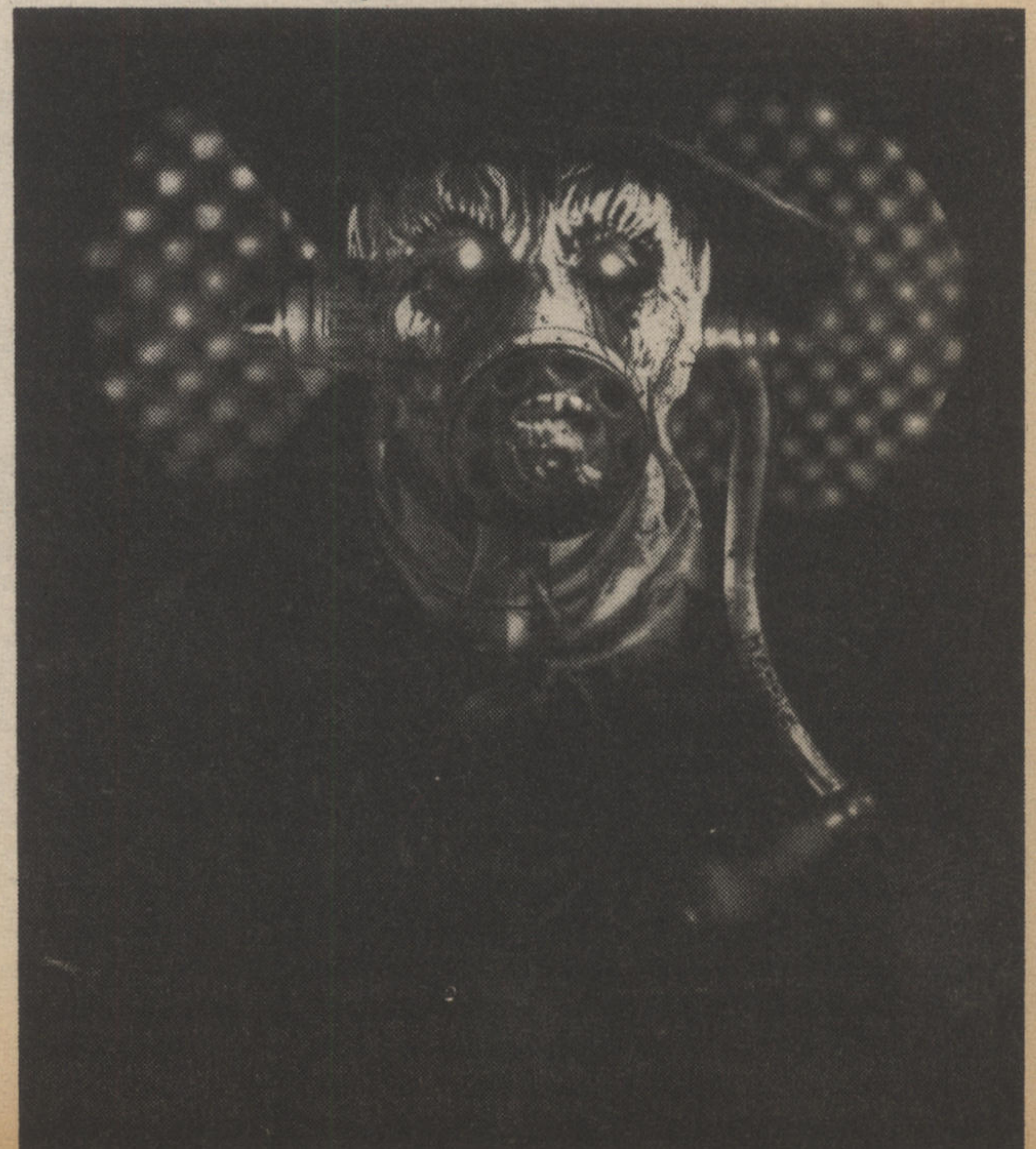
WEST GERMANY

- Omega* "200 Years After The Last War."
Bellaphon Records. 1974. LP Album Cover.
- Polaris II & III* edited by Franz Rottensteiner.
Insel Verlag. 1974/1975. One illustration per book.
- Ansichten Einer Geisterstadt* by Alain Robbe-Grillet.
Carl Hanser Verlag. 1977. Cover.
- Arcane* edited by Helmut Wenske & Wolfgang Jeschke.
Wilhelm Heyne Verlag. 1982. Cover and interior portfolio.
- Books of Blood I, II, III* by Clive Barker.
Edition Phantasia. 1987. Interiors (in collaboration with J.K. Potter).

IN PRESS

- Books of Blood IV, V, VI* by Clive Barker.
Edition Phantasia. Interiors.

[Below: from "The Monitors of Providence" round-robin booklet 1988 WFC - Maclay & Associates 1986]





SEITZINGER

NIGHT-GLO

BENJAMIN T. GIBSON

I. STRANGER

Jason glowered through a battle scarred hockey mask, his pin-prick eyes shark hungry, shark indifferent. Michael gazed down blandly from his perch on the wall, Halloween mask face shadow blurred, butcher knife nestled in his palm like a lover's warm hand. Sergeant Joe was life-size on the bedroom door, his camouflage uniform tattered, his teeth needle sharp points behind his fleshy lips.

Beside Joe, in the doorway of Gary's room, stood Peter Vint. Peter was Gary's new dad or uncle or whatever Gary's mother decided on this time. His face was soft, his eyes were gentle and his hair was too long. Gary hated him already.

"Hi there, Gary." Peter stepped into the room, ducking under a gold plastic Ghiddarah that dangled from the ceiling. "I thought I'd come in and say hi. I guess your mother's already told you I'm moving in."

"For awhile," Gary added, looking from Leatherface to Freddy Kreuger.

"I hope for a long while," Peter said, but they all said that at first. "Your mother's a very special lady."

They all said that, too. Joli never let any man move in with her who didn't think she was very special. They also loved her, thought they were lucky to have found her, and even though they knew they could never take the place of Gary's father, they were sure going to try, or at least wanted to be good friends.

"You like scary movies?" Peter looked at the one sheet for *Dawn of the Dead*, the glowing Skull Full of Snakes, lingered on an eight by ten of Christopher Lee standing before a throne and spreading his Dracula cape wide.

"Good ones," Gary answered, expecting the conversation to end there. The next time the subject came up would be when nice guy Peter was having a knock down with Joli. Then it would be something about that creepy kid of hers with all that horror shit stuffed in his room. Same play, different male leads.

Peter Vint changed the script.

"God, I loved those Hammer movies. *Horror of Dracula*, where Peter Cushing uses the candlesticks for a cross and forces Chris Lee back into the light? God, that was great."

"Yeah." Gary wondered if his mother had told Pete to bone up on a couple of horror movies to win him over, then dismissed the idea as wishful thinking. Joli wasn't that

smart or considerate.

Peter stood over the picture of Christopher Lee. He seemed a little taller as he stared down at it. The back lighting of the lamp by Gary's bed lent his soft face harsh angles.

"This is from one of the later movies, isn't it?" he asked. His fingers were long and thin as he touched the frame. "*The Satanic Rites of Dracula*, maybe?"

"I think so," Gary answered, not sure whether to be irritated that he didn't know or happy that this guy might not list a creepy son as part of his inevitable declaration of independence from Joli.

"I don't see a lot of them anymore," Peter said as he turned away from the picture. "No, I don't see any of them. Some of these pictures are great. Where do you get them?"

Gary was shocked to find no suspicion in the question, only gentle, genuine curiosity.

"Different places," he answered, feeling no need to volunteer the information that he'd stolen some from movie displays. To make up for the evasion, and before he was fully aware of what he was saying, he added: "Sometime maybe we can rent a recorder and I can show you some of the movies they come from."

And was surprised to discover he meant it.

"Maybe," Peter said, in a voice that reminded Gary of the way Joli talked about booze or cigarettes or valium or pot when it was getting straight season. Then he smiled, the way she would when something gave her a reason to pour or puff or pop again. "You know, I've got something, they might be a little old fashioned for you, but something I think you might like. I've been carrying them around for years."

"That's great," Gary said, and his smile felt strange on his lips, as though he had never worn it before. "Thanks a lot."

He was even more surprised than before when he realized he meant that too.

II. TREASURE

"I hope you like these," Peter said, and smiled, and sat the box on the bed.

Gary picked up the box, then shook it because that seemed like the proper thing to do. There was a shifting of paper inside, the shifting of paper wrapped tight and piled deep around a bunch of somethings. Gary thought of packages sent from the tombs of pharaohs, filled with curses and treasures and tannis

He'd seen pictures
of the old Aurora
models,
on the back covers
of decade old comics
and the front pages
of high-priced vintage
model catalogs.
They looked like
nothing
Gary had seen
in his Masters
of the Universe
articulated figure
childhood.

leaves. He thought of paper dry wings unfolding as crypt dark eyes flickered open. And he found himself getting excited against his will.

"It's really nothing," Peter cautioned again, making Gary realize that some emotion must have shown. He pulled his face back into line. "I've had them for years. But they do sort of fit in with the decor."

Gary ripped the box open.

And found heaven inside.

"These are so neat," he said. They were.

Dracula stood in phosphorescent tuxedoed splendor, bat wing cape swept back over his shoulders. Frankenstein's Monster reached out with both spade fingered hands, his piece work face empty of every emotion save suffering. Mr. Hyde crouched beside him, and the only suffering in his face was the glimmering anticipation of that which he was going to cause others. Gary scooped them from the box, revealing others beneath. The wolfman, the mummy, the phantom of the opera, the creature from the black lagoon, finally a zombie who looked more vintage Val Lewton than George Romero.

"These are so neat," he said again.

He'd seen pictures of the old Aurora models, on the back covers of decade old comics and the front pages of high-priced vintage model catalogs. They looked like nothing Gary had seen in his Masters of the Universe articulated figure childhood. Unmoving, immovable, they seemed more filled with wild freedom than the whole legion of three to twelve inch action figures that filled his television and toy stores. They were unique. The figures Peter had given him weren't Auroras. They were better.

They were magic.

"I've never seen anything like these," Gary said, lifting them like priceless china and laying them gently on their backs, on his bed. "Who put them out? I've never seen them in any of the model catalogs."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BENJAMIN T. GIBSON had an aunt who read tea leaves, his mother held seances throughout his childhood, and at the age of three he saw a living dinosaur outside his house. If that isn't enough to qualify him to be an author, what is? He's sold stories to both *Grue* and *Thin Ice*. This is his first story to appear in *The Horror Show*.

"Things were different back when I was a kid," Peter answered, staring at the figures with wide, loving eyes. "There were about a thousand little companies, not just a couple giant ones. Hell, sometimes it was hard to figure out who made what. Sometimes it was like they were just there."

"Thank you, Peter," Gary said, and wondered if he had ever uttered the words before and meant them.

Peter shrugged, but his smile gave him away. He looked at the poster of Sergeant Joe. "They look kind of old fashioned next to this big guy. Who is he?"

"Sergeant Joe," Gary answered. He noticed that Peter was taller than he'd seemed before, almost as big as the giant man monster who glowered out from the door. "He was in Vietnam, and his soldiers ran off when some Viet Cong attacked them. He got wounded and captured, and they tortured him a lot, but he never said a word. Finally they killed him, or at least they thought they did. They buried him in this swamp."

"And he came back," Peter said, his voice a soft, horse growl. He touched the poster with fingernails that were long and hooked and caked with dirt. "And he killed the Cong. And he kept coming back, back all the way to America. And he killed the men who left him behind. And their wives. And their children. And everyone. He's your favorite, isn't he?"

"Yes." Gary stared at the poster, then stared at the figures. When he looked back up Peter had turned away from the door, turned back toward him. "I thought you said you'd never seen him?"

"I've seen enough others to know how they work." Peter's voice was soft and smooth once more. There wasn't a trace of dirt under his close cut nails. Gary wondered what reflection from the poster had made it look as if there had been. "They always come back."

"I know," Gary said, lifting Dracula from the bed and staring deep into his blood red eyes. "Isn't it neat?"

"Yes," Peter agreed, wearing a face of love as he watched Gary's brown eyes tint crimson. "It is."

III. FRIEND

Joli wanted to go out. She wanted to go to the Club Royale and dance in the Boom Boom Room. The place seemed like an alien world to Gary, a hostile planet with a hateful name. He had never seen it, but he could picture it clearly when he closed his eyes. He always saw it in flames. Sometimes Joli got out.

Tonight she was burning.

She wanted to go out, and the video re-

order was already hooked up to the television. She wanted to go out, and the popcorn was popping, the pizzas on their way from Godfather's. She wanted to go out, and *Halloween* was in the machine, *Friday the Thirteenth Part Two*, *Nightmare on Elm Street*, and two of the three Sergeant Joe movies waiting their turn. She wanted to go out, and ruin the first night Gary had ever looked forward to.

Peter said no, and that was when the screaming started.

Gary sat on his bed while angry words pounded on his bedroom door. The figures Peter had given him glowed lemon lime in the darkness. Each one seemed to be looking into a different part of Gary's soul. He'd never known he had one before.

Joli told Peter that Gary could watch the movies by himself. She reminded him that he was living here because of her, not her son. She told him she didn't need a man to lay around and watch the television. Gary couldn't hear one of Pete's answers. Then the front door slammed, and in the silence that followed it was all that Gary could do to keep from crying. He wouldn't watch the damned movies by himself. He wouldn't

His bedroom door opened.

"You ready to watch some movies?" Peter asked.

Joli didn't come home that night.

Gary had never been happier.

"Are you going to be in trouble for this?" Gary asked as the last movie ended.

"I already am," Peter said with a helpless shrug. "I thought this was a little more important. I wish she had stayed and watched with us."

Gary didn't.

"Do you love her?" he asked Peter after a moment. He hoped Pete would say yes, even though he couldn't imagine anyone loving Joli. For the first time in his life he'd met someone he didn't want to go away.

"Your mother's a very special lady." But they were hollow words, echoing through some vast, empty space. "And she has a very special son."

"A very special boyfriend, too," Gary whispered, the words hard to say because somehow a golf ball had materialized in his throat.

He didn't want to cry, but he was afraid he was going to. He was happy. He had a friend. And he knew that before long his mother was going to send his friend away. He bit his lip and read the ending credits until the tears had dried in his eyes.

"Do you love her?" Peter asked quietly, his hands settling gently on Gary's shoulders.

"No," Gary said, seeing Joli in the Boom Boom Room, her blonde hair sprouting red punk spikes of fire, dancing an asphyxiation



jitterbug as smoke filled her lungs. "I hate her."

Pete's hands were still on his shoulders when Gary added, "But I love you."

IV. JOE

This time when the door slammed it was Peter who left the house. Ten arguments in five days, and tonight Joli had thrown the telephone at him. Peter caught it softly and set it carefully on the sofa before he walked out the door.

Joli had screamed after him, telling him not to come back. She had added, with her usual charm, that he had better stop by early in the morning if he wanted to beat the garbage men to the curb, because that was where his things would be. Her last word on the subject of Pete, shouted at Gary before she left herself to hit a few bars, was to pack up those toys the bastard had given him and put them with his other things.

Gary stared at them now, tainted beacons in the pitch black room. Their light was the shade of corruption, sickly green on dirty yellow, but they were still brighter than the darkness that surrounded them.

He stared at Dracula and saw Joli, streaking like a comet from the burning Boom Boom Room, leaving a blazing trail of fire behind her. Dracula stepped from the shadows, enfolded her in his cape, put out the flames. Put out her life.

Gary saw the phantom of the opera, playing his organ in the smoky bowels of the club. His dark tune accompanied Joli's last dance, a wild strip that started with her clothes and ended with her flesh. The music didn't stop until her charred bones clattered to

the burning floor.

Gary saw Sergeant Joe, lumbering slowly into the midst of the other figures, and that was when he knew he had to be dreaming.

But he wasn't.

There was a girl running down an alley. Gary couldn't see the alley, but he knew it was there. He could sense the prehistoric rise of the mammoth dumpsters, the rough, blank walls of empty buildings. He heard the click and splash of her feet, heels in rain-puddled ruts. He wasn't surprised when she tripped and fell. They always did.

Sergeant Joe towered over her, took a deep breath and let it shudder slowly out. The girl stared up at him with wide, knowing eyes. She had seen this scene played out before. She was starring in it now, and she knew how it ended.

There was a scream, but it sounded like a television with the volume turned down.

A thin track of bright red blood washed across the rain-spattered pavement, into a puddle, where it turned pink.

The girl faded from existence.

Sergeant Joe glowed in the darkened room, like the other figures.

Gary closed his eyes and prayed that Peter would come back for him.

V. FATHER

At first glance Gary thought it was the poster on his bedroom door. But the door was open, the poster turned to the wall. Sergeant Joe stood seven feet tall in the doorway, fresh blood staining his torn uniform.

"Hi, Pete."

Sergeant Joe stepped into Gary's bedroom, past Gary's bed, to the dresser. He

stared down at the nine day-glo figures, finally picked up the one that looked just like him. His huge back shuddered and Gary wondered if he were crying or shivering with ecstasy. A moment later Gary realized he wasn't doing either.

He was shrinking.

The helmet faded from Sergeant Joe's head. The trench knife disappeared from his side. The green and brown camouflage swirls spiraled and darkened until they were the blue of jeans and the black of a sport shirt. When Sergeant Joe sat the figure back down his nails were trim, his teeth weren't pointed. He wasn't Sergeant Joe anymore.

"Hi, Gary."

Now he was Pete.

"Did you watch?"

Gary nodded. "It was better than any movie."

"It was a movie," Pete said, turning just enough to look back at the twelve inch monsters. "Except I was in it. And the person I killed was real."

"I know." Gary slid off his bed and walked to Peter. "But she was just the victim. You were the star. Tomorrow every-body'll be talking about it."

"Everybody," Peter echoed, putting his hand on Gary's shoulder and guiding him to the dresser. "It's hard, Gary. It's so hard keeping their monsters alive. By the day after tomorrow they'll have forgotten."

"No they won't." Gary picked up Sergeant Joe. "We won't let them."

Sergeant Joe was sticky with blood, but Gary didn't care. He stared into the figure's tiny red eyes and found himself inside, staring back out.

"Everyone wants to see them," Peter said, his hand slipping from Gary's shoulder as the boy began to grow. "Everyone needs to see them. But only a few of us can be them."

"Joli said you've got to take them with you." Gary's voice sounded strange in his ears. It sounded right. "She said ... you know, sometimes Sergeant Joe has a flame thrower."

And it was there.

"We'll have to leave," Peter said. "I'll pack your things while you're gone."

"Okay." Sergeant Joe's hands checked his flame thrower while his eyes focused on a burning night club. "I'll be back soon. Please watch me. Dad."

"I will, son," Peter said, tears joining love in his eyes. "Be careful."

Gary walked past the poster that might as well have been a mirror, out the bedroom door. It was like walking through a movie screen, to the land on the other side.

He had never been there before.

It was like coming home.





YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN

ARDATH MAYHAR

A swirl of oak leaves danced out of the wood, across the road, and slapped pettishly at the windshield. For an instant, the cool October moon stared through their mottling shadows into my face. Then they blew on, and the road shone dimly in the glare of the headlights.

It was familiar, yet there was a difference. The sharp curve that my hands were braced for had turned into a gentle arc, banked to hold a car on the road. The uphill grade was cut down. I no longer would have had to shift into second to keep the engine from clattering, though my powerful Lincoln took any grade without a problem.

The cut that had lowered the road left banks rising as high as the top of the car on either side. There it was dark, for the moon was still low and it was early evening. At the darkest point, something pale and small flashed through the cone of light and was gone. A cat? Perhaps the umpteenth great-grandchild of the Angora that my mother had doted on and tormented?

Then I was at the top of the hill, looking out across clear space that had been thick stands of oak and ash and pine, when I left home. The house shone in the moonlight, tall and commanding. Mama always resented the forest that hid her imposing home ... she must have had it cut at last.

I wished it back with all my heart, but the shorn meadow glimmered mockingly as the moon rose higher and the stars stared down. The house stared, too, from bleak, malicious windows.

I eased off on the gas, slid the lever into neutral. The car eased to a stop. How many years was it since I had left that house behind? Almost thirty ... I had left my girlhood behind me, since last being here. It was no rebellious nineteen-year-old who now returned to claim the heritage she never wanted and would never have possessed except for the deaths of two well-loved brothers.

Sitting there, sheltered from the pitiless moonlight, I thought of Ed and Vance. My big brothers, always sources of pride and frustration to me. Kind, offhandedly patient with my unfeminine presence, they bridged, to some extent, the hostile gap between my helpless smallness and Mama's powerful will. They meant me well, even while leaving me out of plans, ignoring my questions and comments -- and me. I never quarreled with either of them, and now I was grateful for that. That unforgiving house could not charge me with disliking my brothers!

I shook myself from that dazed recollection. Fanciful notions, for one considering herself a skeptic! Now I owned that tall house, lock, stock, and barrel. I could burn it down, if I chose, for the insurance had lapsed while the lawyers tried to locate me to hand over this unexpected and unwanted heritage. They had had no cash to pay insurance or upkeep. There had been barely enough to bury Vance decently.

I smiled, thinking of the way in which my brother had enjoyed the wealth Dad had killed himself acquiring for Mama. He spent it to the last dime, and I was glad of it.

I paid the lawyers' fees myself and didn't begrudge a dime of it. I made more than enough, in the first half of my life, to entertain any fancy I chose during the last half, even if it meant a cash loss.

Making that success refuted, in my mind, Mama's assessment of me, which had been a mix of fury at my plainness and frustration at my wrong-headed love of adventure and business. Before she died, I let her know, by way of Ed and Vance, that I had more than made good. Rags to riches described my career, though the rags had been Mama's idea, when I resisted her steamrolling of my life.

Not that Ed and Vance submitted to her. They had that easy grace that agrees tacitly with anything you say without betraying the fact that they intend to do whatever they damned well pleased when the time comes. I had been too honest ... or perhaps pig-headed was the best word for it.

Centuries ago, if I had been a boy, at the age of nineteen I would have sewn a cross on my cloak and found a Crusade to follow. I *wanted* conflict, challenge, a cause to give my life meaning. Mama gave me conflict enough, that was true, for we had been at dagger's points for a year when at last I left, dramatically and on foot, bearing my few possessions on my back in the best fairytale tradition.

I laughed, sitting there in the Lincoln and thinking of the night I walked down this road, the trees on either hand making dapples of moonlight across the gravel. I cranked the engine and eased forward, toward the house. Then I was full of fury, determined to prove myself. Now I could only wish that someone was left who might care if I proved *anything*. My victory was empty.

The house was empty, too. A daily cleaning woman had done for Vance, in contrast to the teams of servants who came and went under Mama's hard-handed rule. The

Something moved
at the edge
of the pooled lamplight.
Pale and furry,
it looked like ...
a cat?
But the house
had been empty
for months.
How could one
have survived without
help ...
and alone?

daily maid had cooked for him, which was fortunate. If no one had invented pork and beans, Vance would have starved, if left on his own.

I pulled around the circular drive and into the portico at the back. No limousine had ever pulled into its shelter to discharge important guests for a function over which Mama presided. If Dad had lived, it might have happened, but Mama was too impatient. She heckled him to his grave, I always believed, and by dying he only gave her more cause to complain.

I killed the engine and stepped out of the car. Sweeping away below, in all its splendor, was the view that Dad had found and built his house to enjoy. In the moon's chilly light, the forest stretched away, broken only by distant twinkles marking Gallatin, far to the north, and Venusia, almost below and fifteen miles away. Occasional sparks showed isolated farms. Mama always hated that view, which was the reason for her isolation from a world just waiting to worship at her feet.

My case was light. The bigger ones and the books I left in the car, as I unlocked the heavy door, whose stained glass inset was only a black glimmer in the darkness. The big brass key turned crankily, and the door swung open, letting me step, after so many years, into the impressive back corridor of my home. I shivered suddenly and touched the light switch.

Blast! I sent money for the necessary connections, but the lawyers had not reconnected the electricity. I wondered suddenly if the oil tanks had been filled before Vance died. We were too remote for natural gas or any water supply except our own. If there was oil in the huge container in the cellar and water in the tanks on the roof, I might be able

to survive until something could be done. The water pump to re-supply the roof tanks would have to wait. I hoped the tanks had been filled recently.

I set my case in the hall and went to check the nearest bathroom. The tap turned stiffly, allowing a stream of water to run into the basin. It tasted a bit flat and galvanized (from the tank, of course), but the pressure was good.

The old lamps still should be in the kitchen, I suspected. Nothing ever changed in Mama's house, whether she was there or not. And, sure enough, they sat on their high shelf, together with a two-gallon can of lamp oil.

I set one on the kitchen table, and when it was lit the mellow glow softened the clinical look of the room. I had always hated the kitchen, and so had all the cooks in the long roll of those who came to work for Mama. They usually lasted from a week to a month, as I recalled.

"It may be modern and sanitary," one had snorted at Mama upon leaving. "But it's like working in a confounded morgue. You can almost smell disinfectant!"

You still could, though it was obvious the place had not been scrubbed up thoroughly for a long time. I wondered suddenly about food ... I had been so distracted at the thought of coming here that I had never thought to pick up supplies.

I blessed Vance as I checked the pantry. Though the refrigerator and freezer were bare and clean, in the pantry shelves were row upon row of canned goods. An entire shelf of pork and beans took me back in time to our campouts -- the rare ones that admitted a small sister to the complement. I could smell the smoke of the fire, taste the slightly ashy beans, the tin spoon ... I brought myself back to the present with an effort. The second shelf held canned beef, vegetables of many kinds, soup, potato chips in cans. There was enough to do me well for as long as I wanted to stay, if I didn't become too weary of canned food. I had never been even as much of a cook as Vance.

The house was cold, chilled with the damp of an unoccupied house in late fall. I tried the furnace, pumped the pilot -- then remembered that the fans required electricity. Knowing my Mama, I knew the old oil heaters were probably in the cellar, beside the new furnace. I felt certain that there would be enough oil left in the tanks, even unfilled ones, to fill one for days. Those big tanks had never been completely empty in all the years I lived here.

It took a lot of bumping and swearing, but at last I got the bulky heater into the library. There I cursed the lack of care that left Dad's valuable books to the mercies of



damp and insects. I brought a couple of the lamps, as well, and when all were alight, the room began to warm, and the light chased away unwelcome memories.

I cleaned up in the nearby bath, in cold water, of course, put on my flannel pajamas and my woolly robe, and returned to sit in the deep chair that Mama had consecrated to Dad's memory. I had never sat in it once in my entire life. Her smaller armchair was set at an angle beyond the marble topped table holding the lamp.

I could almost see her there, her gray hair tied into an uncompromising knot, her black eyes snapping as she charged me with some unforgivable sin that no proper daughter would ever dream of committing.

I closed my eyes for a moment. Then I stared around the room. The fireplace was sealed, as it had been since Mama put in the furnace ("inefficient!" Mama had said). The mantel was still filled with delicate jade sculptures, which had been Ed's treasures. I ached suddenly, seeing his big brown face, his huge hands tenderly cradling one of the pieces.

On the library table were Vance's sailing ships, twenty-five of them, each the product of months or even years of work. Some he carved from ivory he found in antique shops; some he made of woods, and some of filigreed metal. All were lovely and fragile ... as gossamer as Vance had been tough and square-hewn.

I had seemed to be the gentle, sensitive one, but inside I was tough and determined. Of the three, I was the only one to tackle and conquer the giant Money. I sighed.

Something moved at the edge of the pooled lamplight. Pale and furry, it looked like ... a cat? But the house had been empty for months. How could one have survived without help ... and alone?



Mama's Angora had borne me no malice. Indeed, it had cuddled in my lap, when we could find a private moment free of Mama, before she called "Ginni! Ginni! Where has that cat got to?" and that sent the animal scampering. She, too, knew the penalty of crossing Mama.

"Kitty-kitty!" I called. I felt foolish. How could there possibly be a cat here?

There was no sound, no hint of motion. I settled back in Dad's chair and looked in the direction I'd been avoiding all evening. Mama's portrait, hanging over the long table, had been painted by the foremost painter of her day, at the height of her early beauty. She had believed with all her might that her talented husband was going to pull her, along with him, to the height of social and political power.

Even I could that she was lovely, then, though to my knowing eye the beginning of the domineering curl had already touched her smiling mouth. There was the hint of hardness in the dark eyes. Yet she seemed, there in oils, all grace, tenderness, and beauty.

I used to come into this room, as a child, to look at the picture and to wonder what fairy had stolen away that lovely woman and substituted the mother I knew. The contrast between the person the artist had seen and what that woman had become still puzzled me.

She had great determination. Her talents varied from a competence in business to a genius at manipulating people. Why had she not gone out, after Dad died, and used his wealth and her wits to make her own place in the world?

I had been too young to wonder, at the time, but I did so now.

Then I shuddered. Something touched my ankle, and I stared down into an inquiring Angora face. Smiling, I scraped the remnants of my cod beef onto a saucer and slid it beneath the chair, wondering how the beast had survived. The mouse population must be down to nothing ... and how had it gotten water? Then I recalled the toilet in the bathroom. Its lid was open.

I didn't watch, for Ginni had hated being observed when eating. Instead, I rose and took my dirty plate and cup back to the kitchen. Nothing could have made me leave it until morning, for Mama might return from her grave to call me a slob.

The hall was lit dimly by the lamps in the library as I returned, picking my way between small Persian rugs. I froze in place as a voice called from above, "Ginni! Ginni! Where has that cat got to?"

The shrill tone scraped along my nerves. My ears rang with it. Suddenly I recalled what Ed had written me, shortly after Mama's death:

We knew for some time that she was failing. You remember Ginni, the cat? She still had an Angora, this one called Ginni, too. Three days before she died, Mama called in Dr. Allison and asked him point-blank if she was dying. He didn't try to deny it.

After he was gone, she called Ginni and Vance and me into her room. We thought she was going to say goodbye -- give us some sort of last instructions -- maybe ask us to find you. At least something that normal people do when they die. Not Mama. She strangled the cat and handed it to me.

"Go bury it in the garden," she said. And I did, but I have to admit that for the first time I realized that you were right about Mama. I suppose my memories went back to when Vance and I were little, and she was still a human person.

Now I know why you left, Berna. I understand a lot of things. I'm going to move away, for I can't seem to bear it here any more.

He did leave, and he died four years after that, though he was only thirty-six at the time. Vance had shared Mama's money with him freely, but he didn't enjoy it, and he just drifted away in Mama's wake.

Now I was in the hall where I had stood so many times, hearing her call her cat. That small sad shape in the library -- was it or was it not a living animal?

I hurried into the room and looked under the chair. The saucer of food had not been touched, though a long pale hair clung to the upholstery of the flounce edging the slip-cover.

The voice came nearer, as if Mama were coming downstairs. "Ginni!"

My hand touched something under the chair, soft and tenuous. Almost not there, yet tangible. I closed my fingers about the furry shape, and something not quite invisible came into the light with my hand. There was the ghost of a purr.

I stood, feeling my knees shake beneath me. I felt myself turn pale, and I had to admit that I was cold with terror. I had feared her alive. How could I face her, dead? The thing in my hand squirmed about, as if trying to hide against me.

I spent years in trying to escape from the house and Mama. I had achieved the impossible again and again, believing that it would free me from her. But it had not.

Tucking the cat beneath my arm, I stepped forward and kicked over the stove, spilling blazing oil over the Persian carpet. I thought of the books ... a pity, but necessary.

In the hall, I caught up my case and my purse. My jacket came out of the closet, with the keys of the car in a pocket. I went quietly and not too quickly down the hall toward the rear entry.

There came a screech behind me. "You! Berna! I always knew you were no good! Where's my cat? Ginni! Don't take her away!"

I was at the door, leaving it open behind me to the rising breeze. The car started with the ease of expensive engineering, and I pulled around the circle and down the drive. Where the woods had been, I stopped and stepped out to watch the house burn. It was like a beacon. They would see it in Gallatin. Trucks might well come up from Venusia, but they would be too late. Mama and her house were going up in flames.

Would I be free at last? I was taking with me something, not a living, visible creature, but something, that had feared Mama as much as I had. I saved Ginni, at last, from her murderer. Something in that act also saved me. Maybe now I could go on and live a life, find someone to share the rest of it. Make two or three more fortunes?

The wind freshened in my face. The cold October moon shone overhead. Against my chest there was the tremulous hint of a purr.





SEITZINGER



HOM



COMMON WATERS

R.G. BENJAMIN

Listen to me.

I hear her in the other room. She has a funny giggle, bubbling fast and then choking like a sob. When she laughs, I think she's crying, too. Maybe she is. I know I cry.

Elizabeth is six, and very small. Her arms are thin, and when she hugs my thigh, I can almost feel her heart beating through her biceps.

I hate that.

I joined the East Shelby police department in 1976. The Chief gave me the Vermont State Statues on criminal and motor vehicle law and said, "Okay, Karl, read these over the next few weeks." Then he handed me a few uniforms, some beat-up leather gear, a gun, and put me in the cruiser.

I thought the job would be cakework, I really did. Do some good, fight a little crime, save a few lives, be loved by one and all.

I had never--ever--been blind-sided like that in my entire life.

It's almost three a.m. Soon she'll come in with me.

She's very affectionate.

Again, I ask myself, should I use the gun?

Any cop can tell you, there's a big difference between motor vehicle work and criminal work. Motor vehicle is quick and easy: the speed's on the radar, here's your ticket, sit on the judge's lap and tell *him* your troubles.

But criminal work ... Jesus, what a swamp. People bleeding and screaming and cursing, and losing any self-control. And half the time, I couldn't tell who was right and who was wrong. But I learned quickly that some people want to be martyrs in public.

My father beat my mother from as early as I can remember until I was twelve, when he slammed the door behind him and vanished into the dark.

There were some lean years after that, and I was whining once to my aunt--my father's sister--about them.

"My mom can hardly make the rent payment," I was saying. "And she's tired and sad all the time."

My mother came in the room and interrupted me, then waited until my aunt left before she boxed my ear. I started crying, more in surprise than pain; she'd never hit me

before.

"That," she said in a voice that lowered the room temperature, "will be the last time you talk about our personal business. I despise that. It sounds pathetic."

That night, instead of taking her usual nap before she went to her cleaning job, she stayed up and made me some tapioca pudding, my favorite. And while I ate, she brushed the hair off my forehead and talked quietly about the different between those who dealt with their own problems, and those who whined about them.

There's no one else alive on the planet at three a.m. I'm convinced of this.

Things were fine for a long time. A crime wave for East Shelby was two burglaries in a row.

Everything changed when Grappler Tool and Die, the town's only major employer, moved to Brattleboro. The unemployment rate climbed into the stratosphere, and assaults and vandalisms sprouted like spring toadstools.

I started arresting people, thinking I was protecting the victims. Blindsided again. I arrested Teddy LeBarron once for thumping his wife Michelle, after she sobbed and cursed him and gave me a written statement.

"I want that sonuvabitch locked up, Karl. He's beat me for the last time." She signed her statement so hard she almost tore the paper.

So I arrested Teddy and tossed him in the crowbar hotel. It wasn't three days later that Michelle told the State's Attorney she was lying, and dropped charges. Teddy got out of jail and filed a false arrest lawsuit. The town gave him \$800.00 to shut up and go away, which he did, but he never failed to smirk at me whenever he saw me. My stomach burned for weeks after that.

That type of thing happened more often than I care to remember. Not the lawsuit part--that was the high point--but people cried on my shoulder, and when I thought I was helping them, they cried to the lawyers and judges and social workers. Finally, I said fuck it, I'm not arresting anyone unless I absolutely have to.

When I did have to arrest someone, it usually went like this:

"Listen, Karl, I know you warned me, but I ain't been right since I lost my job at Grap-

The gun is tempting.
It lies there
on its side,
gloriously blue
and shiny,
aching to be touched ...
embraced.
I wonder about pain:
how much,
how long.
For me, not for her.

pler, and I--"

"You got the right to remain silent. Shuddup."

This bothered Harley, the old night sergeant. "Compassion," he'd say. "There, but for the grace of God, go you or me."

Harley listened. People would straggle in at all hours--in any condition--to sing their sad songs, and he'd sit there behind his desk, nodding his head and sucking his pipe with the corner of his mouth. He never said much, but he paid attention.

I asked him once how he could stand it.

He answered, "Aside from being the decent thing to do, who knows how much crime is prevented by letting someone get all that poison out?"

"Bullshit," I sneered. I sneered good back then. "An asshole is an asshole, and nothing you do will change that."

He shrugged. "You and I are going to part company on that point. I think anything anyone does affects someone else." He poked his pipe bowl with a crusty yellow thumb and peeked inside. Without looking up, he said, "Humanity stands in common waters; when you make a move, you make a ripple."

Harley had a pit bull face, a horseshoe of white hair on his head, and a belly that kept him from snuggling up to his desk, but that remark didn't sound funny coming from him. It didn't embarrass him to say thing like that.

I've been thinking, Harley. I've had the time and the inspiration. I could tell you that on the open seas, even a tsunami is just a flex on the ocean surface. It becomes a tidal wave only when it reaches something to crash against.

I could tell you a lot now, Harley. I wish I could tell you.

Harley died behind his desk. Sarah, one of Harley's regulars, an old girl whose brain had long ago been turned to Jell-O Instant Pudding by years of booze and violent men,

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

R.G. BENJAMIN is a pseudonym for a 33-year old police detective working in Bennington, VT. He resides in Vermont with his wife and four-year-old son. Common Waters is his first professionally published effort.

was talking to him when he went. She told me later that she thought he was just resting his eyes, but they were still closed when she stopped talking, so she shook his shoulder and he tilted to one side.

The doctor called it a "quiet heart attack." It's the type Harley would have had.

He didn't have any family, but I never saw so many people at a funeral in my life.

A couple of days after Harley was laid to rest, I sat on a barstool making a few toss-away remarks about sympathy softening his heart. Mike Beatty turned to me and said, "Well, Karl, I guess you don't have to worry. You'll keep going until your ticker hardens too much too beat." Then he tried to smile, like he was only fooling.

She's stopped giggle-sobbing, and that's almost as bad. She's on her way to me.

The gun is tempting. It lies there on its side, gloriously blue and shiny, aching to be touched ... embraced. I wonder about pain: how much, how long. For me, not for her.

I hated domestic problems. People didn't just want me to listen, they clung like pond scum until I could shake them off.

Jeff Orly broke down sobbing and told me he'd caught his wife in bed tangled around another woman. He'd grabbed a shotgun and chased them, both still naked, down the middle of the street. "For Christ's sake, Karl," he said. "What do you think *she'd* do if she came home and caught me bobbing for apples in some guy's lap?" I thought she might try to make it a threesome, but I didn't tell him that.

Millicent Porter gambled her child support payments away, then slapped the kids when they whined they were hungry. She cried herself to sleep on most nights. She told me she had a "problem."

Billy Meyers reported his fifteen-year-old daughter, Sandra, missing; and he demanded she be brought right home and not be questioned by anybody. When I happened across her on Main Street, I told her I was going to bring her home. She sighed and nodded, and got in the cruiser. I had my suspicions.

Jimmy Brundles smashed his elderly mother in the mouth when she wouldn't give him any drinking money. She told me he was a "good boy" most of the time.

I had to laugh sometimes. Some jokes have strange punchlines.

My involvement in each case was this: I told them to settle it in the family. If they didn't, someone was going to jail.

I didn't get called back too many times. That was my idea of compassion.

A quick ripple up and down my spine, a pianist running the keys, tells me she's in the

room. She moves silently. I think she slides in between the door and the jamb.

I can hear her breathing, though. It sounds like it's difficult for her; her throat rattles and clicks. Her poor neck.

I push the gun away.

An old woman, who didn't want her name used, called the station.

"They're fighting," she whispered. I could almost picture her cupping her hand over the mouthpiece and squinting through the window of a dark room. "He's really tearing the place up. You better send someone. There's a little girl in there." She gave me the address.

I heard him as soon as I got out of my cruiser. From the street, I couldn't make out distinct words, but I knew the tone of voice. I palmed the end of my flashlight, walked up to the front door, and listened.

"You fucking roundheels! You just fall on your back for any swinging dick, don't you?" Pause. Then: "Don't you?" Something crashed against the floor. I pounded on the door with my flashlight.

Everything stopped, as if someone just threw a breaker switch. They knew who rapped on doors at midnight.

"Just a minute," a woman called. I heard some fast footsteps and chairs scraping the linoleum.

"Who is it?" she asked from the other side of the door. I rolled my eyes. "Police," I grumbled.

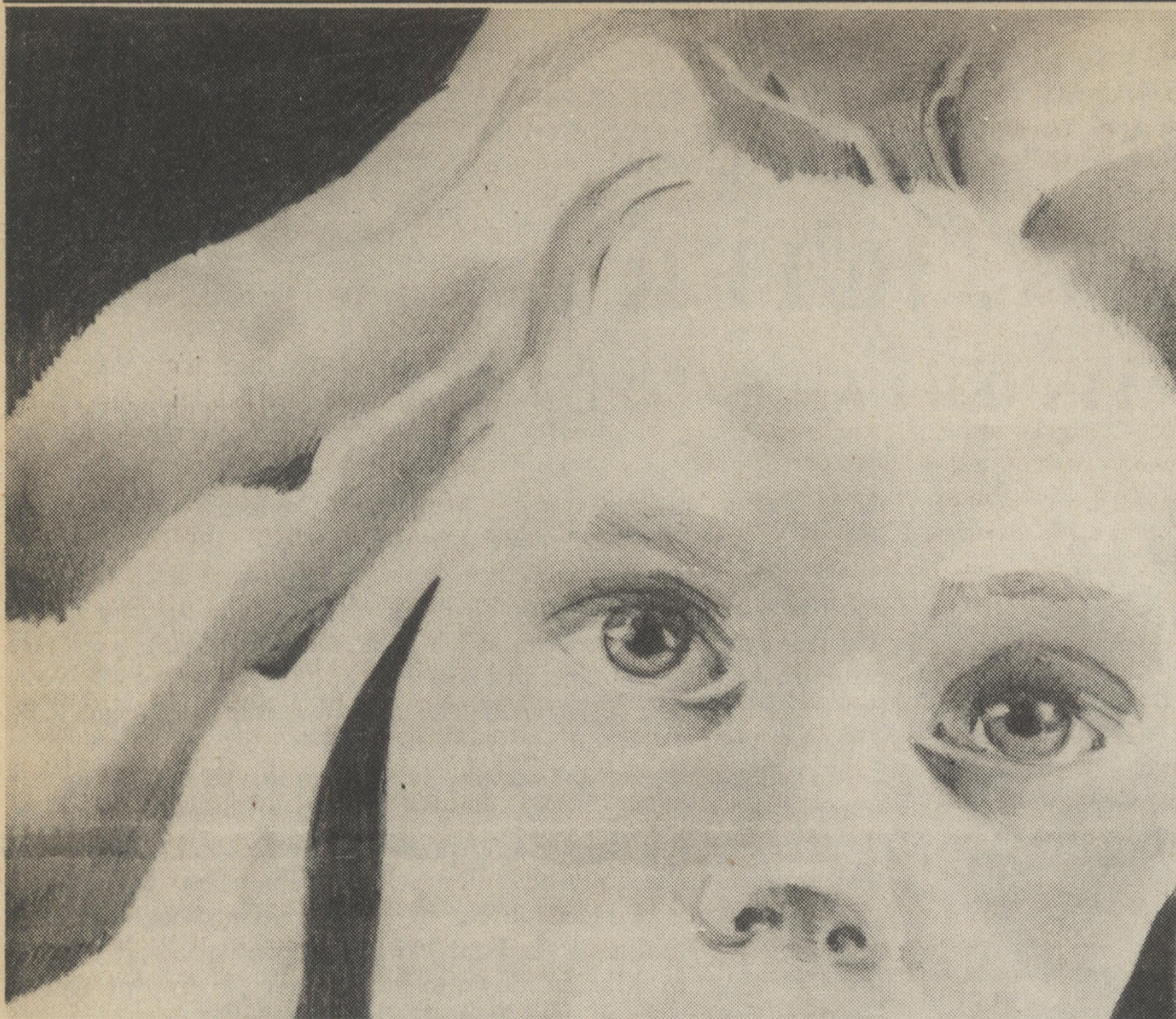
A short, chunky blonde, wearing denim cut-offs and a tube top, swung the door open and moved aside to let me in. Her expression said, *Oh, great, just what I needed, another man.* That irritated me right away, and I wondered if she deserved a little of what she was getting.

I recognized the place as soon as I stepped in. I'd never been there before, but I knew it well; they all look and smell the same.

The stench, a mixture of body odor, garbage, and piss, hung in the air like humidity. I took quick, shallow breaths to keep too much of it from getting in my lungs, but I knew I'd be smelling it in my clothes and hair for the rest of the night.

The kitchen floor pulled at my shoe soles like tape as I walked in. The garbage container rim barely poked through a cone of rubbish. Moldy dishes cluttered the sink and counters, making nifty canyons and mountains for the cockroaches scooting among them.

The man sat at the table, glaring at the wall. He was tall, in his thirties, and had shiny black hair. He wore a blue plumber's uniform with "Jimbo" written over the breast pocket.



I started to say something to him, and for some reason, I looked in the corner behind me and saw a girl there with her knees tucked under her chin. I thought she was about five or six years old, but she seemed tiny to me. She stared at me for a second and then scabbled across the floor on her hands and knees, stringy blonde hair cuffing the sides of her head, whimpering something I couldn't hear. She threw her arms around my thigh and squeezed for dear life (and oh Jesus if only I'd understood that then), and when she looked up at me, eyes wide, I saw the bruise on her forehead and the blood on her lips.

I'm sorry.

We were fighting, and I accidentally bumped into her and knocked her into the counter, Mom said.

Dad jumped up from his chair, suddenly all grins and gestures. That's right, officer. And I told her to be more careful, and she got mad, and one thing led to another, you know hot it is.

Tell the officer, honey.

Tell him *now*, honey.

And the girl giggled nervously, choking back a sob.

Have a cup of coffee, officer?

A line of dismissal. They knew I'd never touch it.

The girl looked from her parents to me and retreated to her corner, where she turned away. Being powerless is easier when you've

never known power.

I believed them because it was easier than not believing them. I gave them my standard song-and-tap-dance, and left without taking another look at the girl. I never got their names, and I never saw them again.

I wish a lot of things. I wish ...

The same old woman called again, two hours later.

"They started again, right after you left." She spoke loudly. "Swearing and hollering. Then I heard the girl scream for a second, and he must've clamped his hand over her mouth, because she stopped suddenly."

I felt the first tickle of fear in my chest. "Why didn't you call right away?"

"Because it stopped. The only reason I'm calling now is because I just saw the two of them sneaking out. I'm worried for the girl." She didn't know their names; they'd only lived there a few weeks.

When I got there, I knocked once and kicked the door open.

Ahhh, God, this hurts.

I turned on the lights and saw her hand first, knuckles down on the kitchen floor, fingers half-curved. The rest of her sprawled on the other side of the door, her scrawny legs kinked in impossible directions. A Pound Puppy lay inches from her hand.

Her head twisted away from a bulge in

her neck. Her Winnie-the-Pooh pajamas cork-screwed around her torso. Her eyes, open and glazed, looked inward. I thought she was smiling, but I pray it was beginning rigor mortis.

I don't know how long I stood there, bonding to her, before I heard the old woman screaming behind me. I turned slowly and stupidly while her scream turned to a crash of white noise, and my own mouth opened to maybe scream myself or maybe make an excuse; and when she looked at me her scream stopped, her eyes narrowed, her mouth flexed, and I heard "... you do something?" just before she slapped my face.

The tsunami reached something to crash against.

I named her Elizabeth. Everyone's got to have a name. I knew an Elizabeth in first grade who told me she loved me, and I'd ignored her.

The State of Vermont held Elizabeth's body for ten days, to be claimed, before paying for the burial. She got a K-Mart coffin.

The parents couldn't be found. My hunch now is that when they drove around the corner, they ceased to exist. Just a hunch.

After I resigned, I found a job as a night watchman at a small industrial park. I walked rounds, yanked doorknobs, and talked to myself.

I heard a giggle-sob in my spare bedroom, about two weeks after I resigned. Although my heart almost stalled, I went in to check. I felt a rush of air and a familiar embrace on my thigh. After I shrieked, I cried.

There's a punchline here somewhere.

Sometimes I hear a man roaring drunkenly at a pleading little girl, whose pleas end with a moist, muffled snap. Sometimes she just jabbars happily, if a little painfully, to herself. But she always hugs me. I can see my pant leg wrinkling in a circle around my leg, and her arms feel like cool clay. Her heart (thump thump) beats too strongly to be anything but a reminder to me.

Elizabeth visits when she can; not all the time, but when she can. Often enough.

She loves me, I know this, despite what happened, despite what she has to do.

I wish I could love her back. I think it would help.

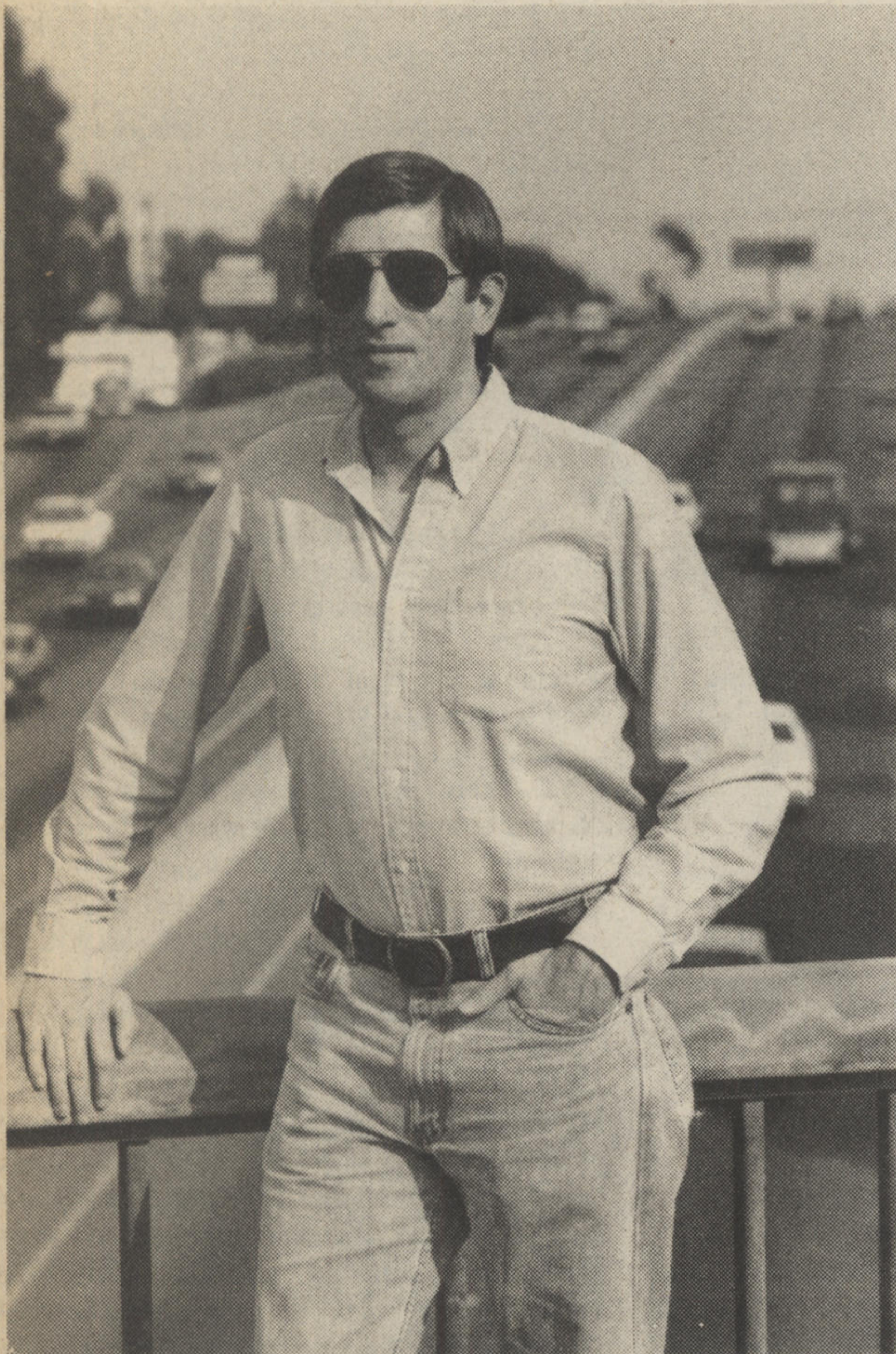


"One of the things that people have said about my writing, that I feel proudest about, is that I take an unusually sympathetic approach to characters who would more often be dismissed or explained away as being 'simply' evil." Charles de Lint presents:

K.W. JETER

FROM INNER LANDSCAPES

Photo by: Viki Blaylock



A list of his work is like a roll call of some of the most imaginative literature of the late twentieth century.

He has taken us a few steps further into a future first shown to us by H.G. Wells.

He has given us terrifying glimpses of a near future L.A. that might well still come to be.

He has shown us an alternate view of Victorian England, complete with an array of clockwork automations.

But it is as a suspense writer that we are considering him today, for his fertile imagination is only one facet of his considerable talent. Recently he has turned his crisp prose and startling character insights to a terra incognita at once more familiar, yet desperately alien: the dark inner landscapes of the human mind.

K.W. Jeter was born in Los Angeles in 1950 where he fell victim to

the infamous "tracking system" instituted in California schools during the administration of Governor Pat Brown.

"I'm by no means a political conservative now," Jeter says, "so don't take this as a general political statement, but the tracking system was an example of liberalism at its misguided, interfering worst, the result of those assumptions that the state in its wisdom knows what's best for its citizens and should take an active role in shaping those citizens' lives.

"The theory behind the tracking system was that schoolteachers and administrators, using all sorts of tests and other evaluating methods, would determine as early as kindergarten or the first grade which kids were predestined to go on to college and become doctors and lawyers, and which would be most fulfilled by becoming construction workers or pulling down shifts on the Ford Motor Company assembly line. In practice, however, it boiled down to the schoolteachers' own middle-class assumptions about the relationship between family income and intelligence, plus their own self-interest--no teacher was going to risk getting into the deep shit by telling Mr. and Mrs. Gotrocks that their little Susie was a bit on the dim side; naturally Susie went right into the bright kid track.

"My father, however, even though he's one of the most intelligent men I've known, was a truck driver, and I didn't even make it into the dumb kid track; I was placed in the retarded section, and stayed there for about three or four years."

Jeter wasn't the only one this happened to. A lot of his classmates were perfectly normal, or above normal, but one thing or another enabled the teachers to use the machinery of the tracking system to rid themselves of children that they didn't want to deal with.

"I remember," Jeter continues, "my friend Philip. He had a bladder control problem, or was *assumed* to have one--he had wet his pants on the school bus once, and didn't have a doctor or a lawyer as a father--and what teacher wants to deal with that, when with a couple of penstrokes you can make the whole kid disappear? But Philip had a great imagination, and a real gift, even at age five or six for storytelling--since there wasn't much to do in the retarded section except hang out, there was plenty of time for developing skills.

"Maybe that's where I got my start."

Eventually Jeter's mother, who had some friends in the school administration, pulled some strings and he was given a private I.O. test, just to see if he could be bumped up into the average kid track. He tested out at around 160 or 170 points, which created a small scandal in the school and several of the teachers who had rubber-stamped him as retarded were called on the carpet.

"I was plucked out of the retarded class, away from my friends, in the middle of the school year, and dropped right in the middle of the advanced section and told to sink or swim; I got by all right. Of course, I found out later that in my permanent record the word RETARDED had been crossed out and the word TROUBLEMAKER written in, for having bucked the system, or having it bucked on my behalf."

The tracking system was largely abandoned during the Sixties, during a wave of progressive school reform, but the experience left

marks on Jeter that influence the way he works and sees things to this day.

"I can't abide labeling of any sort," he says. "I think it's essentially a destructive process, a squeezing and chopping of real things to fit into various mental Procrustean beds. And to go along with that process voluntarily, to label one's self, though it may have some short-term commercial value, as it apparently has for various writers who have cooked up different 'movements' which they then claim to be part of--I see that as self-defeating in the long run.

"The difficulty those writers will have in getting rid of those labels they've chained around their necks will outweigh whatever advantage they gained from them. It's hard enough for a writer to stay fast on his feet, to hit the reader with something unexpected, when he has to fight against the labels that are part of the genre he may be working in, or against the reader's expectations based upon his previous books.

"Beyond this concern about writers and labels," he adds, "that whole business with my early schooling made it difficult for me to label people in general. One of the things that people have said about my writing, that I feel proudest about, is that I take an unusually sympathetic approach to characters who would more often be dismissed or explained away as being 'simply' evil.

"If I have any merit as a writer in this regard, it may be due to those early childhood experiences of actually being one of the kids behind the label, on the other side of the fence between 'us' and 'them,' between the people who can comfortably call themselves okay and normal, and those, strange, different, slightly scary others."

Jeter grew up in Orange County, California, which didn't suit him very well. "I was at odds with the whole suburban sunshine trip." Later on, as an adult, he moved up to Los Angeles and the grittier parts of Hollywood.

"That territory," Jeter says, "has an urban buzz than you can easily pick up, though oddly, if you go just a block or so off the main drags, you can find yourself in what looks like an Andy Hardy set--if Andy Hardy had grown up in Southern California--all neat, green lawns and backyard barbecues under the nodding palm tress. Different worlds bump up pretty hard against each other around there."

He moved north to San Francisco and then spent some time in England--mostly in London and a small village near Bath. "The latter was good for cooling out and getting a lot of work done. The stuff that entered my head at that time is still working through the pipeline, and will probably show up in my writing a little further down the road."

He now lives with his wife Geri in Portland. "I left San Francisco for various reasons, but one of the biggest was that it ceased to seem like a real city to me; it had started to take on an artificial, Main Street Disneyland feel. There was no longer a full range of 'city-ness' to it. The middle had been squeezed out, entirely due to economic factors, leaving only the crack turf squabbles in the housing projects and the tiara set uppercrust above that. I like a place where you get all the economic levels muddled together, where you can actually see the machinery working."

Like many writers, he has worked at a variety of jobs, from being a department store janitor and mending books in a public library, to the graveyard shift at a juvenile detention facility.

"That last was a pretty good gig for a writer," Jeter says, "since it consisted of sitting at a large desk all night, with nothing to do except whatever you brought in yourself to keep busy--typewriter, books, whatever. Every half-hour you have to get up and go down a long corridor, and shine your flashlight in these little windows in the doors, see whichever kids are murdering or sodomizing each other, then go back to the desk and write it down in a logbook.

"That is if you're stationed in what are called the living units. The intake unit is hairier, and with less free time, as you have to actually process the little bastards that the police departments bring in. I was

there during the first big PCP epidemic, only nobody knew what the hell was going on at the time. It'd be a complete rodeo, with about six of us skinny white college grads piling onto some seventeen-year-old linebacker and going for a ride all up and down the walls, trying to keep him from ripping out his own eyeballs.

"Not the sort of interruption you need when you're trying to work out a plot snag in the book you're writing."

Jeter's first published books were science fiction: *Seeklight* (Laser, 1975), *The Dreamfields* (Laser, 1976), and *Morlock Night* (DAW, 1979)--the latter a sequel to H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*. In later years he followed those with his near future trilogy set in L.A.--*Dr. Adder* (Bluejay, 1984), *The Glass Hammer* (Bluejay, 1985), and *Death Arms* (Morrigan, 1987)--and a whimsical "Mad Victorian Fantasy," *Infernal Devices* (St. Martin's, 1987).

In some sense, the largest body of his work is in the sf/fantasy field, though none of his work is easily classified--which is just as well, since that's the way Jeter likes it. When asked about the switch to a stronger concentration on contemporary suspense/horror novels, he explains, "I got started writing horror novels because I wasn't having much luck in the science fiction field. Editors were always returning my books like *Dr. Adder* to me with comments along the lines of 'We can't publish this--this is *horrifying*.'

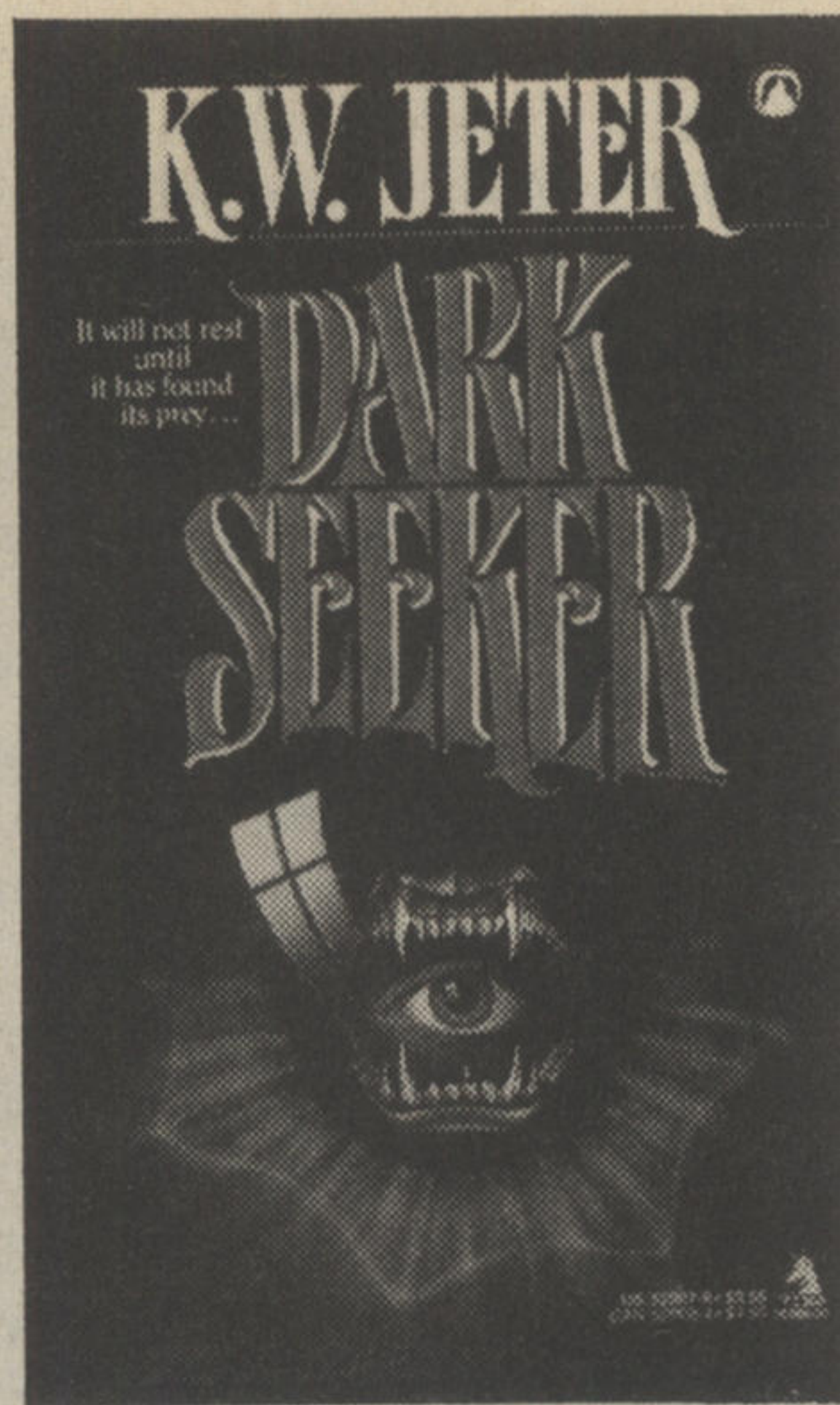
**"Science fiction seems to me
to be a literature
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whereas horror novels
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"One day the clouds parted and a great fiery scroll appeared, advising me that if my books were horrifying so many people unintentionally, I should try horrifying them deliberately; I should write a horror novel. I did, and had more immediate success than I'd ever had writing science fiction, and much more personal satisfaction. I feel that my horror novels contain my best writing, and that they deal with deeper and sharper human concerns than the science fiction novels.

"The horror novels just work better as stories, too. I like the pacing and feel of them, the forward motion, the *accelerando* quality they have. Science fiction seems to me to be a literature of explanations, of telling the reader why and how things happen, whereas horror novels can often achieve this feeling of *the great unexplained*, of things that both the writer and the reader know are in some way true, or analogous to the truth, but which can't really be dragged out into the light.

"I don't mean by this mere superstition-mongering, such as predicating stories upon the existence of witches and demons, but on things inside the human brain and soul."

The first of these horror novels was *Soul Eater*, published by TOR Books in 1983. "It was essentially a learning experience for me," Jeter explains, "to see if I could write a horror novel, but with some pretty



gratifying results.

"The story's genesis is actually derived from my observation of a friend's relationship between his ex-wife and his daughter. He had the misfortune of being in pretty much the same situation as the book's protagonist, of being out of touch with a child that he didn't have custody of, and being unaware that his ex-wife had gone through a psychotic episode, putting the kid in a pretty scary situation for a while. My friend's former sister-in-law, the child's aunt, was supposed to have informed him if something like that happened, but didn't, for precisely the same reason the fictional aunt in the book, a fear of losing her own relationship with the child.

"The developments in the story beyond that, the ex-wife's coma, the seeping out of her personality into others--that's all my concoction; it serves as something of a metaphor for the way divorced parents sometimes regard their children, watching over them to see how much influence their ex-wives or ex-husbands have over them."

Soul Eater was followed by two more novels exploring the business of the broken family. They were both conceived about the same time, and again, both were published by TOR--*Dark Seeker* in February, 1987, and *Mantis* in October of the same year.

Dark Seeker was an intense exploration of a Manson-like cult whose members shared a consciousness because of a drug that they had all taken at one time. The effect of the drug was permanent and that shared consciousness made them into killers, with only a medication able to counteract the effect of the drug. When the protagonist's son is kidnapped and the only way he can find the boy again is by getting back into contact with the shared consciousness, he has to make terrible a decision as to whether he will go after his son or not.

Mantis examined another facet of the parent/child relationship with the protagonist caught between the need of his wife and child, and the need of the man he knows only as Michael, a man who is capable of anything and who seems closer to the protagonist than is his own family.

Both novels show Jeter's understanding of the darker side of the human mind and were told in a lean crackling prose style that didn't, not for a moment, let up on the excruciating suspense of their storylines. But for all the sometimes painful examination of the darker parts of their protagonists' inner landscapes, and especially the doomed family relationships that are the catalysts for their descents into those unknown inner territories, Jeter never needed to go for the gross-out in either one of them to retain the power and terror of the horror experience.

With a craftsman's sure touch, he allowed the story to play itself out inside the character's heads, where a lesser writer might have felt it

necessary to facilitate the plot by exaggerating it on the broader canvass of the world in which the characters find themselves. This is not to say that nothing physical happens in these books; but rather the focus is internalized, and thereby gains both a sharper concentration and a clarity of purpose that would otherwise be lacking.

"I'm interested in working with protagonists who have already gone through a certain catastrophe," Jeter explains, "who have to deal with the consequences of knowing that they've really fucked up as regards to their children. There's a fear seen in a lot of men, and that's the fear of *screwing up in a big way*. I think it's seen in men more than women for purely social reasons; it's an indication of the way women's lives are often trivialized and insulated from responsibility.

"When the protagonist of *Dark Seeker* has the opportunity to make amends, to save the child he thought was lost, he goes the whole distance to do it. He gives up his sanity, his salvation, his future, even his own claim to ever being a moral entity again--he already knows what's inside that dark world he's going back into, he knows that he'll be nose-deep in murder and insanity again. But he's willing to pay that price.

"The protagonist in *Mantis* has a divided love, two responsibilities that he has to juggle: he's trying to protect both his real son and also the murderer whose mind he can get inside. He can only protect them by sharply dividing himself, by making sure that the two worlds he inhabits never come into contact with each other. But again, he's willing to pay that price."

And that's the key to the success of Jeter's suspense fiction. His characters are essentially moral people placed in extreme circumstances, yet, Jeter adds, "their knowledge of themselves is based upon their awareness of having fucked up before. They're not blank slates at the beginning of the books. They have a personal past that they drag around behind themselves, that colors everything they do."

Jeter doesn't agree with the criticism that views the protagonist in *Mantis* as something of a monster, a person doing horrible things who merely comes up with a lot of rationalizations about it to make himself look innocent.

"The man isn't a hypocrite," Jeter explains. "He has some deeply thought-out moral standards, which he then tries to live up to. And it may horrify some people, but his moral standards are essentially my own.

"While there are practical reasons why a society can't allow individuals to contract between themselves for illegal acts such as murder--that is, you can't legally arrange for someone to murder you--ethically speaking, I don't see anything wrong with it. I really believe that people should be allowed to go to hell in their own way. To interfere with that is to also interfere with an individual's right to seek salvation in his own way."

When it's mentioned that many of his books seem to be "internalized," Jeter offers the following explanation: "It's probably due to my being more of a suspense writer than an action or even what's generally considered as a horror writer. There may be just as much action in one my books, but it's seen at a different perspective. Suspense is largely an internal matter; a lot of it can't be seen from the outside. It's the interplay between the inside and outside worlds that I find most interesting. Each has an effect on the other.

"But for all my talk about deep brooding in horror novels, my main goal is to keep the story moving along. To do that you really have to strip descriptive passages down to an effective minimum. The fault I find with a lot of current horror novels is the amount of tedious descriptive writing--the so-called gore content--in them. The momentum of the story is derailed while you get several paragraphs that were written with a college-level anatomy textbook propped up beside the typewriter.

"Some writers have made a big deal out of their supposedly having 'no limit' about this sort of material, but there's an inherent limitation

which can't be gotten around, which is whether it's effective or not, whether it's really scary or suspenseful. I feel there's an inverse ration between gore and suspense, and that's the only reason I don't make as much use of it as some other writers do."

The best example he can give of what he means, Jeter goes on to explain is Cornell Woolrich's novel *Black Alibi*, "which contains that great sequence of the little girl being stalked through a city's street by a panther, never seen, only sensed in the shadows, and just as she gets home and her mother is fumbling at the front door lock to let the terrified child in, there's a huge impact against the door, then silence and one small drop of blood trickling under the door.

"It's one of the most effective scenes if all of suspense literature, precisely because of the restraint Woolrich used in writing it. But I have the feeling that a lot of current writers would read that and think, Gee, if one drop of blood is so scary, then *two* drops of blood would be twice as scary; a whole bucket of blood would be thousands of times as scary. What if the mother opens the door and you actually get to see the child's mangled corpse, skull crushed, aqueous humor leaking from the torn eyeballs, yadda yadda, refer back to the anatomy textbook again, and so forth?"

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I usually settle down, though,
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Towards the end,
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"Well, it wouldn't work that way; every additional drop of blood would only *decrease* the effectiveness of that scene. Believe me, I have no shame about using whatever works; if I thought talking camels were scary, I'd stuff my books full of them."

Jeter believes that the biggest influence on a writer are invariably the books he has read. "The writers who've had the biggest positive influence on me are suspense writers like Geoffrey Household, whose *Rogue Male* is probably as close to being the perfect suspense novel as anyone is likely to get. James M. Cain only wrote two good books--*The Postman Always Rings Twice* and *Double Indemnity*--but those two are incredibly good. Cornell Woolrich could be a little shaky about plot construction, but a master at evoking and putting together set-piece climaxes."

Other influences include the Hitchcock films. "It's incredible to think that *Psycho* was considered shockingly graphic for its time, yet it's easy to see now that the effectiveness of something like the shower

scene is in what you *don't* see. The blood and water swirling down the drain is many times more hair-raising than all the special effects gore in all the slasher films that are Norman Bates' bastard children."

Jeter also cites a fondness for Robert Wise's *The Haunting*, Val Lewton's *The Seventh Victim* and both the Lewton *Cat People* and the Paul Schrader remake. "Pretentious as it sounds," he adds, "I used to love going to Bergman films. Gone are the days when you could go to some art-house theatre and just sink under a triple bill of heavy Scandinavian gloom and existential angst. *Persona* is, in some ways, a real horror film."

His work schedule varies. He works from detailed outlines, but considers them only as road maps, with plenty of room for detours and re-routing along the way. "At the start of a project, I can be a little fidgety, not getting a lot of words on paper, but just sort of feeling my way into it. I usually settle down, though, and chug along through the bulk of the book pretty well. Towards the end, I'll sometimes write around the clock, to keep the sense of the pace going."

He believes that most writers discover, or know from the beginning, that it's impossible to separate character and plot. "Certain characters make certain plots possible, and the action of the story is the way the writer reveals the nature of those characters. What makes a book ring false is when a character is warped to fit the needs of some arbitrary plot, when the author makes the character do something he wouldn't do. There's a difference between that and surprising the reader with something about the character that the reader hadn't known before.

"As for style, I try not to make that much of a consideration. Language is a functional tool; it's at its best when it does its job in the most efficient way possible. I aim for a clean line, something that looks flat and bare on the surface, but hints at something underneath. Ideally, the effect would be that of a gold ingot completely covered with black enamel, with one small scratch showing what's inside. You have to give yourself that sort of recessed background, so that when you do set off a little fireworks, they really stand out."

Upcoming works include a science fiction novel titled *Farewell Horizontal* coming from St. Martin's this winter, to be followed by another horror novel, *In the Land of the Dead*, which will appear as a Morrigan limited edition, then as a paperback from NAL. He's currently finished up yet another horror novel, titled *The Night Man*, but his big project that he'll be working on into 1989 will be a book titled *Screen*.

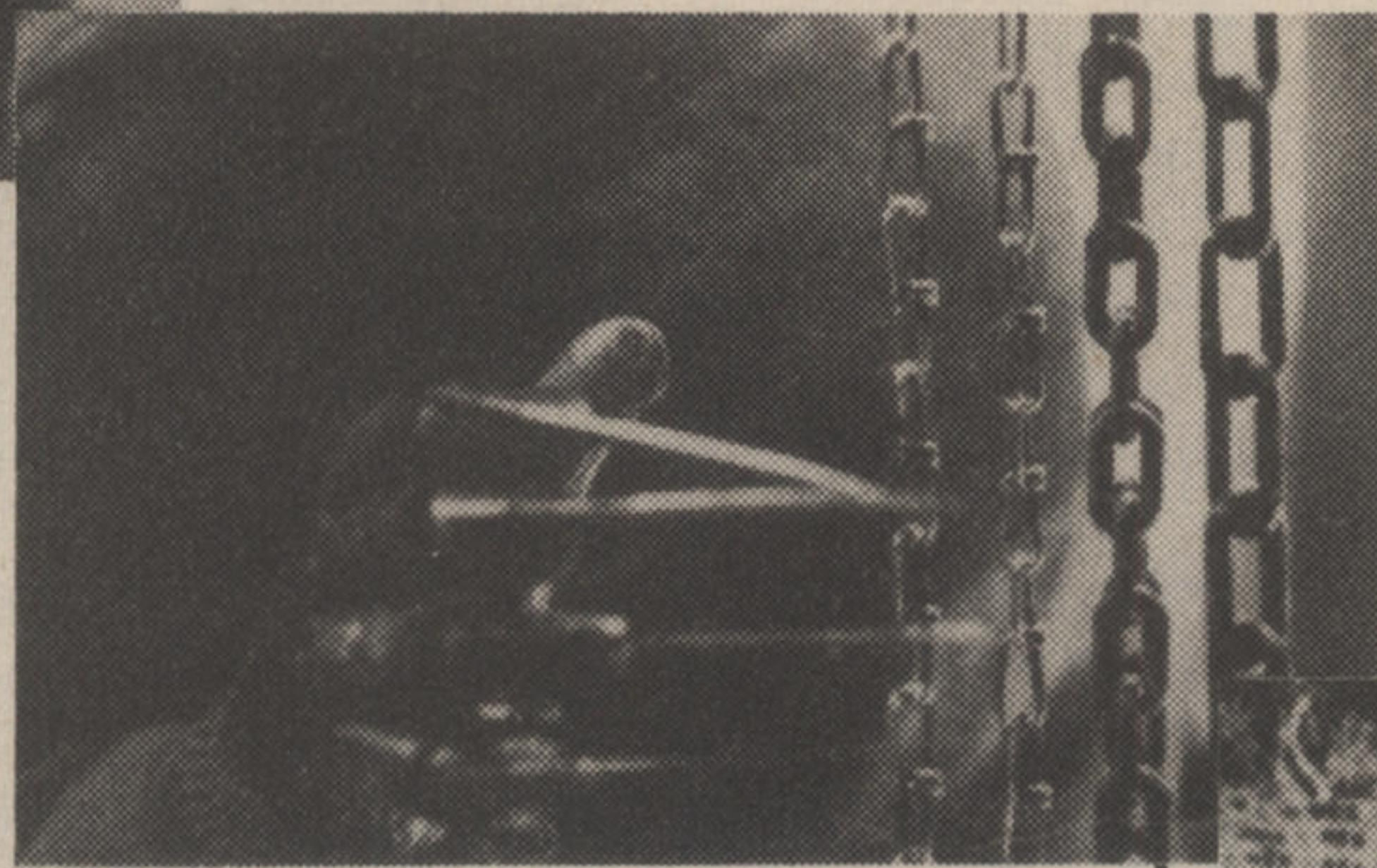
"*Screen* will have some tricky stuff in it, stuff that will be a real stretch for me to pull off. It'll have a more complicated structure, an extension of what I was getting at in *Dark Seeker*, where the consequences of events spread out in a sort of web, triggering other events, rather than the more straight-forward linear construction of my other books.

"This one particular character actually tries to understand evil, see what it is, but he's not really sophisticated, he can't just philosophize about it. At the same time he has to be concerned about not being drawn into it, embracing it. I've told a couple of people that *Screen* will be a 'horror novel with meditations,' but that actually sounds kind of dreary. I intend for it to have the pace and forward motion of a suspense novel, with a big whipsaw finish, all the good stuff."

In a field currently dominated by works with "no limit," it's particularly satisfying to see an author working the more traditional style of suspense--yet doing so from a contemporary viewpoint so that the finished work isn't merely a rehash of previously explored themes, but something with relevance and meaning to the modern reader.

Hopefully there will always be room for every approach to fiction in this field. And so long as there is, there's no doubt that K.W. Jeter will be at the forefront.

When The Lights Go Down



MICHAEL ARTHUR BETTS

NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 4	1988 Theater
DEAD RINGERS	1988 Theater
THE KISS	1988 Theater
THEY LIVE	1988 Theater
HALLOWEEN 4	1988 Theater

I spoke on a panel for The Mile Hi Convention in late October. Ed Bryant, Simon Hawke and Dan Simmons were some of my fellow panelists. Many interesting points were brought up during the two hour discussion. One that interested me the most was why so many young people enjoy watching such notable villains as Freddy Krueger, Jason, and Michael Myers, thinning the teen-age herd. None of us were psychiatrists, but a good point was made during the discussion when one member of the panel suggested that young people lack a sense of personal power. These monsters, no matter how hideous they are, represent unstoppable force and should therefore be respected. I'm not sure if anyone on the panel felt this was a healthy trend for horror; however, no matter what anybody says, this trend will continue for some time to come.

In fact, there are now syndicated television shows for both *Nightmare on Elm Street* and *Friday The 13th*. When I first heard of this, I envisioned what the *T.V. Guide* might look like when these shows became a part of the listings:

Channel 4: *Leave It To Beaver* ... The Beaver and Wally are sent to summer camp and have a run-in with a bully.

Channel 4: *Friday The 13th* ... Mad killer, Jason, buries an ax in the Beaver's head. Then he takes after Wally, impaling him on a

sharp tree limb.

Channel 9: *The Beverly Hillbillies* ... Jethro is having bad dreams and Granny whips up an old country remedy.

Channel 9: *Nightmare On Elm Street* ... the kids of Beverly Hills are having nightmares. Freddy Krueger has invaded their dreams and begins his reign of terror. That is ... until a little old lady named Granny puts Freddy over her knees and gives him a good spanking!

Actually, the *Friday The 13th* television series turns out to be an anthology show without any Jason. Thanks for small favors. From what I've seen, it looks like an unexceptional show. The new *Nightmare* series seems to be more promising, especially since Freddy (Robert Englund) occasionally pops up. The episode I saw, entitled "Judy Miller Come On Down," was well written and excellently executed on its low budget, and had some of the fun-warped humor of the movie series. I'd recommend *Nightmare* and guardedly say that, since *Friday The 13th* is an anthology show rather than a slicer/dicer, you might want to catch it too. On with the movies.

NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 4

I don't really know if it is a sign of the times that the number one screen hero isn't Dirty Harry or Luke Skywalker, but rather a severely burned child abuser called Freddy Krueger. What may be the ultimate in irony is that Freddy's biggest fans are the younger generation, the same generation he's terrorizing. When I did an interview with Robert Englund (Freddy) a couple of years ago, Robert explained it this way: "He [Freddy] plays dirty ... but, he is also out there in the suburban

middle class kicking ass. So a lot of punks and heavy metal fans like him for that."

What next? Freddy Krueger for President? Why the hell not?

Can we sleep safely now? Is Freddy really dead? Kristen (Tuesday Knight), one of the last remaining Elm Street children, doesn't think so. She's still having nightmares about Freddy. The other two survivors, Kincaid (Ken Sagoes) and Joey (Rodney Eastman), aren't so sure Freddy is still around. That is until Kristen draws Kincaid into one of her dreams. He ends up in the junkyard where Freddy's bones are buried. A dog pisses fire on the burned one's grave and that jokester with the razors comes popping out.

With filtered light silhouetting Freddy's frame, we see a scene that could have been used in a second coming of Christ sequence. It becomes obvious that the filmmakers were trying to accommodate Fred's fans by giving him a larger than life image. Kincaid yells to Freddy, "I'll see you in hell!" Freddy retorts, "Tell them Freddy sent ya." Goodbye Kincaid.

There is no question that these movies have a great, morbid sense of humor, and I've got to believe that it's Freddy's humor, more than anything, that gives him his popularity. For instance, after an erotic dream while lying on his water bed, Joey is confronted by the nightmare king once again. Just before Freddy slices the kid, he says, "How's this for a wet dream?" You can't help but laugh.

While the remaining Elm Street kids are getting picked off, a new group of kids is being drawn into Freddy's nightmares. The first is Alice (Lisa Wilcox), a friend of Kristen. After Kristen draws Alice into one of the nightmares, she manages to convince her friend that the deaths of Kincaid and Joey were caused by Freddy. Then, as she begins to draw the strength of Freddy's victims, Alice becomes the new heroine in the series ... the dream master.

There is a takeoff on *Jaws* in the movie, some blatant commercialization when Freddy shows up on MTV, and plenty of dead teenagers. My biggest beef is that I fear the series is becoming a bit formulated, which is what I dislike most about the admittedly inferior *Friday The 13th* series. Hope they can continue to keep this fresh. This entry is definitely up to the fine level of the first and third installments of the series. Englund still does a great job with the role. The one liners and special effects are solid. Overall: morbid fun!



DEAD RINGERS

It's been said that some of our greatest movie directors are essentially making the same movie over and over until they get it right. This could easily be said of Canada's David Cronenberg, who has, ever since the 1975 *They Came From Within*, been exploring the human body through inward or outward invasion. I thought, perhaps, his remake of *The Fly* was the masterpiece that finally pulled all the loose ends of his other films together. That conclusion came too soon.

With *Dead Ringers*, Cronenberg has topped himself and made one of the ultimate movies about the vulnerability of the human condition. Perhaps Cronenberg summed it up best in a recent interview he did with Bob Denerstein when he said, "We are our bodies. The way we sound. The way we move. The way we look."

The film begins in 1954 with Bev and Elly, two bright young boys who seem fascinated with the human body. Then we switch to Cambridge, Mass. in 1967. The two boys are medical students who invent a special gynecological apparatus. Then, finally, to the present day Toronto where the boys are now famous Gynecologists.

Jeremy Irons, in an Academy Award caliber performance, plays both parts.

Bev is the more restrained and shy one, while Elliot is a smooth-talking ladies man. The brothers not only share their offices, but also share a plush apartment and women. One of the women is Clare

(Genevieve Bujold), a movie actress who begins to suspect that the brothers are switching off on her. Confronting them at a restaurant, Clare becomes angry to learn her suspicion was correct: the brothers had been sharing her without her knowledge.

Elliot doesn't think it's any big deal, but Bev has fallen in love and he becomes quite upset. The brothers' close relationship begins to crumble now.

Bev continues seeing the actress on his own, and slowly becomes obsessed with her. When Clare leaves on a trip, Bev falsely suspects her of infidelity. He begins to abuse drugs, and starts to mentally and emotionally deteriorate into a psychotic state. His paranoid delusions slip into a surreal world where certain women are mutated and need special gynecological equipment, which he eventually invents to accommodate them.

With much more restraint than in his earlier films, Cronenberg skillfully weaves a tale of physical and mental decline. The twin brothers act as a kind of looking glass of human emotions and fears. They become one disturbed mind trying to cut itself open. Like an echo that has nowhere to go, the brothers end up where they started ... together. Plot holes aside, this could be the movie Cronenberg has been making all these years, and finally he got it right. *The Fly* was a mini-masterpiece. *Dead Ringers* is simply a masterpiece.



THE KISS

If someone were to ask me to define what a generic horror movie would be like, I would tell them to go see *The Kiss*. Watching *The Kiss* is kind of like eating generic green beans. They sort of taste as good as a name brand but somehow your mind keeps telling you they're not.

In the Belgian Congo, in 1963, a young girl boards a transport train with her mother. At night, on the train, we see a demonic-looking talisman hanging from her mother's bag. Suddenly the child watches as her mother's face becomes distorted and, as she falls forward toward the little girl, her bloody mouth kisses the child. The child turns and suddenly appears possessed.

Twenty-five years later, in Albany, New York, we go to the house of Hilary and Jack Holloran. They are in the backyard celebrating their daughter Amy's confirmation in the church. During the party, Hilary gets a phone call from her sister, Felice, who asks to see her. Hilary says no, but changes her mind and goes anyway. While downtown, Hilary is killed by a run-away car.

A few months later, while visiting Hilary's grave, Amy (Meredith Salenger) and her father, Jack (Nicholas Kilbertaus) meet Felice (Joanna Pacula). They return to the house and Jack asks Felice if she would like to stay with them. Amy doesn't want Auntie to stay.

Strange things begin to occur. While at a Mall, Amy's girlfriend, Heather, gets caught in an escalator. Then Amy discovers Heather's sunglasses in Felice's suitcase, along with some occult paraphernalia. Disturbed, Amy asks her father to tell Felice to leave. That night Jack is attacked by a strange creature that looks like something out of the movie *Critters* and is never explained in the movie. In fact, if you want to know anything pertinent to the plot, forget it.

This movie seems to be a classic case of making things up as we go along and hoping we can set up enough snuff and chase scenes to keep the indiscriminating audience happy.

Another problem, Amy's almost automatic suspicion of her Aunt. Granted, she is a stranger in the house. But after all, she is a blood relative. Of course, the father is seduced by the exotic Felice and begins to side with her.

At the end of the movie, Jack is informed by his neighbor, Brenda (Mimi Kuzyk), that Felice's blood is that of a dead woman. Of course, he automatically accepts this everyday fact, picks up the neighbor at the lab and heads to Amy's rescue. In the film's most ludicrous scene, as they are in the car heading toward the house, Brenda turns to Jack and says, "I think we should call the police." He yells back, "And tell them what? That someone is trying to possess my daughter?" Now, how the hell does he know that? Nowhere in the movie is he informed of Felice's intent.

What makes this movie generic is the lazy attitude the filmmakers had toward suspense and plotting. The movie did have some things going for it. The music and sound is great, the ending is exciting and well choreographed, and even on its not so big budget, it looks good. Still, it's only a pretender to the real product. It's string beans with too many strings attached.



THEY LIVE

It has been quite awhile since director John Carpenter has made a movie showing the promise he once had as one of America's best horror directors. His last great movie in the genre was 1981's remake of *The Thing*. Since then, he's made such so-so outings as *Christine* and *Big Trouble in Little China*. So, what happened to Mr. Carpenter? I'm happy to report that with *They Live* he has finally recaptured some of the exciting energy that helped make his earlier films such as *Halloween* and *Escape From New York* so enduring to many genre fans.

They Live is certainly John Carpenter's most politically minded film-to-date. An anti-Reagan era movie which sometimes hammers the point that we've become an "out for a quick buck" society. It could have easily been titled *The Blue Collar Workers vs. The Yuppies From Hell*.

Ex-professional wrestler, Rowdy Roddy Piper plays down-and-out construction worker, John Nadar, who lands a job with a construction company and becomes friends with fellow worker, Frank (Keith David, *The Thing*). Frank takes Nadar to a shanty town where other low-income members of this near futuristic society live. There are strange things going on around the camp, such as interrupted television broadcasts warning that there is something out there trying to fuck with the human conscious, and that a movement has been started to rid the planet of this menace.

Nadar also discovers there are secretive meetings going on in the nearby church. He tries to enlist the aid of Frank, but Frank doesn't want to know what is going on. It's too late anyway as the entire encampment is leveled by riot police who beat and kill the revolutionaries and anyone else who happens to get in their way. Nadar goes back to the church to get some answers and discovers a box full of sunglasses.

He escapes to the city and puts on a pair of the glasses, not realizing that they will reveal a world that is totally different than the apparent reality he has been living in. The first things he sees are subliminal

messages in the place of normal billboards and signs. They say things like: Obey -- Conform -- Consume. Then, while at a newsstand, he sees a customer who looks like a skeletal creature with ping-pong eyeballs. This first part of the movie is incredibly intriguing. The focus throughout is of average America awakening to the greedy monster that has been created by complacency.

The enemy can be seen now and Nadar wastes no time in arming himself and starting on the road to eradicating the problem. Nadar goes into a bank, and seeing a horde of the monsters, proclaims, "I'm here to chew bubble gum and kick ass. I'm all out of bubble gum." The snuffing out of society's ills are back in the hands of the average American. If, indeed, it was ever there. I'm not going to give away any more of the plot. Part of the fun of watching this satirical allegory is following the proceedings as they unfold.

The film slows down a bit after an overlong fight when Nadar tries to convince Frank to put on the glasses. Other Carpenter weaknesses show up also: occasional lapses in logic, cliché characterizations and dialogue, and his over-indulgence in super-machoism. Actress Meg Foster is virtually wasted as a quasi-love interest to Nadar. Nevertheless, this is a challenging and often rewarding effort from one of horror's best directors.



HALLOWEEN 4

And speaking of John Carpenter, he had no involvement in the making of this sequel to the second *Halloween* movie (the third movie had no relation to the others). However, they do use Carpenter's magnificent theme music and that automatically boosts it ahead of the countless *Halloween* clones.

Another plus is the return of Donald Pleasence as that worry wart, Dr. Loomis. Ten years later the Doc's face is a bit charred and Michael Myers is only hanging on to life as an apparent invalid who has burns covering most of his body. Against Dr. Loomis's objections, the hospital has decided to transfer Michael to a different institution. Bad idea! Michael kills the ambulance crew and takes off for Haddonville, his home town, where ten years earlier he had attempted to kill his sister but ended up lowering the town's teen population instead. Michael's sister, played by Jamie Lee Curtis in the first two movies of the series, has died, leaving behind a daughter whose name is Jamie. Jamie is now in the care of foster parents and has a foster sister named Rachel.

It's Halloween night again, and Michael, who was never known for being high fashion, gets back his old outfit by killing a gas station attendant and stealing a bogeyman mask from a local store. While in the same store, Jamie finds a little clown outfit that looks just like the one Michael wore when he killed his other sister about thirty-five years ago. You get the feeling Michael has some kind of latent fixation with the female members of his family.

Dr. Loomis finally arrives in town and warns the sheriff that evil on two legs has surely preceded him. Actually, I'm having a bit of fun with this one. You see, even after going through so many of the *Halloween* clones, this movie is still superior to any of the *Friday The 13th* movies. There is more suspense than you'll see in most movies of this type. One nice touch is when Michael goes to the electric works and blacks out the small city, giving the movie a more atmospheric look.

Still, this one is nowhere as skillfully done as the original, and sans Pleasence, lacks adequate characters. Also, I strongly recommend that you don't allow young children to watch this movie, as the killer's main potential victim is his niece, and it would definitely be too disturbing for the little ones.



Michael Betts
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A Literary Guild Alternate



NAL BOOKS

"The Chapman House," he read aloud. "Built in 1896, The Chapman House is believed to be the oldest extant skin dwelling in Wyoming." He frowned. "Skin dwelling?"

SKIN

BENTLEY LITTLE

The brown and white sign at the side of the road was small, and even though he was wearing his contacts, Ed could not read what it said. He slowed the car as they approached. "What's it say?" he asked Bobette.

"It says 'Historical Landmark. Chapman House. One Mile.'"

Ed leaned toward the kids in the back. "Want to stop?"

"Okay," Pam said.

Eda shrugged noncommittally.

"We're stopping." Ed drove slowly, allowing the other cars and trucks on the road to pass him, until he saw another brown and white sign, identical to the first. He turned off the highway onto the narrow, barely paved road which ran in a straight line across the grassy meadow to the forest on the other side.

"Here we come!" Pam said. She unbuckled her safety belt and began bouncing up and down in her seat.

Bobette, hearing the click of the belt, looked sternly over the headrest at her daughter. "Young lady, you put that back on right now."

"I was just--"

"Right now."

Pam rebuckled her seat belt.

The road continued in an unwavering line, through the trees before finally widening into a closed cul de sac in front of a small brown one-room cabin. The cabin was not log but appeared to be made of wood, with a sod roof. One open window and door faced outward.

"All right," Ed announced. "Hop out. We're here."

It had been several hours since they'd eaten lunch at a Burger King in Cheyenne, and all of their legs were cramped and tired. Pam and Eda jumped about, crunching gravel beneath their tennis shoes, while Ed stretched loudly, groaning. Bobette stood in place, exercising isometrically. They had gotten so used to the artificially cooled air in the car that they had not realized how warm it was outside. The temperature was well into the nineties, and there was no wind. Above them, the sky was blue and cloudless, and from the bushes they heard the constant buzz of cicadas.

"I hope they have a bathroom here," Bobette said.

Ed grinned. "There're plenty of bushes." "Very funny."

"And we have Coke cups in the car."

She shook her head. "You're sick."

They moved across the small dirt lot toward the cabin, Ed leading the way. He stopped before another sign, this one mounted on a platform of cemented stones. "The Chapman House," he read aloud. "Built in 1896, The Chapman House is believed to be the oldest extant skin dwelling in Wyoming." He frowned. "Skin dwelling?" He walked toward the cabin, the others following. This close, he could see that the cabin was not made from wood as he'd originally assumed but was made from tanned animal hides stretched taut across a wooden frame. In places, the skin had been stretched thin, lending it a translucent quality, and he could see in the direct sunlight a network of spiderweb veins stretching across the wall.

Bobette shivered. "Gruesome."

Ed shrugged. "I suppose building supplies were scarce in those days. Who knows? Maybe they didn't have the right tools to use traditional materials."

"There's a wooden frame," she pointed out. "And there doesn't seem to be any shortage of wood or stone around here."

"Come on, let's go inside."

"I'd rather not."

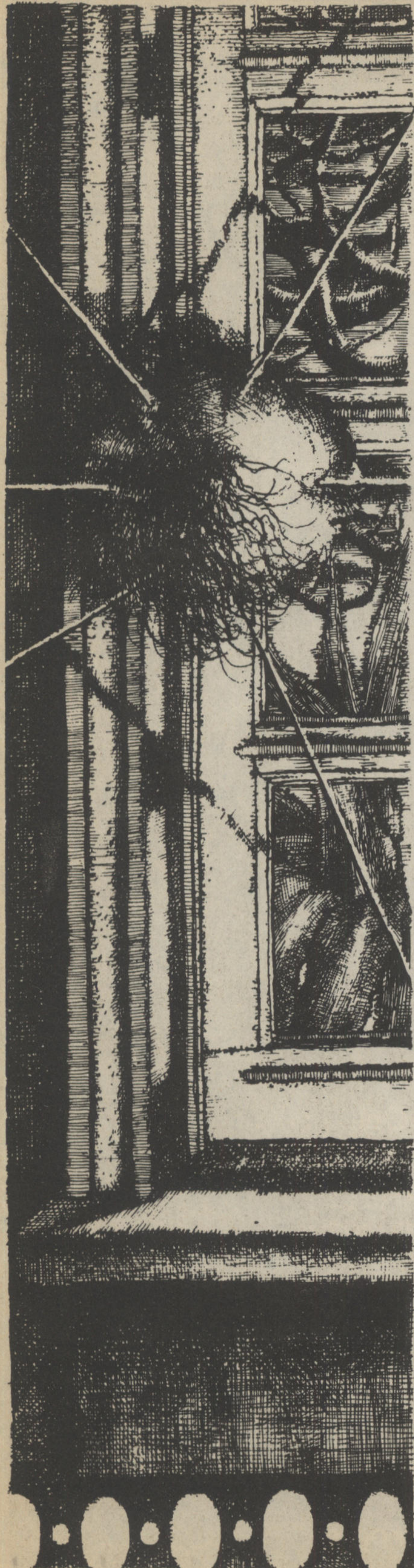
"Come on."

"I'll wait here."

"Suit yourself." He turned to the girls. "You two coming?"

"Yeah!" Pam said excitedly. She and Eda followed him through the low doorway into the cabin. In here it was dark. The one door and window were facing east, and while they probably let in plenty of light during the morning, they let in very little now. Across one wall ran a low bench, also made from animal hide, and in the center of the room was a low pit for fires. The floor was dirt.

They should have been excited, they should have been having fun, they should have at least been interested, but somehow all of that left them when they walked through the doorway. Pam and Eda's bubbly conversation died almost immediately, and his own



JMOTIVE

curiosity gave way to a feeling remarkably close to dread. There was something heavy and claustrophobic about the air in the cabin, something indefinable which made all of them feel uncomfortable and ill-at-ease. He found himself staring at a small round patch of light colored skin sewn into the wall near the window.

"Ed!" Bobette called from outside. Her voice was loud, a little too loud, and there was a hint of panic in it.

Grateful for a reason to leave the cabin, he stepped back out into the sunlight, the girls following silently. They hurried over to where Bobette stood reading the rest of the sign. "What is it?"

"The cabin was made with human skin," she said. "Not animal skin. Read this."

He scanned the rest of the text. According to the sign, the Chapman House was one of a series of homes and buildings constructed from human skin in this part of Wyoming during the late 1800s. The builders of the dwellings were not known. He looked at Bobette.

She shivered. "Let's get out of here," she said.

He nodded, motioning for the girls to get into the car. Before closing his own door, he snapped a photograph of the cabin. He didn't really want the picture, but he'd been taking photos of every place they stopped and he took this one out of habit, for completeness.

They drove silently back to the highway. Ed tried to concentrate on his driving, but he found himself thinking of the small round patch of skin he had seen near the window of the cabin. He couldn't get it out of his mind, and he couldn't help thinking that the skin had come from the head of a child. The thought disturbed him, and he drove without speaking, speeding along the highway, passing other cars, as if trying to get as far away from the cabin as possible.

A little further on, they saw another small brown historical landmark sign by the side of the road. Ed sped by, but not before Pam had made out the message. "Bone House One Mile," she read.

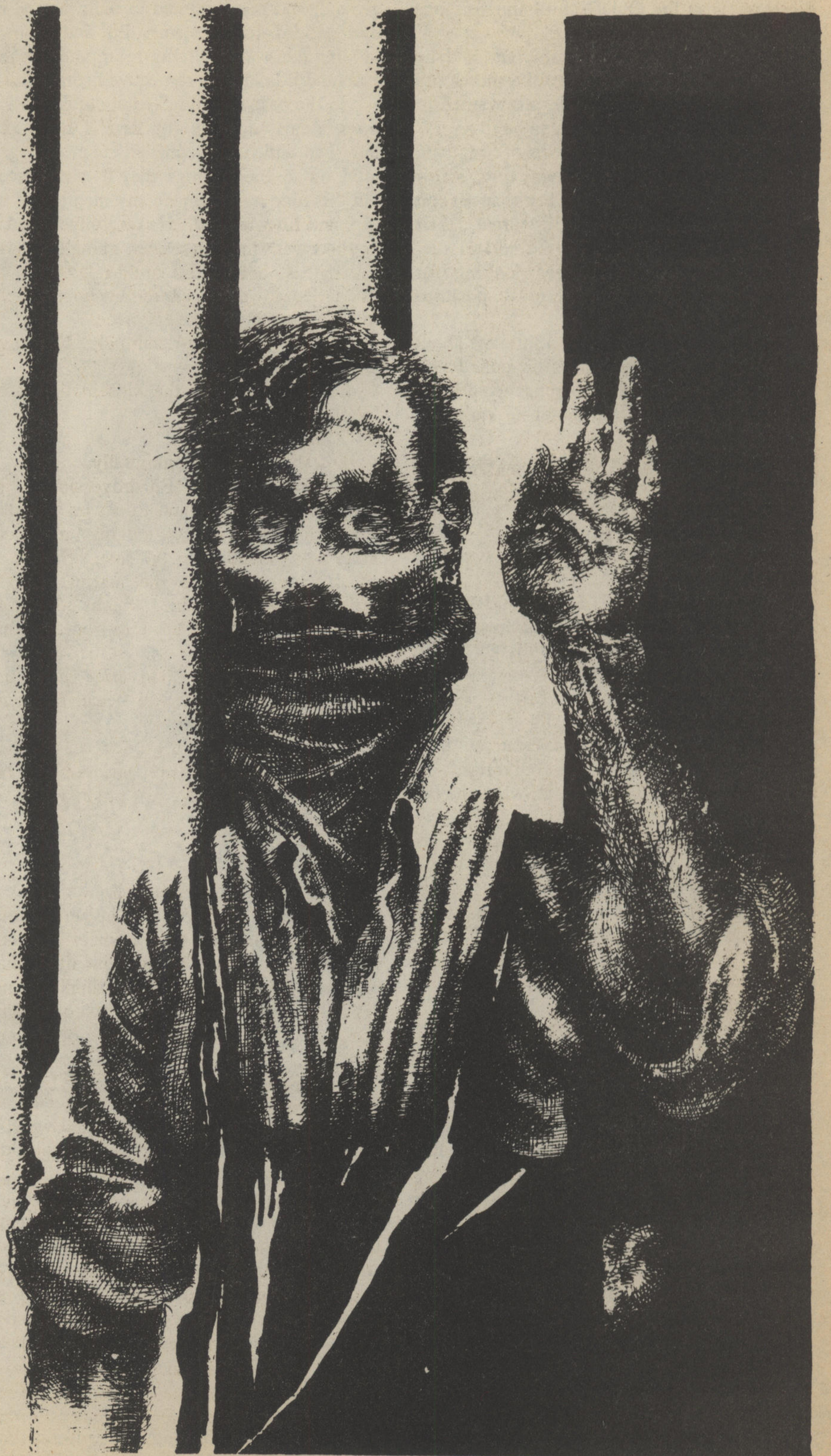
"Can we stop?" Eda asked.

"Not today," Bobette told her. "You and your sister just find something to do for awhile."

Bone House, Ed thought. It didn't take much imagination to figure out the material that building was made from.

He felt the skin prickling on the back of his neck.

The station wagon sped down the highway through the forest. It was late afternoon, and according to his calculations they would reach Singleton by five. He'd made reservations there at a Best Western, and check-in time was supposed to be at four, but he



figured they'd hold the room for an extra hour. From Singleton, it was a five hour drive to Yellowstone, where they'd made reservations at the Old Faithful Inn for four nights.

He felt tired already, worn out, and he couldn't wait until they got to the motel and his head hit the mattress. He just wanted to sleep. He just wanted this day to be over.

They drove into the outskirts of Singleton just before five. The town was tiny, a few homes scattered amongst the trees, an Exxon station, a Shell station, a restaurant, their hotel, a few stores. It was the sort of picturesque town they had been looking for when planning their itinerary--a postcard community.

But there was something a little off about the buildings, Ed thought as he pulled into the parking lot, something wrong. And looking up at the wall of the motel he knew exactly what it was.

The buildings were made of skin and bone.

And the bricks used and there in construction had a peculiarly red tinge.

He backed immediately up, swinging onto the highway.

"What are you doing?" Bobette demanded, grabbing onto the armrest as the car swerved in reverse. "You'll get us all killed."

"We're getting out of here."

"But we have reservations!"

He glanced in the backseat at their daughters. "Look at the buildings," he whispered quietly. "Look at what they're made out of."

Bobette peered out the window then turned back to him, her face bleached white. "This can't be happening."

A man walking down the sidewalk, wearing farmer's overalls and a plaid shirt, waved at them.

"We're getting out of here," Ed said. "I don't care if we have to drive all night."

Their vacation ended early. They went on to Yellowstone, but somehow the geysers and bears and natural beauty did not interest them as much as they'd thought it would a few days before, and they returned home after two days instead of four.

They took a different route back, bypassing Singleton entirely.

Usually, after a trip, it was depressing to come home. The house inevitably seemed small and confining after the great outdoors, the neighborhood dull and moribund. But this time they were glad to be back, and both the house and neighborhood seemed cheerful and welcome. They settled in almost immediately, the temporary communal spirit which had possessed them on the trip, in the

comfortable space of the car and in the unfamiliar territories through which they'd traveled, dissipating as they reached familiar ground, and they returned to their normal individualized living status: Ed and Bobette holding court in the living room and kitchen, Pam and Eda in their respective bedrooms.

In the past, they'd talked about their vacations almost nonstop for several days after they had ended, Pam in particular, trying to hold on to the feelings they'd experienced, but this time no one made any mention of the trip, and Ed was glad. He dutifully turned in



both rolls of film he had taken, and when he got them back a few days later he sorted through them in the car.

And there it was.

He stared at the photo. The Chapman House lay low and dark against the background trees, the brownish skin looking in the picture almost like wood. He could see clearly the small door and smaller window and saw in his mind's eye that tiny patch of round

infant
skin.

He tore the photo into little pieces, drop-

ping the pieces out the car window onto the drugstore parking lot, before heading home.

Neither of the girls had been acting much like themselves since they'd returned from the trip, but Eda was quieter than usual that night, as was Pam, and though Bobette tried to get them to talk during dinner, both refused to answer in anything except mumbled monosyllables. After eating, they both went directly to their rooms.

"I don't know what's going on with them," Bobette said, clearing the dishes. "I tried to talk to them today while you were gone but they ignored me, stared right past me as if I wasn't there. I thought maybe you could try to get them to talk. I mean, I know it wasn't the greatest vacation in the world. I know we ran into some strange things, but nothing actually happened. It's not the end of the world."

Ed nodded slowly, sitting up. "I'll talk to them."

She looked up, dishes in hand, "Thanks, I--"

But he was already out of the room and moving down the hall.

Ed stood outside Eda's closed door, listening, but heard no music, no TV, no talking, no sounds whatsoever. He shuffled across the hall to Pam's door and listened again. He heard whispering from inside the room.

Whispering and a strange whisk-like sound.

He pushed open the door.

The girls were both on Pam's bed, holding steak knives they had obviously taken from the kitchen. Between them the classified ad section of the newspaper had been spread over the bed, and on top of the newspaper was a partially gutted cat. He stared silently. Large portions of the animal's black and white fur had been scraped off, leaving the skin whitish pink. He recognized the cat as Mrs. Miller's pet Jake.

The two girls looked at him, caught, catblood all over their hands.

He was going to scream at them, to beat them, to tell them that tomorrow the whole damn family was going to see a psychiatrist, bus voice, when it came out was calm and even. "What are you girls doing?"

"Making a dollhouse," Eda said.

He nodded. "Clean up before you go to bed." He closed the door behind him, heard them lock it, then went out to the kitchen to tell Bobette nothing was wrong.

Two days later, he caught Pam in the garage with the Jancek's dog. This animal was bigger, and she was having trouble with the knife. Next to her, on the floor, was the dollhouse. She and Eda had taken apart their old dollhouse and had stretched over the plas-

tic frame the still-wet skin of Mrs. Miller's cat.

"How's it going?" he asked.

She looked up, startled. Something like horror or disgust passed over her face for a second, then was gone. She returned to her work. "We're learning," she said.

"Where's Eda?"

Pam giggled. "Getting more building materials. She's kind of slow, though."

"You girls be careful."

"We will, dad," she said.

Ed left the garage, closing the door. Something was wrong. He could feel it, but he couldn't put a finger on it. He could sense that something was not right, that he was behaving oddly, not the way he used to behave, not the way he was supposed to behave, but he did not know what was making him feel like this.

He went into the house, where Bobette was in the living room, pedaling her exercise bicycle while watching *Donahue*. There was something so ordinary, so wonderfully pre-trip, about the scene that he just stood there for a moment watching her. The sight triggered something within him, and for a split second he almost remembered what had eluded him in the garage. It perched on the

tip of his brain, unable to be articulated by his conscious mind, then retreated once again into the shadows, and he was left only with a strange sadness as he watched his wife exercise.

She glanced in his direction, frowned. "Something wrong?"

He was filled with sudden anger, anger that she could go on with her normal life after the trip as if nothing had happened. Was she so damned stupid and air-headed that she'd forgotten it all already? Of course something was wrong.

He just didn't know what it was.

"I'm going to the store," he said.

"Okay." She continued pedaling. "Pick up some milk while you're there."

He nodded absently, then stepped out the door, pulling his keys from his pocket.

He returned several hours later. It was dark and well past dinner time. He had walked through stores, through shopping centers, knowing he wanted to buy something but not knowing what it was. Then he had seen what he was looking for and everything suddenly clicked into place.

Now he walked across the driveway holding the sack. Pam and Eda came out of the shadows to meet him, and though he had not

been expecting them he was not surprised. He took out two boxes and handed one to each. "These are for you," he said.

He took out one for himself, dropping the sack on the ground.

They unwrapped the boxes.

Bobette was washing dishes when they came through the door. There was an angry expression on her face and a plate of cold food untouched on the table. She looked up, glaring, as she heard the noise behind her, but the lecture that had been on her lips died when she saw the carving knives in their hands. She looked from Ed to Pam to Eda. "What are you doing?" she asked. Her voice was suddenly shaky, scared.

"The house needs redecorating," he told her.

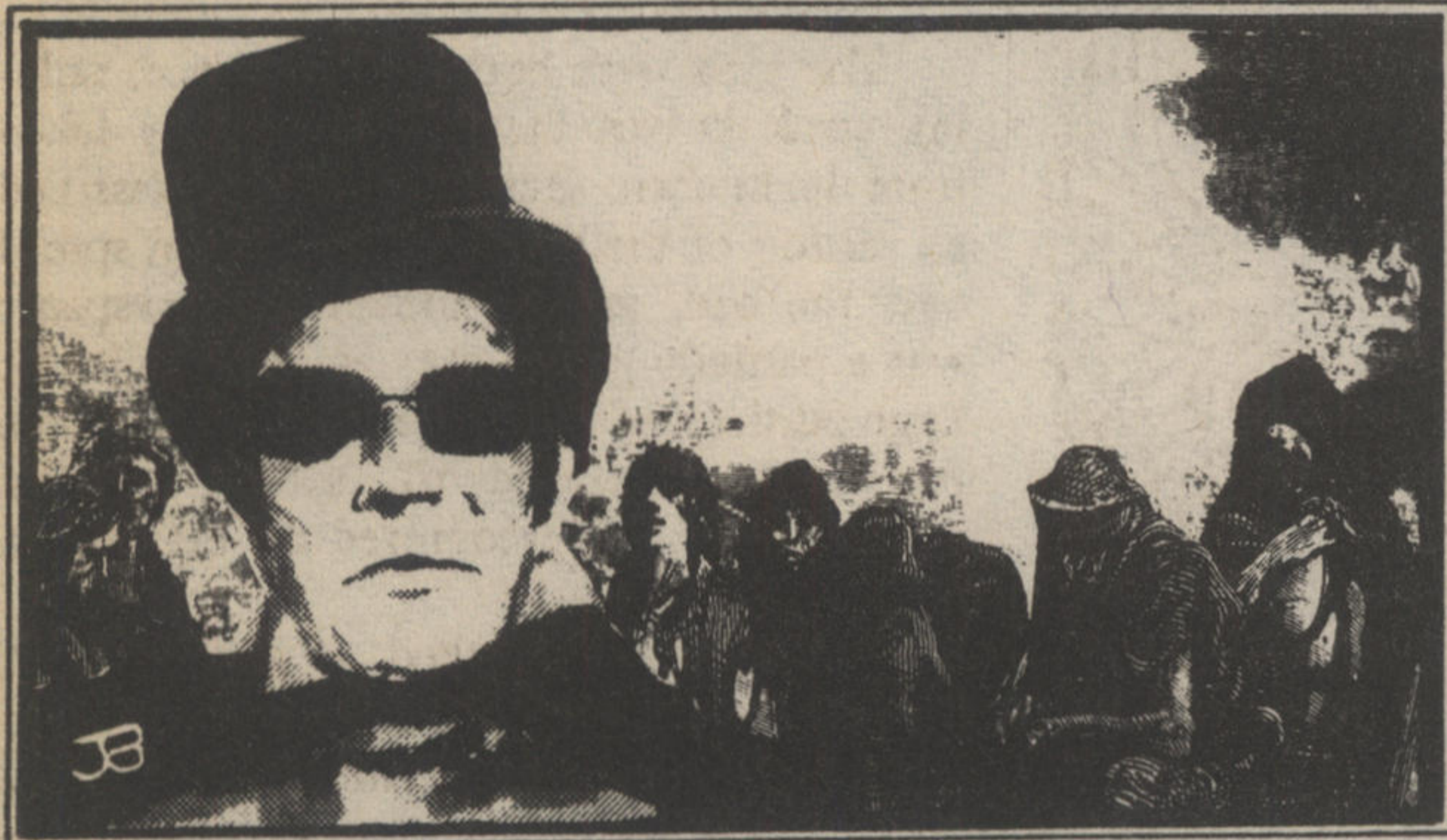
Bobette tried to back up, but there was no place to go. She was flat against the sink. She was too stunned to scream as the three of them moved forward.

Ed smiled. "We're going to wallpaper the living room."

His knife went in first, Pam's and Eda's followed.



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TO THE HORROR SHOW



*Again he stands before me, pompous little aristocrat.
Again the picture is passed before my eyes.*

BASKET CASE

STEVE VERNON

I ignore him, this strutting little rooster of a man. I will play Reynard to his Chanteclair. I must wait. I sit, I knit, and I listen to the clatter of my needles.

More bird than man, he flits about my room pouncing upon all that is shiny and bright. An officer of the law, he says. A gaudy eyed crow, more likely. More fit to be scratching in burial grounds. Again the picture is passed before my eyes.

"I must repeat myself, madame. Have you ever seen this man?"

I shrug.

A lace filtered blade of sunlight momentarily decapitates the glossy photograph. I blink my eyes. Still he talks, mercilessly jabbing his finger at me, a duellist's flicker of motion. I could bite it off, so close does his finger come to my teeth.

"Please, Madame. This is very important."

I attend to my knitting. While he chatters, I will clatter. The singing squeak of my rocker serves to drown his speech.

From above, his hand descends upon the arm of my rocker. I am shaken, but only by the suddenness of the move.

His hand squeezes the wood as if it were flesh. He forces his voice through gritted teeth.

"Will you listen to me," he says.

I gaze at his hand, stare through it, willing it to move. The white around his knuckles fades. My fine sharp needles clatter. He should listen.

He must have heard. His grip is released, a little too quickly. He pulls his hand away, hides it in a pocket.

His breath hisses from his mouth, like a wounded tea kettle.

He tries to smile.

"I'm sorry. I've gone too far. But you must understand, my only concern is your safety."

My gaze rises, I will not look upon his face. It is far more comforting to contemplate his neck.

"Again, I apologize for my loss of temper."

He is moving again, circling about my room, snatching up what ever catches his eye. A vase. French? Yes. A family portrait. Yours? No. A basket. Old? Souvenir.

"This man is believed to be nearby. He is a psychopath, a proven killer, who only evaded arrest by minutes. A pattern killer, he chooses his victims carefully. In his last place of residence we found a scrap of paper bearing this address."

I shrug. Clatter, clatter.

"A slim lead, I know, but we will take no chances. A police woman will stay with you for your own protection."

I shake my head. "No," I say.

"I don't understand. What can you possibly be thinking? You are in danger. We will send someone from the station to ..."

"You will send no one," I say.

"In God's name, why not? This man has a history of violence."

I smile.

"You speak of history," I say. "Yet in my time I have seen more death, more violence than your entire little police station. You know nothing."

I pause, I have gone too far.

"Besides, the man has not been here, will never be here at any time."

Again he rants, flapping his arms as if he would take wing.

His attempted flight is interrupted as he brushes a bottle of sherry from its resting place.

The bottle lays where it has fallen, bright red sherry spilling from its open neck. The cork rolls about the floor.

The man kneels, attempting to right his wrong. He pats at the stain. I say nothing. I stare, fascinated at the way the sunlight slices across his exposed neck, highlighting the stiff hairs of his nape, the knife crease from a too starchy collar. A quick draw of breath chills my gums.

"I'm so sorry. Your carpet will be ruined, I'm so ..."

His voice drifts.

He rises, holding something he has found. Something small, something forgotten. How careless of me to miss it.

"A ring, ma'am. A man's ring."

I shrug.

"He has been here, hasn't he?" he asks. "These are his initials."

For the moment I will say nothing. I will watch him, try to catch his eyes. They are intent upon the ring. I must speak, distract him

somehow.

"Is there a price on this man's head?"

A private joke.

"He's wanted by the law. Look, if you're afraid of something happening to you, we can help."

Clatter, clatter.

"It's in the basket." Hah! I have shocked him. He has no answer. "What you're looking for, it's in the basket."

He takes a slow step forward, then looks at me to speak. Looks me straight in the eye. I have him. The hook is set.

"Look in the basket, Monsieur."

Caught in my spell, he walks slowly, stiffly, towards the basket.

"Closer. Put your head into it."

Kneeling slowly, almost reverently, he pokes his head into the basket. Again, the back of his neck is bared to me. A final time my eyes caress his vulnerability.

"Put it all the way in."

Inside the basket it is like a seashell. He seems to hear the roar of the ocean. No, not the ocean. It is a human sound: the roar of a thousand, thousand flailing tongues. The roar of a mob.

He tries to remove himself, finds he cannot. He feels the heavy wooden yoke about his neck, feels the rough hemp chaffing his wrists. Like a bird in a snare, he is caught.

He raises his head, gazes at the crowd. Dimly, as if through the mist of countless years he sees them. Hears them chant. Smells them. Stinking peasants.

He can see the old lady in front of the mob. Rocking on her withered haunches, cackling at him. Clatter, clatter.

He knows her now. His suddenly dry lips part, he croaks the name. Her name.

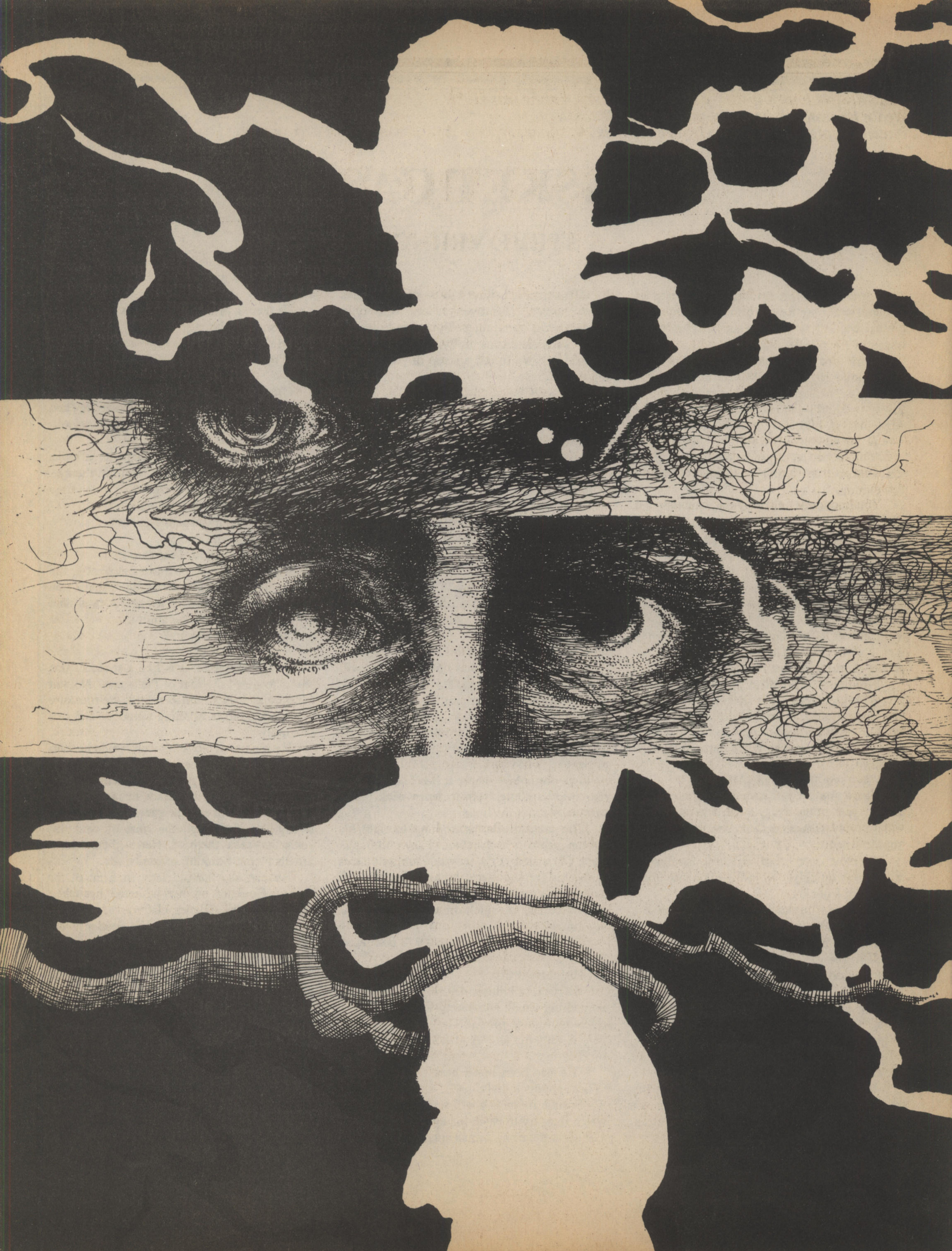
"Mme. Lefarge."

He raises his eyes further, swiveling his head. Above was the sky, framed by twin pillars of oak. Oak, and something shiny. He now knows what happened to the man with the ring. And how many men before?

He blinks his eyes, uncertain beneath the eighteenth century sun.

He hears the blade fall, sees the basket below. Waiting. Hungry.





*I had always hoped it would not be necessary, but he was right.
We would succeed best with a human mother.
I had been merely trying to ignore the obvious because of its obvious human complications.*

OPENING THE DOOR

LARRY BAKER

It was not an original idea, nor is mine an original story. You would call the idea immoral, the story traditional. But it is becoming obvious that the facts are being misconceived by the press, sensationalized beyond their merit, and dramatized for public consumption. Science gone mad they call it. A comfortable, mindless cliché. At its core, like all clichés, empty. And so it becomes important to have someone know the truth, someone who will understand the truth.

Briefly, from me to you, the truth about Adam.

You know my field: eugenic chemistry. I prefer to call it eugenic philosophy because that is where all the questions are. Not what to know but how to use what we already know. And what we know has been known for several years. My contribution to that knowledge has been minor. All I really claim to have done is open a door that had been shut, not because it was locked, but because no one dared turn the handle. In seminars, in journals, in private conversations we had all been debating the key question: crossbreeding of species. It had been done on primitive levels; I merely leaped to the inevitable plateau: man and ape.

I approached several colleagues. They hesitated and I backed off. I had expected their reservations but not their moralizing. I then knew my project had to be done selectively, and privately. So I was surprised when propositioned by three researchers from mainland China. Kung Chi and Shui were well known. They insisted I find a place for Huo, who in the long run proved the most valuable.

Why go through all the back alleys? Why do it? Why risk the professional abuse? I wanted to see what would happen. That's all. I wanted to do something that had never been done before and then sit back and study the result. More than that, I wanted to study the world's reaction to that result. Contrary to what you think, there was never a question of morality, never a choice between right and wrong. Adam was, and still is, a fact whose moral status varies with the eye that perceives him.

Four years ago Kung Chi and Shui arranged for a pair of apes to be delivered to

our lab compound outside Los Angeles. The female we called Grace, the male was given no name. Obviously we only needed the female but this pair had been together since infancy and we thought keeping them together would make for a smoother gestation period.

Grace was impregnated successfully and the four of us, living within the lab complex, took six hour shifts monitoring her. The donor sperm? I was responsible for that creation too.

Problems developed within the first month. On the thirty-first day, Shui barged into my office screaming in broken English that Grace was aborting. By the time we got back to the lab it was too late. She had aborted. Worse than that, she had destroyed the fetus, rendering it unfit even for a basic study of cell development.

I looked at Huo. He had been the one who formulated the drug that made impregnation possible, and he had been the most confident of success. His yellow face was expressionless, even when he laughed and said he had underestimated Grace, a mistake he would not make again.

Three months into her second pregnancy she had still given us no trouble. During my shift she and I would look at each other and we would both listen to the babbling of her mate in the other cage. The other men reported the same routine: her staring, him screeching.

One autumn afternoon, I was in the lab reading when I suddenly realized that the room was quieter than usual. I looked at the nameless ape, who was looking at Grace. My eyes went from him to her. She was motionless, squatting in a corner, and I could feel, though not see, her abdominal muscles contracting. She was aborting again.

By the time I reached her cage I could see the brown and red fetus in her hands. I hesitated for a moment and then realized that she was going to eat it. She was not even going to let me have the stillborn flesh. I quickly pressed my face up against the bars of the cage, waving to distract her.

Turning back around to get the key I was slammed back against her cage. She had reached out and wrapped her arm around my neck. It was a revelation. She was trying to

choke me.

Did you ever think that you could prevent your own death by anticipating every possible way to die? As if by visualizing your own drowning you would never drown, thus forcing some inexorable fate to find another way to claim you. To cheat by looking at the cards of your opponent. I had never pictured my throat wedged in the long arm of an experiment. I felt cheated and tricked. I was terrified, but then I was outraged. There I was, looking across a silent room at a nameless ape who was watching me die. Frightened, angry, and then very clam. Because I knew this was absurd.

I was right.

Kung Chi was standing in front of me when I opened my eyes, an ax raided over his head. In the same moment the blade came down I could see over his shoulder to the other cage. Grace's mate had his own arms extended through the bars of his cage, palms up. For a fragmented second, as the blade headed toward me, I thought I was the victim of a conspiracy. Then I heard two sounds together: a metallic ring and an almost-human scream. I thought Kung Chi had missed, but the first blow had gone all the way through Grace's shoulder, severing her arm, and then hitting the bars of the cage. I was free, the right side of my face red with her blood.

We anesthetized her with an air-gun syringe and then I cut her open. Starting with the throat, down through the chest and abdomen, one long incision from under the chin down to the crotch, ribs pushed back.

I wanted that fetus.

Despite Grace's efforts, it was remarkably intact, though I had to slice open her upper colon to get most of it. That fetus proved invaluable. Studying it, Shui and Kung Chi were able to determine the fallacies in our initial formulations.

A week later Shui asked me if I wanted to drop the project. But he already knew I would not. He then gave me a single sheet of paper, on which was a single sentence: *Right chemistry, wrong parents.*

I had always hoped it would not be necessary, but he was right. We would succeed best with a human mother. I had been merely trying to ignore the obvious because of its

obvious human complications. We would need a woman willing to be a vessel of transport, a woman able to literally disappear for almost a year. Finding a father would be no problem; he was still in our lab. The appropriate mother?

Her name was Tara. In the Sixties, romantics would have called her a flower child. When I found her she was a seventeen year old whore. Not necessarily for money, sometimes merely for a place to stay, or even a place to go. She was on the Strip in Hollywood, stoned and staring at traffic, willing to get in my car for a ride anywhere. All the time I knew her I never saw the cynical wisdom that would seem to be the necessary baggage of every whore. She always had the illusion of better things tomorrow, and yet never really complained about today. In the middle of her pregnancy we would sit and she would talk about the future. She just wanted to be as happy as she always had been. I never contradicted her.

She said she always wanted the "experience" and didn't mind having a baby as long as it was really wanted by someone and would be loved. So, without a question, she believed my story of being the go-between for an illegal adoption and agreed to live under my supervision at a house near the lab. Perhaps being agreeable is in the nature of a whore.

After a month of isolation--no alcohol, drugs, or sex--she was ready to be impregnated. Using a method then under development in England we fertilized one of her eggs in a test tube, incubated it for two days, and then implanted the embryo in her. A carefully controlled, and clinical, conception.

It was late in March and I had nine months to learn how to be an obstetrician.

Tara had blue eyes. I will always remember that. For nine months I had to watch her night and day. Even after the first six weeks, when I knew there would be no problems, I watched her. We would eat together, walk together, exercise together, go out together.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Larry Baker has been a Pinkerton guard, owned and operated his own movie theatre, was a city councilman in Iowa City, and currently teaches literature and composition at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville. He has published short stories in numerous literary magazines and is writing a screenplay of "Door" while also trying to get a political novel published.

She embellished the role of expectant motherhood and her posturing was genuinely charming. But only I knew how much a parody of domestic bliss we were. A whore has no identity because she must always assume the fantasy of her lover. And so she was grateful to me for having given her a role more enduring than a night.

She was happy and too often told me that I was the only person who really cared about her. I never understood that. I took care of her, almost paternally. I would hold her when she was cold, lay beside her when she was scared. I deceived her about some things, but never about my feelings toward her. I did not want her to love me, not even as a friend. But if she was happy loving me, I didn't stop her. Not that in a hazy, irrational way I didn't care very much for her. I did. But she had always been, thought she would not admit it, temporary.

When it came time for Adam's birth I was ready. As soon as Tara's contractions started, Shui began videotaping everything. From the moment of conception I had kept detailed records of Adam's growth, monitoring everything from size to pulse. The filming was simply more detail for posterity, and would form part of the multi-media history I was compiling about his life. Shui looked over my shoulder; Tara stared at the ceiling.

It was a singular experience. Adam's head being forced out the cervix, a genuinely new form of life, cradled by my hands. But I was too preoccupied with the immediate medical aspects of the birth to philosophize much, or even to note specific details about his appearance. Besides, even new born humans are deceptively grotesque, with features that must smooth out over a period of hours.

Umbilical cord severed, Adam was quickly transferred to a portable incubator and Kung Chi took him to an adjacent lab converted to a nursery. I put the after-birth in a container to be studied later, and then cleaned up Tara.

She never asked to see her child. We had agreed on that from the very start. For the first few days after Adam's birth she was exhausted both physically and emotionally. No laughing, no monologues, she lay in bed most of the time. Ten days after the delivery she was ready to leave. I expected her to be sad, and I wasn't disappointed. But, also as I expected, when I gave her the cash her blue eyes brightened. She took a deep breath, hugged me, and joked about going into the baby business.

That was two years ago.

From that time until last month, I devoted myself to Adam's growth and education. For the first few months I had merely to watch him grow, keeping a close check on which

genetic traits were emerging dominant. He was not a freak. I could have told someone who did not know his history that he was an ape and they would not question it. Or I could have told them he was human and they would have equally believed that. Even I would fluctuate. His external appearance was totally ambiguous. Depending on my mood, he would either look ape or human. That disappointed me. I wanted something unique, but too often he seemed to be only an ugly human child. A slightly elongated face, flat nose, a jaw that was becoming less obvious than it had been at birth.

I fed him by formula for the first six months. Gradually I taught him how to feed himself. I wiped the feces off his hands, sponged the urine out of his bed, and finally toilet trained him. When it became apparent that excessive body hair would be a problem, I developed a hormone treatment that shifted the scale back in favor of human appearance. It became obvious to me that I could not just let things happen. I had to give them a direction.

At the end of two years he was an adolescent. His arms were noticeable long but he walked with a human gait; in fact, with better posture than most humans. Overall, his physical development was perfect and his uniqueness was finally becoming apparent. He would never be handsome, but he unmistakably had the appearance of being, for lack of a more precise word, interesting.

There was only one problem with Adam. In two years he had never spoken. In that time he had acquired the fringes of humanity. He did not look like an ape, did not walk, eat or even smell like an ape. And he understood language. I knew that. It was the tool most emphasized in his education. He would respond to my instructions, and even seemed to enjoy the radio and television. But he would sit and stare at me, understanding every word spoken to him, and still remain silent. That silence was the only chain preventing his entrance into the human world. But for no organic reason he was mute.

It was maddening. We would sit across from each other. I would point to a book across the room. I would repeat the word slowly. Book. Book. Then I would turn my back to him and ask him to bring me the book. I would hear him get up and walk quietly across the room. When I turned around the book would be on the table and he would be staring at me. I would ask him to open it and he would. I would point to a word and a single letter. He would stare at me and his expression, though benign, would always unsettle me. There was something about his face that was not right, but I could never put it into words.

I had almost given up when Shui sug-

gested the "miracle" method used in the movie about Helen Keller. So we would sit facing each other, knees almost touching. I would trace letters in his palm, over and over again. Nothing happened.

I got so angry once that I grabbed his jaw and yanked it side to side, up and down, in a crude parody of speech. He slapped me off the chair. I realized then for the first time how developed he really was, emotionally and physically. It was not a reflex action; it was communication. He extended his hand as if to tell me that all was forgiven but to never do that again.

I gave up for a month. Then, three weeks ago, everything changed. I was trying again when he gave me the first sign of progress. No, it was more than progress, it was success. As I was holding his left hand, he reached up with his other hand and placed it on my throat. I stopped talking and looked into his face. He had the expression of a scientist who does not know what he is doing but is willing to try a new approach just to see what happens. I said his name and he nodded, almost smiling. I asked him if he was all right and he nodded again. He put his left hand on my throat and I spoke again.

Then I knew the secret. He was feeling the vibration in my throat as I spoke. It was giving him almost sensual pleasure to feel the words come up the throat, through the voice box, and out the mouth as warm moist air. I put my hand on his throat and told him to speak. His lips opened and I knew it was the beginning of his whole life, his real birth. There was a word, a specific word, coming up out of his chest, following the same path as the first word a million years ago. It was in his mouth and I could see his tongue trying to push it out. But not a sound. The motions were complete and the word came out silent. It came again. His lips framed it but there was no sound. It would be audible very soon.

At that moment, Huo walked in and told me that Tara had come back.

I was furious. She had no right to want Adam back now. Leaving him in the lab, I rushed back to my house outside the compound. Tara was in her old bedroom, a bedroom now used by Adam. Her face brightened when I came in, but the tone of my voice told her I was angry. Her happiness changed very quickly into a pathetic blankness. She couldn't speak and just seemed to collapse in on herself. She lay on the bed, knees pressed up to her chest, like a baby in a cold room.

Looking down at her, I realized she had not come back for Adam. In fact, she obviously did not know he was still here. She had come back for me. No, not for me, *to* me. She was dying. I knew it intuitively. She had lost over thirty pounds, her skin was

paper white, her blue eyes faded. Perhaps it was drugs, perhaps disease. But for some reason she had come back here. I knelt down by the bed and looked at her face. She just smiled at me and then, barely above a whisper, asked if I would take care of her. I said yes.

What else could I do at that point? I wasn't ready for anyone to know about Adam. Tara had upset all my plans. Why couldn't she have disappeared two years ago? It wasn't fair. She had not fulfilled her part of the contract. And so now I had to suspend my work with Adam while I cared for her.

Ten days ago, my worst fear came true. I found Tara crying in her room. Scattered all over the bed were the pictures of Adam. To this day I still don't know how she got them. She was shaking. Seeing me, she screamed. I put my arms around her and tried to calm her down, all the while trying to come up with some explanation. But she had her own. She kept asking me to forgive her, crying that it was her fault that the baby was born the way it was. She was incoherent, babbling about how it must have been the drugs or the alcohol or the sex that she had overdone, convinced that some divine retribution was punishing her for her life. She was insane, moaning about the monster she had created, insisting that I must be very disappointed in her after all the time and kindness I had given her. She held up the latest picture of Adam, screaming about her monster. She was crazy. Adam looked almost normal in that picture.

Her shoulders were shaking and she began to cough. Blood was coming up out of her lungs, splattering my chest. There was only one way to help her. I went to the cabinet and got a syringe. She nodded her head, thanking me for the relief. Into her vein I injected cool pure air.

A door slammed behind me and I turned around, but there was nothing there.

I went to the beach for a few days, leaving Huo to dispose of Tara. He asked no questions. It was not an easy time. I had to reconcile me to myself. Tara was dead; Adam was alive. But Tara had been dying long before she came back to me. I had merely been an instrument. If she had known the truth about Adam, it could have been much worse for her. I knew that. She could not handle it. If she had stayed with me it would have been her, not Adam, that the world would call a freak. Such a petty world would fear an abomination but it would scorn the mother of that abomination. If Adam was not responsible for his existence, Tara was, and she would have been branded a willing agent of perversion. Most people would not have accepted Adam. I knew that, but Tara they would have stoned.

Finally, I had enough reasons to insulate myself. It was time to return for Adam's coming out.

Back in the lab, he and I were re-united. He turned and stared at me, and there returned to me that same uneasiness about his face. Some feature was not right. I asked him to sit and speak to me but he remained near the door. So I walked over and took his hand to guide him back to the chair. He broke my grasp and walked over on his own, sat down, and then motioned me to sit opposite him.

I wanted to begin at the point where we had been when Tara had returned, but I could not resurrect the moment. Three weeks ago we were on threshold of his first tottering verbal step. Adam had wanted to speak then, but now he made no effort. I scratched letters in his palm without response. I put his hand on my throat and spoke to him. I put my hand on his throat, but he shook his head and I pulled back. So I began a one-sided conversation with him, telling him the history of his life. I knew then that I had finally gotten his interest back. He wanted to know about himself.

As the story progressed into the last few months he put his right hand on my neck and began to move his mouth. He was going to talk, I knew it, to continue the story on his own.

With his first word came also the realization of what had always bothered me about Adam's face. It was his eyes. He spoke to me at the exact moment I comprehended that his eyes were blue. Just like Tara's.

I would have screamed but his hand had already cut off my air. With the fingers of his other hand, he punctured my throat and slowly probed up to my larynx, finally pushing through it. Suspended in his arm, in shock and passive, I marveled at the lack of pain.

Then he stared at me, through those impossible blue eyes, and he spoke his first word:

"Father."

Somewhere in the room, water was gurgling as I blacked out.

There is nothing else to this story. Adam and Huo, the others, have disappeared. I am blamed for that as well as Tara's death. The police found her when they found me. You have seen the pictures in the papers and there will be a cover story next week in *Time*.

Adam is the object of a massive search, a massive, futile search. They will not find him because they want him for the wrong reasons. A few more weeks in this cell and then the farcical trial. And then another cell. I wish I were as dangerous as they believe. What have they to fear from a man who can never speak again, even if he wanted to.

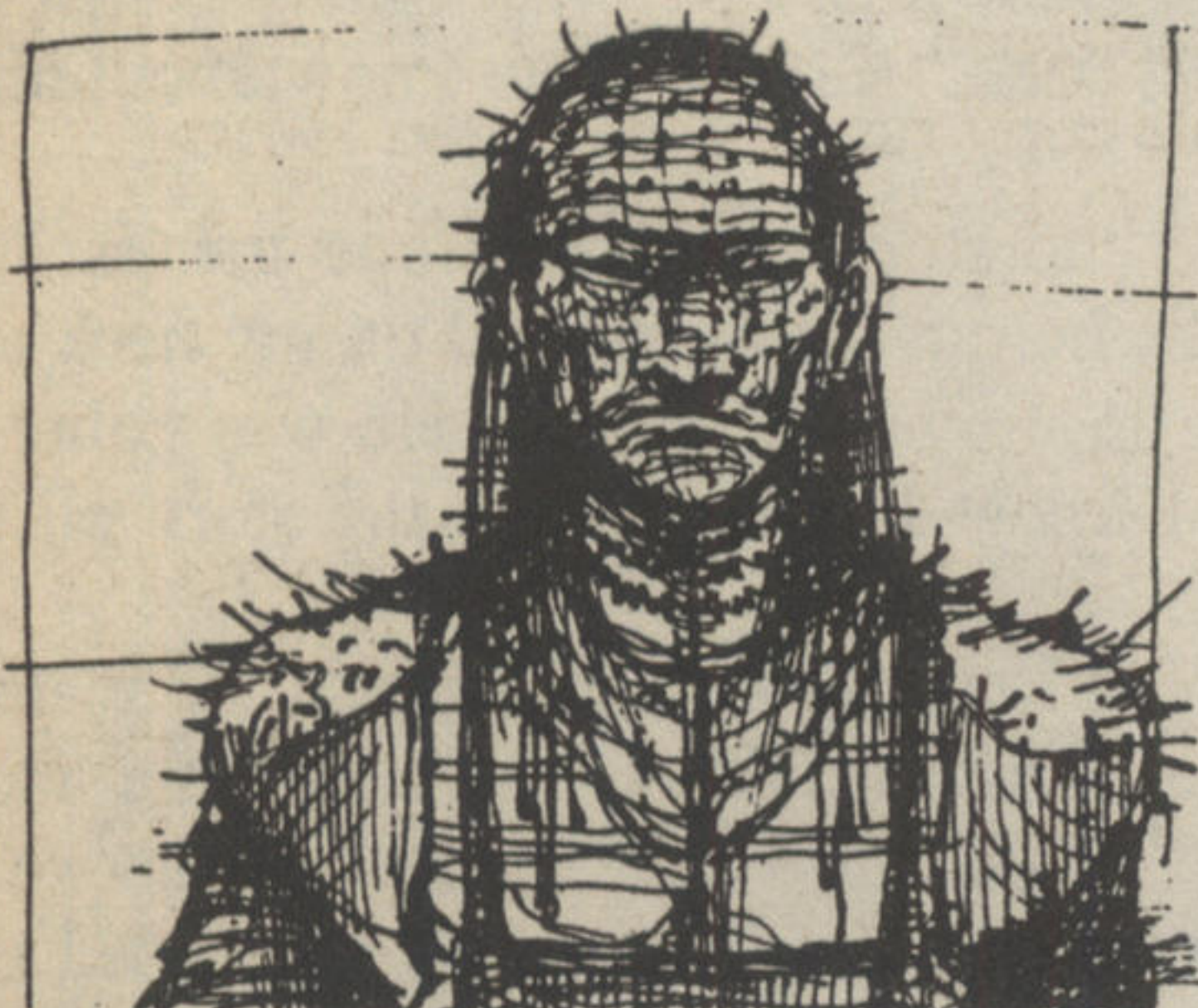


NIGHTMARES

HORROR HAPPENINGS: NEWS, EVENTS, LATE RELEASES

FOOTSTEPS PRESS

Look for two new chapbooks from Footsteps Press. In December 1988, they published *Holiday* by Richard Christian Matheson, which includes a preface by Richard Matheson. 400 signed copies will be available at \$10.00 (postage & handling \$2.00). Then in February 1989 look for *The House of Fear* by Chet Williamson, with illustrations by Steve Bissette. 500 signed copies will be available for \$18.00 (postage & handling \$2.00). Footsteps Press, Box 75, Roundtop, New York, NY 12473.



ARCANE COMIX

Coming soon from Arcane Comix: *Fly In My Eye*, an anthology of unparalleled confusion. 200 pages, black and white imperial format, perfect bound comic book, featuring comics, portfolios, fiction and more from: Mike Blair, Clive Barker, Stephen R. Bissette, Larry Chambers, Douglas Winter and others. \$9.95 plus \$1.50 postage & handling. And then: *Books of Blood*, limited edition lithographs by Clive Barker. A set of six full color prints, signed and numbered by the artist. \$200.00. Arcane Comix, 715 Eighth Street, S.E., Suite 300, Washington, DC 20003.

THE GHOST WRITER

Look to ABC if you're looking for the mid-season replacement, *The Ghost Writer*. It's being hyped as television's first "scarecom" as a result of its blend of comedy and horror. According to the show's producer, the stories will evolve from the fact that everything the main character writes about "turns out to be true, not fiction."

G. WAYNE MILLER

Next year *Morrow* will be published

Thunder Rise, a new horror novel by G. Wayne Miller. It's Miller's first novel, after having established himself as a powerful short story writer (a number of his stories have appeared in *The Horror Show*). Be on the look-out for this one.

GARRETT BOATMAN

In an interview for Signet's bimonthly science fiction newsletter, Garrett Boatman (author of *Stage Fright*, shared his view of the horror genre. In response to a statement of Izzy, a character in *Stage Fright* (who said, "The purpose of horror is to scare the crap out of the audience."), Garrett replies: "That's Izzy's theory, a reactionary theory. It's true on one level. On a deeper level, I would say writing horror is like sticking pins in a doll, taking the reader back to a dark place he or she knew as a child, where the veneer of adulthood is tripped away; back to the dark things."

PRIME EVIL

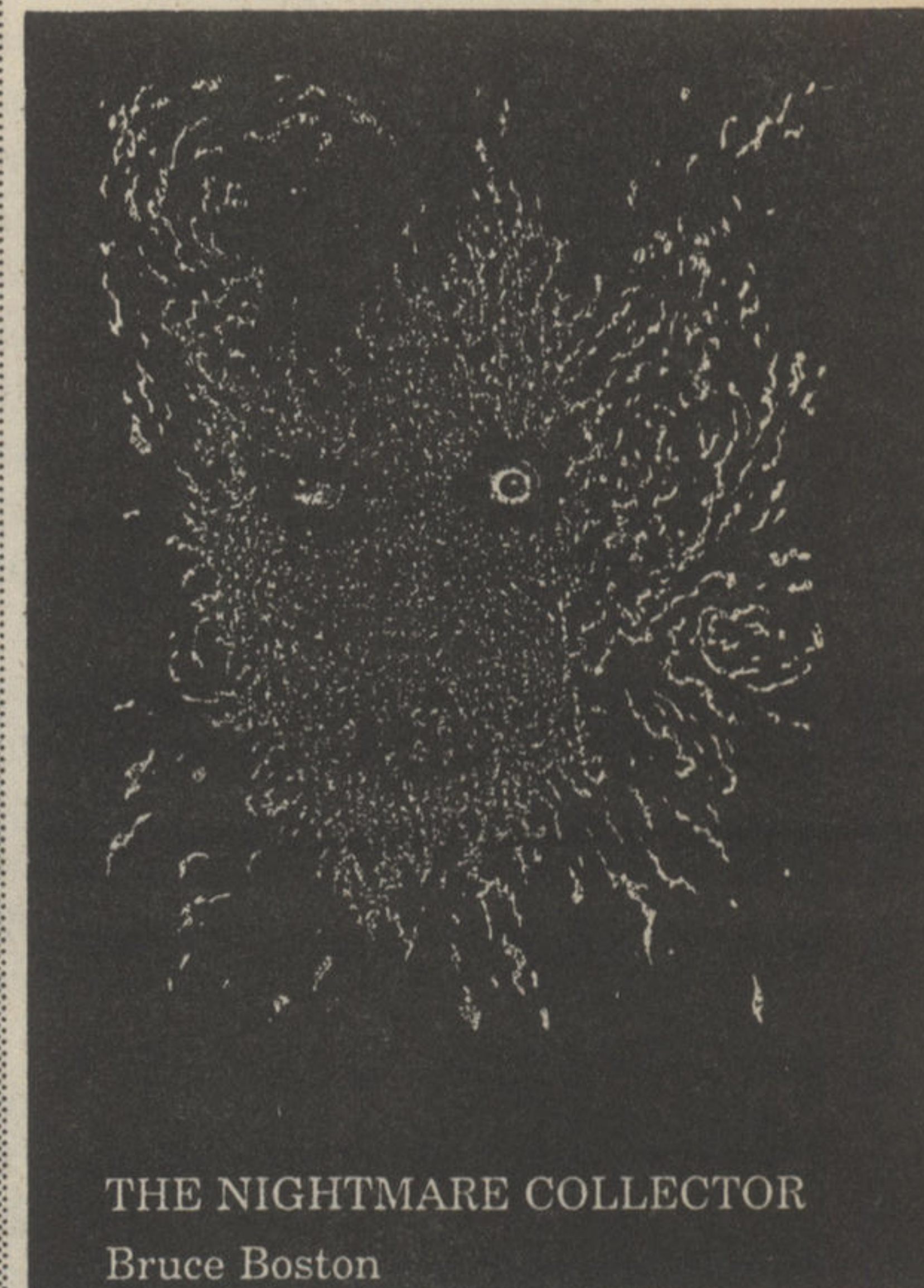
Douglas E. Winter's *Prime Evil* set a new record foreign sale for a short story collection when Bantam UK bought the anthology for approximately \$64,000. The collection includes stories by Stephen King, Clive Barker, David Morrell, Whitley Strieber, and Peter Straub. It's sales have done extremely well in the U.S. and editions will also appear in Germany, France, and Japan.

GORE/SHRIEK

Chris Pelletiere has a ten-page horror strip of his own, called *Mal Occhio* (evil eye) coming out in a comic called *Gore/Shriek*. You might remember Chris's work in past issues of *The Horror Show*. If you'd like to check it out, you can contact the publishers directly: Fanta C. Enterprises Inc., 21 Central Avenue, Albany, NY 12210-1391.

SIMON & SCHUSTER AUDIO

Simon & Schuster has two new audio tapes coming out which may be of interest to horror fans. First, there's the first of five volumes of *Prime Evil*. Volume I is called *A Taste For Blood*, and includes three unabridged stories by: Stephen King, Paul Hazel, and Thomas Tessier. \$14.95. The second audio tape is *Koko*, by Peter Straub. Also \$14.95.



THE NIGHTMARE COLLECTOR
Bruce Boston

THE NIGHTMARE COLLECTOR

2AM Publications has released a collection of poems by Bruce Boston, done in an attractive chapbook, and it's available for only \$4.95! The collection includes "Uroboros," "Curse of the Demon's Wife," "The Monster Unreason," and 31 other poems, plus some fine illustrations by Gregorio Mentjo. 2AM Publications, P.O. Box 6754, Rockford, IL 61125-1754.

POCKET BOOKS

It's hard to keep up with all the titles, but here are two new Pocket Book paperbacks you might want to check out: *Deathbell* by Guy Smith (\$3.50) and *Spirit Warriors* by Devin O'Branagan (\$4.50).

PET SEMATARY

According to an article in *The Ellsworth American* (a small Maine newspaper), the film version of Stephen King's *Pet Sematary* has just completed production in Maine after King himself insisted the movie be made entirely in his home state. The film is being shot throughout Hancock County, and undoubtedly is pumping lots of money (an estimated \$1.5 million) into the area. *Pet Sematary* is scheduled for release in February.

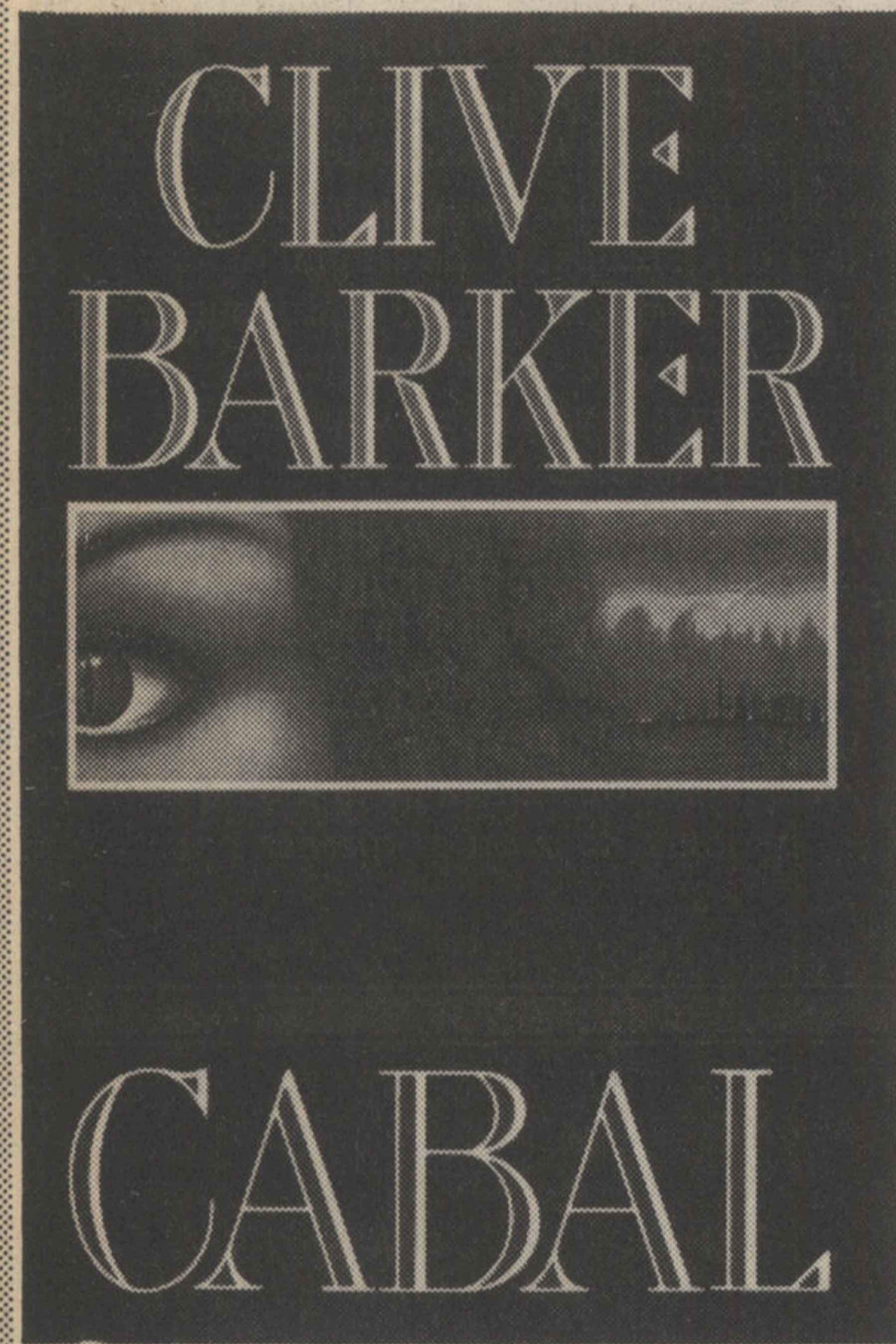
CUT THROAT

Want a look at how a horror movie goes about finding actors? Here's a short blurb from an ad in *Drama-Logue*:

CUTTHROAT--Horror thriller about a young girl who goes to a surprise party and gets more than she bargained for ... Casting male 34-40, possessed by three personalities; female, 18, hip, pretty, orphaned at birth. There is pay. Send photo and resumé ... Interested?

RAY BRADBURY

Ray Bradbury celebrated his 68th birthday on August 22nd of last year with a signing party at Hunter's Books in La Jolla, CA. According to *Locus*, the setting was particularly appropriate ... "since the title story of his new collection *The Toynbee Convector*, involves a time traveler who celebrates his birthday in La Jolla."

**CABAL**

Clive Barker's newest, *Cabal*, is a collection of five stories: "The Life of Death" (in which a young woman's fondness for death becomes infectious, literally, when she stumbles upon a crypt containing plague victims), "How Spoilers Bleed" (in which three fortune hunters raping the Brazilian jungle and wiping out its Indians discover the vengeance of the jungle), "Twilight at the Tower: (a British secret agent defects--from the human species), "The Last Illusion" (a New York City psychic detective does battle with the darkest of evils over a magician's corpse), plus the title story, a novelette, "Cabal." Poseidon Press.

Hardcover. \$18.95

An interesting aside to this: while signing autographs for *Cabal* at the Forbidden Planet in New York, Barker received the surprise of his life when a fan pulled out a razor and cut his own arm in front of the author. Apparently, he wanted to have his book signed in blood.

HEATSEEKER

John Shirley, in his mid-thirties, has been publishing both novels and short fiction for over a decade now, and finally, we're about to see the release of his first short story collection. In 1989, Scream/Press will be releasing Shirley's *Heatseeker*, a collection of nineteen short tales, illustrated by none other than our own Harry O. Morris. Next issue, we'll try to get you a review of the collection. In the meantime, put this one on your list of purchases for 1989.

Scream/Press, P.O. Box 481146, Los Angeles, CA 90048. As yet unpriced.

SILVER SCREAM

If you weren't able to pick up a copy of the Dark Harvest limited edition hardback of *Silver Scream* now's your chance to pick up the paperback edition from TOR Books. \$3.95. Edited by David J. Schow, the collection of stories (reprints and originals) revolving around the movie theater scene, contains stories by Joe R. Lansdale, Robert R. McCammon, Clive Barker, Ramsey Campbell, Robert Bloch, F. Paul Wilson, Ray Garton, and others. It's a collection not to be missed.

HORROR, The Illustrated Book of Fears

In the tradition of the classic EC comics and the Warren publications of the late 60s and early 70s, but geared to contemporary tastes, *HORROR* is a full-sized, 80 page, black and white comics format magazine. Published quarterly by Northstar Comics. Cover price \$4.00. Currently in search of new material. Fiction: original stories or comics adaptations of published stories to which authors have rights, one to twelve standard (comics) pages in length. Also needs one or two page short-shorts with "snapper endings." Pays five dollars a page minimum, more for established pros. Always include a SASE with your submission. Mort Castle, Editor, *HORROR, The Illustrated Book of Fears*, 1004 E. Steger Road, Lincolnshire Commons, Suite C-9, Crete, IL 60417.

CITIES OF THE DEAD

Recently out from Berkley (\$3.50), *Cities of The Dead*, a story which revolves around the unleashing of the dead. Howard Carter

goes to Egypt to study its culture, its mysteries, and finds, instead, a madness (this is back cover copy). The author is Michael Paine. The book has received some solid reviews. And you may or may not be interested to know that Michael Paine is a pseudonym for John Curlovich, who writes primarily in the science fiction field. It's one of those "little" books in the horror field which come and go so quickly these days. You might want to check it out.

AFTER HOURS

Those of you who are always interested in checking out new magazines in the field might be interested in *After Hours*. The first issue will be carrying stories by J.N. Williamson, John Maclay, Bob Warner, and a classic from Tanith Lee. Also in this issue is an interview with Robert R. McCammon, author of *Swan Song*, *Stinger*, and the soon to be released, *Wolf's Hour*. Interested? A sample copy runs \$4.00. *After Hours*, 21541 Oakbrook, Mission Viejo, CA 92692.

SHOCK SUPPLEMENT

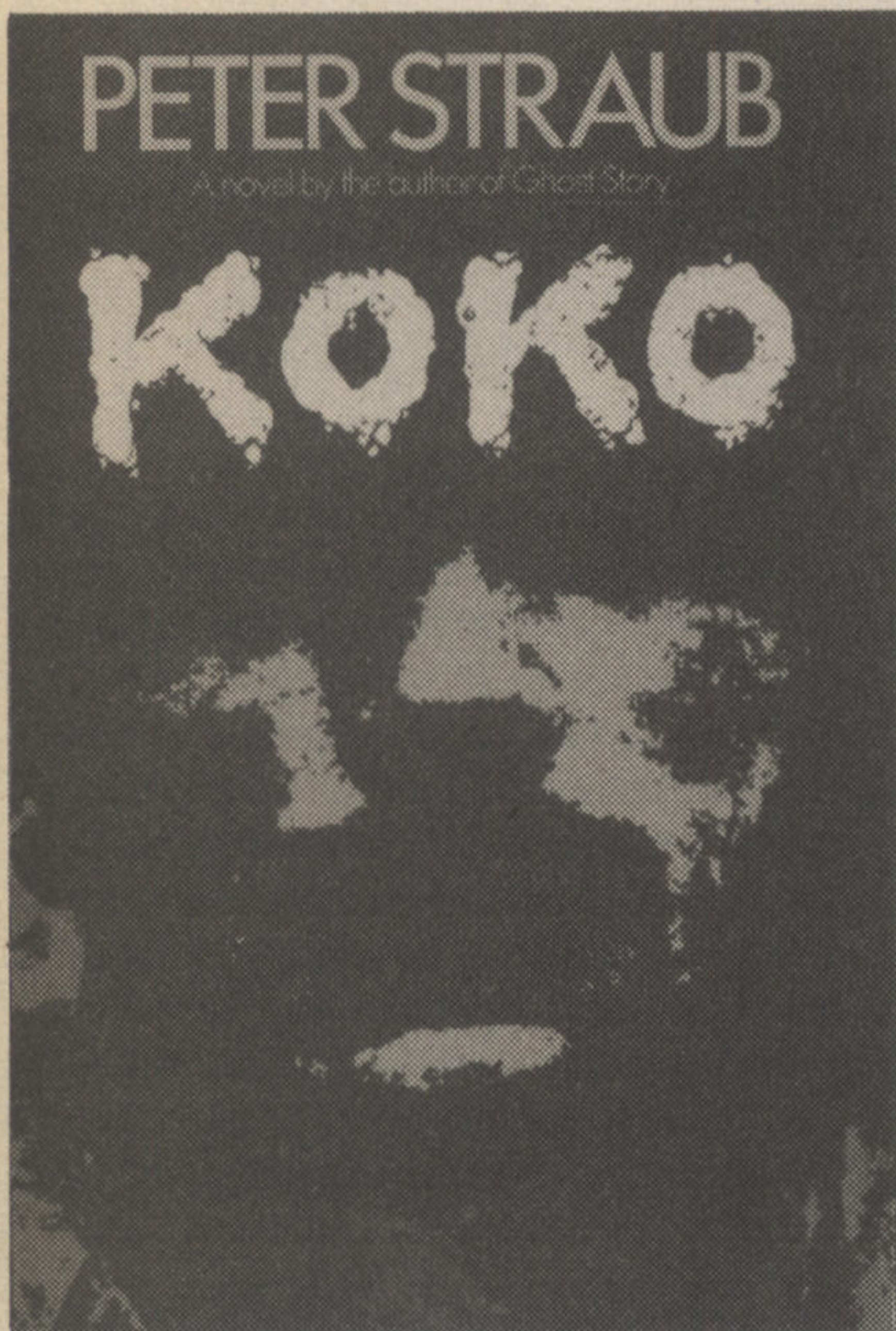
If you enjoyed John Stanley's *Revenge of The Creature Features Movie Guide* and you're eager to stay up with all the current movies, then you won't want to miss his new quarterly newsletter, *Shock Supplement*. Few frills, but lots of reading material, *Shock Supplement* picks up where the *Movie Guide* left off: with reviews of all the currently available genre movies your heart desires. A special discount subscription is available for only \$15.00. Write: *Creatures At Large*, P.O. Box 687, Pacifica, CA 94044.

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

Can you believe it? It was twenty years ago last month when George Romero's *Night of The Living Dead* first appeared. This independent production, done in a grainy black and white, and shot on weekends, has long since become a cult classic. But its affect on the movie industry was greater than many movie-goers might realize. It was more than just a zombie movie, it was a reflection of the times, of the Vietnam War, of the civil unrest in the country, and it began a trend of little movies made outside the Hollywood infrastructure. Twenty years ago. Hard to believe. Maybe it's a good time to pull out the video tape and remind ourselves from where some of the tradition of the genre arises.

The Black List

WILLIAM J. GRABOWSKI



KOKO

Peter Straub
(Dutton, 562 pages, \$19.95, hardcover)

I've waited a long time for this book; so have you. (Straub mentioned the novel way back in my Spring '85 *Horror Show* interview.) *Koko* is a departure from such past Straub works as *Shadowland* and *Floating Dragon* in that its disturbing qualities derive from demons psychological rather than supernatural. I was expecting him, sooner or later, to return to writing outside the horror genre (like his early *Under Venus*), though I have to admit that I wasn't expecting a novel in the thriller vein that, among other things, chronicles the grisly doings of a Vietnam vet.

A fine job it is, however.

Though *Koko* eschews the animated

corpses and revenants of Straub's earlier successes, it is structurally similar to *Ghost Story* in that a small group of friends reunite to confront the consequences of an evil act in their past. Grisly and vivid, the book is a tapestry of flashbacks, shifting perspectives, subplots and no-holds-barred chaos.

Four veterans who served in the same platoon in Vietnam (they whiled away their time slaughtering civilians in the village of Ia Thuc) begin to suspect that a series of killings going on in Bangkok and Singapore may be the work of a well-liked fellow vet -- a self-tortured novelist residing somewhere in the Orient. Of the four, three vow to locate him and attempt to put a stop to the murders.

Dr. Michael Poole is a pediatrician who longs to set up a practice in the inner city. He is *Koko's* most sympathetic character. Since the death of his son, Poole's marriage has been falling apart.

Harry Beavers, a self-serving cynic, has dreams of TV and movie deals.

Conor Linklater, frequently out of work as a carpenter and prone to drinking, joins the manhunt in an effort to transcend his dismal life.

Tina Pumo, a well-to-do restauranter with a place of his own called Saigon, seems doomed in his war against ever-increasing legions of cockroaches (he is joined by his fascinating girlfriend, Maggie Lah).

All of Straub's strengths manifest themselves. Whether we are crawling through insect-infested jungle or debauching in a sordid, smoky bar room, his evocative prose transports us to these varied locales like magic. Some readers might find the denouement anticlimatic, but, as more than one reviewer has noted, this is redeemed by an absolutely chilling epilogue.

In a recent interview, Doug Winter asked Straub if he felt it was a risk to move back toward more realistic themes in his writing. Straub's response was: "Sure. I had to consider it. For a long time there was a kind of

supernatural element in *Koko* -- the mysterious event in the cave in Vietnam. But what happens in the cave is now pretty clear, and the mysterious elements are explicable through a simple mechanism. That was as close as I wanted to get to the kinds of things I had written previously. After *Floating Dragon*, I felt that I had pretty much done everything I could."

Even with his deliberate move away from the fantastic, fans of Peter Straub shouldn't be disappointed after reading *Koko*. I know I certainly wasn't.

THE BLOOD KISS

Dennis Etchison
(Scream/Press, 216 pages, \$22.50, hardcover)

Dennis Etchison's third collection of short stories (the first two being *The Dark Country* in 1982, and *Red Dreams* in 1984) is a gripping *tour de force*, and ample evidence that Etchison may very well be the master of the so-called psychological short story.

This beautifully packaged Scream/Press edition features J.K. Potter's disturbing illustrations -- I can't imagine a more perfect artist (short of Harry O. Morris) to visualize the essence of Etchison's literary terrors. The combination is very striking.

Included here are stories from throughout the author's career, spanning the years 1963 ("A Nice, Shady Place") to 1987 ("Call 666" and the experimental "Blood Kiss"), with some hard-to-nail-down yarns like the sf-ish "A Walk In The Wet," perhaps the ultimate horror story about empathy and telepathy, and "The Night Of The Eye" (is there anyone who invents titles as killer as Etchison's?).

Like his fellow scribe Richard C. Matheson, Etchison tells stories with haiku-like precision. He is unsurpassed in such skills as word nuance and pacing. An example, from

"The Woman In Black:"

"When they took his mother away he went to live in the big house.

There he discovered rooms within rooms, drapes like thick shrouds, a kitchen stove big enough to crawl into, overstuffed furniture that changed shape as he passed, a table with claw feet larger than his head, ancient carpets with designs too worn to read, floor heating grates that clanged when he walked on them, musty closets opening on blackness, shadowed hallways that had no end.

These things did not frighten him."

Something new to me are the collaborative efforts: "The Spot" with Mark Johnson, and "Home Call" with C.C. Palaski.

Other stories are "The Soft Wall," "Somebody Like You," "Bloodgame," and "The Olympic Runner."

No Dennis Etchison fan should be without a taste of *The Blood Kiss*.

(For additional information, write: Scream/Press, P.O. Box 481146, Los Angeles, CA 90048.)

VAMPIRES, BURIAL, and DEATH: Folklore and Reality

Paul Barber

(Yale University Press, 236 pages, \$12.95, hardcover)

From the subtle to the scholarly sickening, and a book best read *miles* away from food.

If your tastes lean toward the necrophiliac, then *Vampires, Burial, and Death* could be your cup of putrefaction. The book is touted as "A compilation by Barber of exhumations of suspected vampires including descriptions of blood on the lips of the dead body, how the corpse cried out when a stake was driven into its heart, and how the corpse partly rose from the grave ... Barber studies the descriptions of exhumed cadavers in light of what is now known about forensic pathology and shows that they are clinically possible. Barber thus argues that the lore about vampires is an elaborate folk-hypothesis that sought to make sense out of a wide variety of natural phenomena, including the events of decomposition ..."

This is really a serious study about how simpler people misunderstood the facts of bodily death, and few of the chapters, such as "IX: Search and Destroy;" XII: The Body After Death; "XVIII: Body Disposal and Its Problems;" and "XVIII: The Soul After Death" are nothing short of blood-freezing -- a veritable source book for the writer of hor-

ror or the student of superstition.

Again: this is an exceedingly gruesome book which scrapes the bottom of the forensic pathology barrel. *Gray's Anatomy* should be so entertaining.

THE SIEGE

Rick Hautala

(Zebra, page count and price unknown)

First, due to the fact that I'm reviewing this forthcoming Hautala novel in manuscript form, I'm unable to furnish details like page count or price. Second, the author wants you to know that his publisher has taken it upon himself to alter the title to *Moon Walk* -- or something equally non-germane to what the story actually concerns itself with. (There is a reason for this cruel, irrational treatment which I will reveal in my next column. Since the book will most likely be in print by then it won't matter, but for now, it might.)

Hautala, you might recall, is the author of *Little Brothers, Night Stone* (both of which were reviewed in these pages) and several other novels. With *The Siege*, he has taken an old bit of folklore, widened its scope and transplanted it into modern-day rural Maine -- namely the potato-producing Northern region of that state. With, I might add, satisfying results.

Dale Harmon, whose wife perished in a car crash some time ago, returns to his hometown of Dyer, Maine -- with daughter Angie in tow -- to attend to the funeral of Larry, who was a close friend, and who also was killed in an auto accident. Or was it an accident?

Dale and Angie check into old Lil Appleby's bed and breakfast, and soon enough 12-year-old Angie hits it off with Lil's granddaughter Lisa. In an early scene, the two venture to Lisa's "secret place" -- a nearby abandoned barn -- but soon find they are not alone:

"Now that Lisa mentioned it, it did seem strange that with eight, possibly more men all together down there, there'd be no conversation, just their heavy breathing and what sounded like them shifting around, maybe sitting or lying down on the barn floor ..."

Angie was a little more than half-way to the trap door when one floor board creaked particularly loud ... from down below, the men shifted and grunted; the watery rattle of their breathing grew louder, sounding more agitated ... just then, one of the boards in the trap door exploded up-

ward, and a clenched fist shot up from the smashed wood ... through the splintered door Angie saw a man's face ... black gunk rimmed his mouth and stained his teeth, almost as though he had just eaten a mouthful of dirt ... a deep, rumbling laugh exploded from his chest."

Just so you don't get too stressed out: the girls managed -- barely -- their escape. This scene is one of the best I've yet encountered in a Hautala novel; my childhood bogeyman -- like Freddy with a real attitude problem -- sprang back into being. The symbolism of the two girls being menaced from the creeps below wasn't lost on me.

Fade to road scene.

Ray Moulton (aka "Hocker" for reasons which quickly become obvious) and Tasha Stewart, hitchhikers, walk through the cold Maine morning. Ray has "walked out of" a mental hospital in Athens, Georgia. He likes fire. Tasha simply got bored with the fuddy duddies in her life and split, joined Hocker later. These two cause much trouble, end up in the wrong place at the wrong time, consistently.

Further into the narrative, Dale (along with Donna LaPierce, his new love interest, also in town to attend Larry's funeral) investigates the death scene of his friend (this is called "Casey's Curve" in memory of a past bus accident) and recovers a small tape recorder. A disturbing revelation is made, which puts Dale and Donna onto the local funeral director, Mr. Rodgers. And something might be going on with Sam Higgins, who happens to own lots of potato farmland.

Hautala does a lot with his material; there's just as much broody, New England atmosphere as there is suspense and action. Plus a healthy (unhealthy) dose of mysticism. *The Siege* -- I really hope the author keeps fighting for his original title! -- is Rick Hautala's most taut and frightening novel yet -- don't miss it.

THE BOOK OF AZREAL: An Intimate Encounter With The Angel of Death

Leilah Wendell

(Westgate Press, 208 pages, \$8.95, paperback)

Aside from the fact that this book has the best cover art I've ever seen, it is a disappointment. Blurbs such as "The Ultimate Tale of Love & Death ... is a True Story!" irritate me nearly as much as the author's habit of concluding eight out of ten sentences with exclamation points!! (This is one of the first

lessons taught to beginning writers: Do not abuse punctuation marks. Sure *I* do it! Don't *you!*)

I'm certain that the author was, and is, quite serious about the subject matter of her book. The nonfiction billing, though, is too much. Leilah Wendall's introduction well defines her intent: all italics are the author's: "... I assure you that Death is *much more* than just a noun! More real than the experience of dying allows! *It* is almost 'alive'! In fact, *Death is a living thing!* An awesome and melancholy entity detached from the Cosmic Host; A solitary spectre living partially outside of Itself in a necessary, yet painful duality.

"Thus, being of two minds makes it extremely difficult to elicit one idea. However, being also of one spirit, helps 'us' to assimilate these abstract thoughts into an understanding accessible to all humanity!"

Please don't take me for a flat-out skeptic. I'm not that stupid. It's just that something about the way in which books dealing with metaphysics -- and Death as an entity -- are packaged bugs me. There is plenty of beautiful, thought-provoking writing in this book. It might even help some people whose fear of dying controls their lives. But for most (horror readers, anyway; I mean the hardcore group), *The Book of Azreal* might come off as nothing beyond overblown romanticism about the death experience.

Give it a try. Let me know what you think, okay? (No, not the death experience -- the book!)

NIGHT VISIONS 6

Introduction: Dean R. Koontz
(*Dark Harvest*, pages unknown, \$19.95, hardcover)

The sixth in the series includes stories by F.

Paul Wilson ("Feelings," "Tenants," "Faces"), Ray Garton ("Monsters"), and Sheri S. Tepper ("The Gardener"), with a very lengthy, poignant, introduction from Dean Koontz about the state of the genre.

Because of its importance, I want to share a little bit of the introduction with you:

"In the days when comparatively little horror was published, prior to Ira Levin's Rosemary's Baby in 1967, the reader could find more of quality than he can now, when the bookstore shelves sag under the weight of volumes in the genre. The roots of modern horror fiction can be traced to the work of exceptional writers who knew how to spin magic into sentences and whose work was unfailingly literate: H.P. Lovecraft, Frank Belknap Long, Fritz Leiber, Joseph Payne Brennan, Ray Bradbury, Richard Matheson, Theodore Sturgeon ... When Levin and Blatty proved that horror could be sold to a broad audience beyond the small group of diehard fans, the genre seemed poised for a long golden era.

But something went wrong.

Oh, yes, we've enjoyed some superior work in the seventeen years since The Exorcist. Stephen King's The Shining and The Dead Zone, come to mind. Dan Simmon's excellent Song of Kali, Patrick Suskind's Perfume, and a couple of dozen other books and a double score of shorter pieces by a number of writers spring to mind. But even if I used the precious space here to list them all, it would be a strikingly short compilation of first-rate work given the time span and the thousands of titles published therein. And we see less prime stuff these last few years than just a decade ago."

Koontz goes on to discuss how many of today's horror writers have turned away from their responsibilities as storytellers and craftsman, how many have chosen the easy road instead of putting in hard work and continuing to hone their skills. It's a fascinating look at the genre. Worth the price of the book on its own.

Which brings me to an apology of sorts. Unfortunately, from the fiction, I was only able to read Ray Garton's brilliant "Monster." It would probably be unfair of me to write about that story alone, but just the same, let me say that I've never enjoyed anything by Garton quite as much. It's my loss that I hadn't the time to complete the book before deadline, but *Dark Harvest* hasn't released a loser yet, and my educated (through reading their past efforts) guess is that *Night Visions 6* won't taint its predecessors.

(For more information, you can write: *Dark Harvest*, P.O. Box 941, Arlington Heights, IL 60006.)

FURTHERMORE:

The House of Thunder

Dean R. Koontz
Dark Harvest, 255 pages., \$18.95, hardcover.

Banshee

Dan Barton
Worldwide, 383 pages, \$3.95, paperback

The Pact

William Schoell
St. Martin's Press, 206 pages., paperback

Dreamthorp

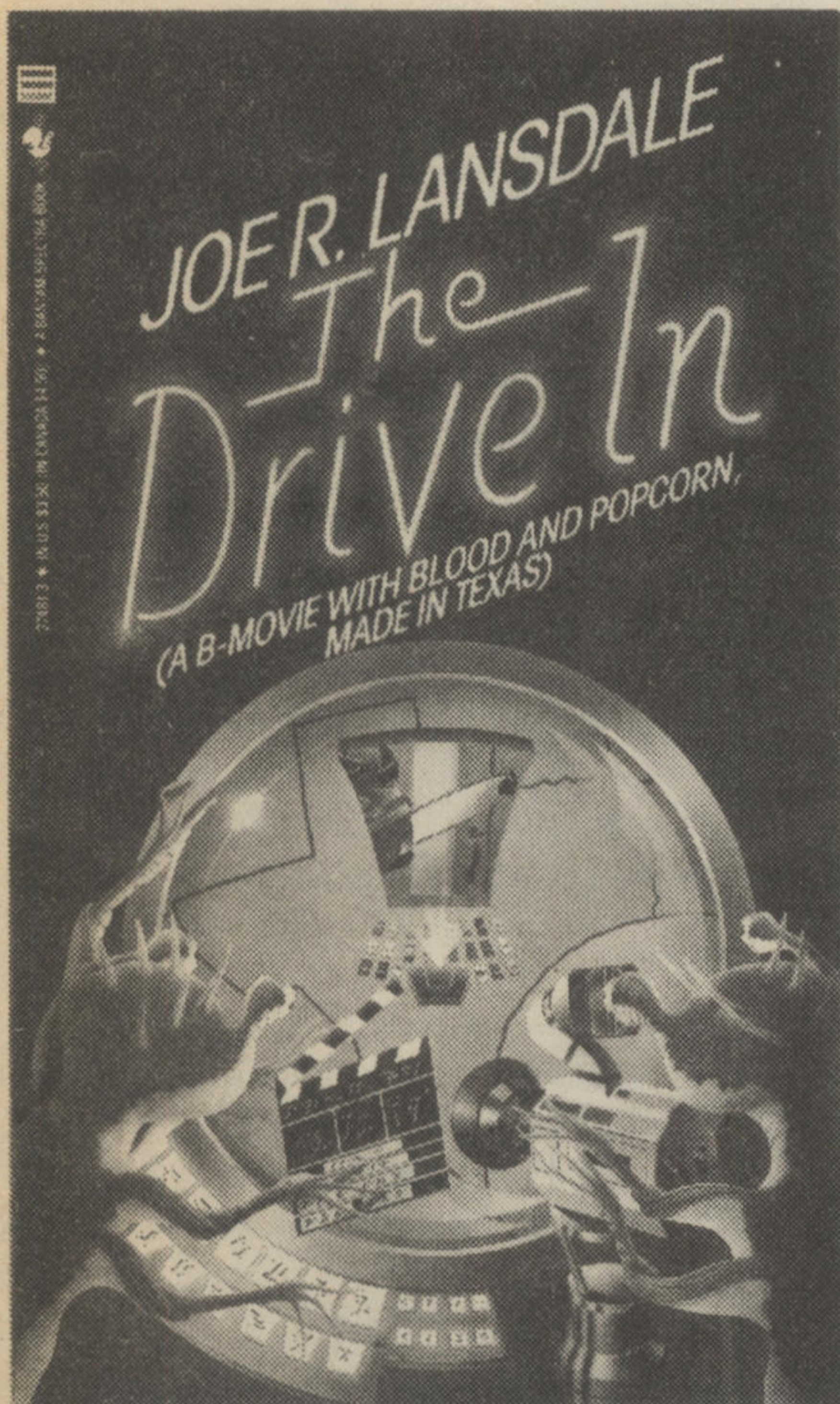
Chet Williamson
Dark Harvest, pages unknown, \$19.95, hardcover

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. c. Sorry, Joan Crawford was only in ... *Baby Jane*.
 2. b. The irony was that Libby's call precipitated the murder of his wife.
 3. b. Which doesn't make sense if you think about it, but it worked.
 4. a. Remember, the kid was into running, and later limped around?
 5. d. The movie opened with the girls exchanging drippy Valentines.
 6. c. Actually, the murders in ... *Spring* were pretty violent too.
 7. a. Powell played the killer's scientist dad, Hitch was an early walk-on.
 8. b. I dunno, maybe Mann should've kept the original title.
 9. d. Pity the film bombed initially, Laughton was a great director.
 10. c. Author Robert Graysmith tells more in his 1986 *St. Martin's/Mareck* book of the same name, the killer was never caught.
 11. a. It isn't shown on camera, but inferred later in the film.
 12. b. Remember, the guy was walking behind his truck?
 13. a. Well, Rhoda thought *she* should've won it.
 14. d. That's why his butterfly collection offended her artistic sensibilities.
 15. c. And the irony was, the woman *didn't* have it most of the time.
 16. b. In 2-D the ball just looked kinda silly.
 17. d. I saw this one years ago, and it wasn't even all that scary.
 18. b. Remember, she saw the test results from his doctor on his desk?
 19. b. The book is really quite good, very unique and witty.
 20. a. He's acted in his own *Chinatown*, too, among other films of his.
- Bonus: The "Human Chicken."

FRAGMENTS

G.L. RAISOR PRESENTS AN EXCERPT
FROM DRIVE-IN II BY JOE R. LANSDALE



We welcome back into this column a man who is rapidly becoming recognized as one of the most unique and imaginative voices in horror fiction -- Joe R. Lansdale.

This East Texan writes about life -- and death -- in small, out-of-the-way places the world has passed by and no longer cares about. His characters have their disappointments and their triumphs. Some will win out over the terrible obstacles placed in their paths. Some will not. But no matter what happens to them, you will come to know and believe in the characters in a Lansdale book. Some you will never forget, like the monstrous preacher in *The Drive-In* who devours human flesh and yet is embarrassed to admit he must paint on his ties because he cannot manage to tie the knots.

The last few years have seen a welcome

outpouring of fiction from Lansdale: *The Magic Wagon*, *The Night Runners*, *The Drive-In*, and now, the upcoming *The Drive-In II*. If you haven't read *The Drive-In*, you've missed something special. It captures the spirit of those B-movies you loved as a kid, only with more wit and style. It's all about some young guys who go to a dusk-to-dawn horror movie festival at a drive-in called *The Orbit*. Once there, they are cut off from the outside world by unseen, malignant forces. They must do battle against hunger, insanity, and eventually, a creature that makes the zombies in a George Romero movie look pleasant by comparison.

In this column, you get a sample of what you'll see as Lansdale drags out the second reel. As Joe would say: Get that popcorn -- er, bloody corn, ready! Roll 'em!

FIRST REEL

(A Burial, A Tree House, A Burned Man,
And Titties Close Up)

[1]

There was some nice scenery out there. Big trees that climbed to a sky bluer than a Swede's eye, and next to the highway was some grass growing so tall and sharp it looked like green spikes.

After being cooped up in that drive-in for who knows how long with the tar-colored sky overhead and people so close together you couldn't scratch your ass without elbowing your neighbor, I suppose I should have been grateful. No one was trying to crucify and eat me, and that was worth something, but even with everything so pretty, it had a sort of landscaped look about it that I couldn't explain. You know, like a movie set that could afford to use real trees and grass and what looked like a real sky but struck me as a little too blue and perfect. It put me in mind of an old woodcut I saw in an art magazine once. The woodcut was from the sixteenth century, I think, maybe earlier, and there was this

monk on his hands and knees and he was poking his head through the fabric of a night sky and looking at all manner of gears and machinery on the other side, stuff that made the world work, that swung the sun and moon across the sky and popped out the stars and turned things light or dark.

As we rode along, I thought about the dinosaur, and the way he walked, and thoughts spun through my head like pinwheels in a blue norther. The *Tyrannosaurus Rex* had moved smooth, all right, but slightly mechanical, and had I heard a sort of hum as he crossed the road, like the soft buzz of a battery-powered watch?

Probably not. But I had dreamed off and on that there were these many-tentacled, bladders, eyes-on-stalks aliens that were doing this to us, making us the stars of low-budget movies they were making. And if my dreams were, as I suspected, more than dreams, were in fact my tapping into their thought processes, then they could be doing to us again what they had done with us in the drive-in. Didn't low-budget movies nearly always show as part of a double feature?

Odder than the dream was me wanting to see someone. Meaning not someone from the drive-in. They were on my shit list. But I wanted to see someone out there, someone who could make me feel this was more than a movie set. I think I might have felt better if I'd seen at least some beer cans or Frito wrappers laying out beside the road or thrown up in the trees. It would assure me that humanity was out there, ready to start fucking up anything it could get its hands on. There's nothing like pristine wilderness to incite in human beings the need to start chopping down trees, tromping grass, killing animals and throwing down beer cans, so I was pretty certain there wasn't a human being within a hundred miles of us.

Not counting the folks who left the drive-in ahead of us, of course. They hadn't had time to respond to natural tendencies, and it was doubtful after our ordeal anyone had a beer or a wrapper to toss. Everything that

could be eaten or drank had been consumed at the drive-in and the containers and wrappers tossed down there.

So the people ahead of us were forced to fight their instincts to litter, though I figured in time the urge would become too strong, and they'd start throwing their clothes out, or pulling over to the side of the road to burn their spare tires and leave the blackened, rubber-dotted rims to mark their passing.

We drove on for quite a time, and when it was getting near dark, Crier said, "Think we ought to find a place to hole up for the night?"

"I doubt we're going to come across many motels," I said.

The sun was going down in what struck me as the North, and I mention this because when we went into the drive-in the highway ran North and South, and when we came out we were heading in what was formerly a Northerly direction. But being a creature of habit, and not wishing to give any alien movie makers the satisfaction of letting on I noticed, I reoriented myself and called the direction in which the sun was falling, West.

Besides, you never knew when someone might ask you directions.

Crier found a place off the highway where the jungle cleared out and there was some tall grass that went on for a ways, and he pulled over and parked, came around and helped me out of the truck.

My feet were sore and stiff from the crucifixion and I couldn't walk, but I could lean a little when propped against the camper.

As our duds had been stripped off us by the mad drive-in crowd, Crier had cut holes in blankets for me, Bob and Sam, and slipped them over our heads to serve as clothes, and I took this moment to lift my stylish wardrobe's hem and take a whizz.

Crier went around and opened the back of the camper and helped Bob out, and that's when Crier and I found out about Sam.

"We hadn't no more than gotten started back there," Bob said, "when he snorted once, shit on himself and went on to glory. Or wherever assholes like him go. I won't miss him."

Bob was sentimental like that.

When Crier got Bob propped up next to me, Bob lifted his blanket and took a leak too. If I had waited a minute or two, we could have gone together.

Crier had gone back to the rear of the camper, and Bob called to him, "I know it's a bother, and I hate to ask, you having been so nice to us and all, but--"

"Would I clean Sam's shit out of the back?" Crier said.

"And they say there's no evidence for ESP," Bob said.

Crier took Sam by the heels and dragged him bumpity-bumpity out of the camper and onto the ground. Sam hit hard enough to make me wince. Crier pulled him over to the grass and dropped his hold on the old boy's heels. He peeled Sam's blanket off and went back to the truck and used it to clean the mess up as best he could. It still wasn't going to smell like the perfume counter at J.C. Penney's back there, but it had to beat leaving things the way they were.

Bob began to ease down so he could sit, and I did the same. We managed our legs out in front of us without wincing and moaning too awful much.

**Actually,
I think Crier
could have hit him
if he'd wanted to.
It wasn't that far
a shot.
Instead, he was
trying to make
Bob nervous,
which I could
kind of understand.
Bob didn't always
bring out the best
in a person.**

Bob looked over at Sam's body in the grass and made a clucking sound with his tongue. "Hell of a thing, ain't it? Life's hard, then you die, then you shit yourself. There's just no dignity in dying, no matter how you look at it."

"Might not be any dignity," I said. "But at least you don't have to get phone calls from aluminum siding salesmen anymore."

"Got news for you," Bob said. "We won't be getting those anyway, and we're alive."

"It's because we don't have a phone," I said. "If we come across a phone, you can bet we'll be hearing from them."

Bob called to Crier. "You gonna bury the old fart, ain't you?"

Crier came around from the back of the camper. He was a sight. He was scrawny as a month old corpse, but didn't have as nice a complexion. He still had his clothes and shoes, but they seemed to be held together by little more than body odor and hope. His hair was long and shaggy and thinning. His beard looked like a nest. He had the shit-stained blanket in his hand, and he gracelessly tossed it into the grass, an act that gave me some hope. Humanity was once again on the roll. Littering was in flower.

"You're kind of pushy, Bob," Crier said.

"I ain't saying you have to bury him--"

"That's big of you."

--I'm suggesting it. If I had two good hands and two good feet, I might do it."

"Uh huh."

"Let your conscience be your guide."

Crier said something under his breath, took a step forward and kicked a hubcap on the truck with a ragged shoe a couple of times, then went to the back of the truck and came out with a tire tool.

"Hey, forget it," Bob said.

Crier used the tool to pop the hubcap off the rear right tire. He took the cap out to the grass and tossed it down next to Sam. He began pulling the grass and cussing while he did it. It was pretty interesting to watch. Once in a while he'd toss a wad of grass, dirty roots still intact, toward Bob, and it would land near his sore feet or slam into the truck beside him. Bob started moving his head like a nervous anaconda.

Actually, I think Crier could have hit him if he'd wanted to. It wasn't that far a shot. Instead, he was trying to make Bob nervous, which I could kind of understand. Bob didn't always bring out the best in a person.

As for me, I tried to sit casual with my punctured biscuit hooks in my lap, looking at the crusty wounds on the backs of my hands where the nails had come out and gone into the wood of my cross.

When Crier had a good patch of grass pulled, he took the hubcap and used it to dig with and his mouth to cuss with. He worked the dirt between his legs like a dog burying a bone.

It was almost solid dark when he finished the grave. It wasn't much, more of a shallow trench, really. The moon came up in the North, right where the run had gone down, the place I had decided to call West before, and I had a vision of my real or imagined multiple-eyed, many tentacled, bladder-shaped aliens pulling levers and pushing buttons and causing gears to creak and crank and start the final descent of the sun and the rise of the moon, which spilled its light into Sam's final resting place like thin cream.

Crier hooked his hands under Sam's chin

and pulled him over to the trench. Sam's body rustled through the grass like a snake. Crier rolled him into the hole face first. Sam's legs stuck out at one end, and his left arm flopped from the grave and lay in a manner that suggested he was about to push up and get out of that hole as soon as he gathered his strength.

"You gonna have to dig some more," Bob said.

Crier turned slowly and looked at Bob. The moonlight on his face made him look like the man most likely not to give an ax. I hoped he knew that Bob's sentiments were his own and that I was an independent.

"Maybe not," Bob said. "Hell, just throw some of that grass over the spots that don't fit, and fuck it."

Crier turned back to his work, took hold of Sam's free arm and brutally twisted it behind Sam's back like a kid working his end of a wish bone. When the arm cracked loud enough to run a cold tremor up my spine, Crier pushed it down against Sam's back and put a foot on it and pressed, rocked back and forth on it until it stayed in place. He bent Sam's overlong legs at the knee, folded them to where the soles of his feet touched the back of his naked thighs, sat on them, and bounced hard.

Every time Crier got up to examine his handiwork, the legs would creep up slowly. Finally Crier had had enough. He bent them down and hopped on them one last time, got up and grabbed the hubcap and started scraping the dirt into the trench and topped it off by tossing loose grass on it.

I guess it was an okay grave, in that it beat lying naked in the grass with a blanket full of your shit nearby, but it was disconcerting to see the top of Sam's feet and part of his ankles sticking up in the moonlight. If any of Sam's relatives had been around, I don't think they'd have liked it.

I suppose it got to Crier too, because he took the hubcap and set it on the soles of Sam's feet as a kind of marker. And though it wasn't perfect, it did sort of tidy things up.

Without saying a word, Crier went around on the other side of the truck and got in. I could tell from the way the truck moved he had laid down in the seat.

Bob leaned over to me and said, "Think it would be okay if I asked him to help us into the camper?"

"Maybe not just now," I said.

From inside the cab we heard Crier say something about "goddamn ingrates," and Bob and I went very, very quiet.

[2]

We crawled under the truck and tried to

sleep. The grass made it pretty soft, but there were bugs crawling on me and it began to get cold and I was feeling stiff in the hands and feet. One thing I had gotten used to in the drive-in was the constant moderate temperature, and that made the chill seem even chillier.

I got one of the larger bugs off of me and crushed it with my thumb and forefinger, a movement that made my worn hand throb. The bug's body collapsed like a peanut husk. I tried to look at it closely, but under the truck with only a stray strand of moonlight, there wasn't much to see. It looked like a crushed bug. Maybe I was expecting little silver wires and a battery the size of a pinhead.

--

**We were looking
at Sam's grave
while we talked,
examining his ankles
sticking up,
his feet
wearing the hubcap,
and all of a sudden,
we grew silent,
as if possessed
of a hive mind.
"I could have
at least
spoken some words
over him," Crier said.**

I suppose Crier started feeling guilty, because in the middle of the night he came and woke us up and pulled us out from under the truck and helped us into the camper, which, he had in fact, cleaned out quite well, though the odor of Sam's last bad meal clung to the interior like moss.

Still, it wasn't cold in there and the bugs, real or synthetic, weren't crawling or biting.

After we laid down, and Crier was about to shut the back of the camper, Bob said, "No kiss and story?"

Crier held out his hand, palm up, made a fist, let the cobra rise.

Bob looked at Crier's stiff middle finger and said, "That's not nice."

Crier shut the back of the camper and went around to the front seat and lay down.

Bob managed up on his knees and thumped his forehead against the glass that connected the camper to the cab.

Crier sat up and turned to look. I've seen more pleasant faces on water moccasins.

"Night-night," Bob said.

Crier did the trick with his finger again, only with less flourish this time, then lay down out of sight.

Bob wiggled onto his sleeping bag, got on his side and looked at me and said, "You know, I like that guy, I really do."

That night the dreams came back, the same sort I'd had in the drive-in. They seemed more like visions than dreams, like I had tapped into some consciousness that controlled things. Bob and Crier didn't have the dreams, so I could only guess that through some quirk of fate, or by alien design, I had been given this gift. Or, I was as crazy as a cat in a dryer.

Hot wired to aliens or not, the dreams/visions were clear. I could see the aliens in them, their bulbous heads sporting wiggling tendons tipped with eyes, tentacles flashing about, touching gears and punching buttons. Lights and buzzers and beepers going off and on around them. And them leaning forward, conversing with one another in a language that sounded like grunts, squeaks, burps and whines, and yet, a language I could somehow understand.

And some of the things they were saying went like this:

"Slow, uh huh, uh huh ... that's it."

"Nice, nice ..."

"Very pretty, oh yes, very pretty ... tight and easy now ..."

"All right, that's it. CUT!"

Then the connection was cut as well, and the dream, or whatever it was, ended. The next thing I knew it was morning and Crier had joined us for breakfast, such as it was: a can of sardines that we had taken from Sam's bus before we blew it up.

Afterwards, Crier got us out of the back of the camper and made us take turns walking, him supporting us, so that we could exercise our sore feet. Mine had started to curl like burned tortillas, and Crier said if I didn't make them work, they'd quit on me, and that at best, I'd end up having a couple of lumps that had all the mobility of potted plants.

I believed him. I exercised. So did Bob, though he grumbled about it.

Worse part about the exercise, worse even than the pain, was the thirst. It had been a long time since I had had a drink of water,

and of course, this was true of Bob and Crier too. In the drive-in, for a time, we existed on soft drinks, and later on, Bob and I had nothing but the juice from jerky, and now the liquid from sardines.

If that doesn't sound so bad, go out some summer evening and do some kind of hard work, like say hauling hay, then try quenching your thirst with a big glass of soy oil or meat broth.

The bottom line was we were dehydrating, starting to look like flesh-colored plastic stretched over a frame of coat hangers.

"I figure," Crier said, after we got through exercising and were sitting with our backs against the truck, "any place as full of trees and grass and critters as this, ought to have water."

I wasn't so sure. I wouldn't have been surprised to come to what looked like a stream only to discover it was colored glass or rippling cellophane.

We were looking at Sam's grave while we talked, examining his ankles sticking up, his feet wearing the hubcap, and all of a sudden, we grew silent, as if possessed of a hive mind.

"I could have at least spoken some words over him," Crier said.

"And who the hell would you have been talking to?" Bob said. "Sam? He don't give a damn about nothing no more. God? Personally, I'm not real fond of that sonofabitch. Or wouldn't be, if I thought he, she, or it, existed."

I didn't say so, but I was in Bob's camp. Like the drive-in patrons, God was on my shit list. I had tried religion during our stay in the drive-in, and it hadn't exactly been a rewarding experience.

I had decided that if there was a God, he was a cruel sonofabitch to allow the things he allowed. Especially since he claimed his name was synonymous with love. It seemed to me that he was little more than a celestial Jack The Ripper, offering us, his whores, rewards with one hand, smiling and telling us he loved us, while with the other hand he held a shiny, sharp knife, the better with which to disembowel us.

"I don't know what I believe anymore," Crier said, "but I feel I owe the old boy some words because he's a human being. It doesn't matter if I'm talking to the wind, or just myself. I didn't give him the best kind of burial, so it's the least I can do. And who knows, if there is some God out there, maybe he'll be listening."

Crier said this soft and solemn like, and you could almost hear the organ music in the background. I think Bob was as affected as I was by Crier's remarks, because he didn't say anything rude, and something of that sort was

always on the tip of his tongue. A lump like a crippled frog trying to make it downhill, moved in my throat.

Crier went over to the grave and looked at the hubcap, picked it up and looked at the soles of Sam's feet, put the hubcap back, sighed, looked at the jungle.

"I'm here to say some words about this man, but nothing much comes to me. I didn't really know the poor bastard, but from what I could tell, he was about the dumbest sonofabitch that ever shit over a pair of shoes.

"Still, he was a man, and he deserved better than this. I'm sorry I couldn't get him buried proper, couldn't get his feet to stay down, but I did get his arm in the grave, and that was a job. I hope he rests in peace.

"I'm sorry about his wife, Mable. She wasn't any better or smarter than he was, from what I could tell, maybe a damn sight dumber. But I guess she did the best she could, like all of us. She's back at the drive-in, burned up under some lumber pieces, just in case you care.

"And listen, God, if you're out there, how about some relief around here? Lighten up. Things are multiple-fucked up, and if anyone can put things straight, it ought to be you. Right? I mean, you hear what I'm saying? Give us some sign of good things to come. It would be appreciated. Okay, that's it. Amen."

Crier walked back to the truck, and about the time he reached it, the jungle parted and out stepped a nasty red and blue dinosaur that was probably a baby Tyrannosaurs Rex, or something close enough to be a double cousin to one.

Whatever it was, it stood on big hind legs and held two puny forelegs in front of itself as if pleading. Its face was mostly teeth.

Toothy sniffed the air delicately, scampered over to the grave, snapped at the hubcap with its mouthful of big, sharp teeth, and managed to gulp it and Sam's feet down with very little chewing.

After a moment, Toothy coughed and spat out the hubcap, which now resembled a wad of aluminum foil. He used one clawed foot to scratch a worm from the dirt, bent and bit into Sam's corpse. With a series of rapid head-flipping motions, he proceeded to gobble the old boy so viciously that pieces of Sam flew out of Toothy's mouth and sprinkled the grass.

Finished with his repast, Toothy eyed us, as if giving the desert counter a once over.

We stayed very still. Rocks couldn't have been that still.

He let out with a little honk that shook the truck, then started to turn toward the jungle.

A weight watcher, to our relief.

But before he could make a complete turn, he froze, turned his head slightly to the side and acquired a look akin to that of a patient who has just experienced the greased finger of the doctor up his ass. Then with a grunt, Toothy leaned slightly forward and cut a monster fart that was reminiscent of an airhorn, but with more tonality.

When the fart was finished and Toothy had adopted a more satisfied and comfortable look, he moved into the jungle and out of sight.

After a moment of silence, Bob said, "Well, Crier, hope that wasn't the sign from God you were waiting for."





IF THERE AREN'T ANY VAMPIRES, WEREWOLVES OR ZOMBIES
THEN WHY AM I SCARED OUT OF MY WITS?

A.R. MORLAN

It doesn't always take a vampire, radioactive mutant insect or reanimated corpse to make audiences shake and quake in terror ... just plain old meanness, insanity, greed and revenge in ordinary human beings can often be enough to raise most back-of-the-neck hairs. The films mentioned below have generated plenty of chills without so much as a bloody fang buried in a neck or a single unwinding mummy wrapping in sight. With the exception of the Bonus two-point question, all answers are worth one point. Anything over eight points proves you've stumbled onto the worst monster of all in cinemaland ... man (or woman, in a few cases!) ...

- In the early sixties, screen queen Bette Davis became a "scream queen" with her marvelously over-the-top title roles in *Whatever Happened To Baby Jane?* and *Hush, Hush Sweet Charlotte*. But aside from Ms. Davis' star performances, what else did these two films have in common?
 - Joan Crawford co-starred
 - Robert Bloch wrote the screenplays
 - Robert Aldrich directed
 - Both were filmed in color
- William Castle's 1965 gem *I Saw What You Did* concerns what happens when baby-sitting teen Libby Mannering (Kit Astin) dials Steve Marleck's (John Ireland) phone number at random joke-game of telling the person on the other end, "I saw what you did and I know who you are." Instead of being merely annoyed, Marleck is terrified, because he thinks the caller:
 - Saw him dallying with Joan Crawford
 - Saw him bury his murdered wife in the woods
 - Heard him kill his wife while the phone line was open
 - Heard him killing Joan Crawford
- 1979's *When a Stranger Calls* starts out with a baby sitter (Carol Kane) experiencing something straight out of an urban legend -- a nutso making weird phone calls. But after she calls the cops to complain, they call her back with distressing news; the nutso is:
 - This guy with a hook ...
 - In the house, calling from the extension
 - Really a rouge cop
 - Dead, the phone line is down on a grave
- The teen-killer in 1980's under-rated *Massacre at Central High* is actually a teen himself (a neat twist in itself), a guy with a score to settle (*initially*, that is!) against the school toughs who:
 - Severed his leg by dropping a jacked-up auto on top of the kid
 - Stole his girl friend
 - Shot his dog
 - Turned him in for cheating on an exam
- Perhaps the ultimate teen horror film is also one of the most subtle, sensual and stylish -- Peter Weir's lovely and haunting *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975). The plot (loosely based on a true -- and still unexplained -- incident) revolves around the disappearance of three Australian school girls on a hot, sunny afternoon in 1901 -- a holiday picnic, to be exact. But which holiday?
 - Christmas
 - New Year
 - Easter
 - Valentine's Day
- Wes Craven's ultra-realistic, ultra-violent revenge flick *Last House on the Left* (1972) was inspired by and loosely based on a lyrical, stunning movie by Ingmar Bergman, which also dealt with parental revenge for the murder of a teen, namely:
 - Wild Strawberries*
 - The Seventh Seal*
 - The Virgin Spring*
 - Fanny and Alexander*
- Peeping Tom* (1959) and *Psycho* (1960) had much in common besides psychotic murder subjects; both films were uncommonly graphic (for their time) and unflinching, both featured "name" actresses (Moria Shearer and Janet Leigh) as victims, and both films:
 - Featured on-screen appearances by their directors
 - Were filmed in garish Technicolor
 - Were huge commercial successes
 - Were critically panned
- Michael Mann's 1986 scary killer/thriller *Manhunter* was based on a novel called:
 - Slob*
 - Red Dragon*
 - The Heat of the Night*
 - Switch*
- Unlike Michael Mann, when Charles Laughton directed Davis Grubb's novel *Night of the Hunter*, he kept the title for the 1955 film version. Aside from stellar performances by Robert Mitchum, Shelley Winters and Lillian Gish, stunning black and white cinematography and haunting images like Mitchum's LOVE and HATE tattooed knuckles, what else is considered distinctive about this film?

ARKO 88

- a. It was filmed in 3-D
- b. It was silent

- c. Grubb wrote the screenplay
- d. It was Laughton's only film as a director

10. It is believed by some criminal experts that the 1932 film *The Most Dangerous Game* (in which a madman hunts people on his remote island for sport) strongly -- and adversely -- influenced a *real-life* killer, the serial murderer known as:

- a. Son of Sam
- b. Ted Bundy
- c. Zodiac
- d. Zebra

11. The climax of *Bedlam* (1946) is a revenge scene straight out of a Poe story -- insane asylum head Boris Karloff is cornered by his mad charges and:

- a. Bricked behind a wall
- b. Cut up and placed under the floor boards
- c. Killed by a crumbling building
- d. Trapped under a razor-edged pendulum

12. During Steven Spielberg's made for TV classic *Duel* (1971), the face of the demented road-hog trucker who terrorizes Dennis Weaver is never seen. In fact, only two parts of his body *are* shown. Which parts?

- a. Hat, nose
- b. Booted feet, left forearm
- c. Ear, upraised fist
- d. Back, shoulder

13. When *Bad Seed* (1956) Rhoda Penmark (Patty McCormick) wanted something, she'd do *anything* to get it -- including murdering the owner. Early in the film, she whomped a schoolmate over the head with her cleated shoe heel, because she wanted his:

- a. Penmanship medal
- b. Mickey Mouse watch
- c. Lunchbox
- d. Engraved pencil case

14. Another "bad seed" who snatched what he wanted was Frederick Clegg (Terrance Stamp), a cloddish young man who couldn't win lovely Miranda Jones (Samantha Eggar) ... so he "collected" the young student, for *good*. Before running afoul of *The Collector* (1965), what course of study was Miranda pursuing?

- a. Insect studies
- b. Theatre
- c. Music
- d. Art

15. Alan Arkin's Harry Roat from Scarsdale plays a brutal game of hide and seek with a blind housewife (Audrey Hepburn) in *Wait Until Dark* (1967) ... but just what hidden *thing* was Mr. Roat seeking?

- a. A hot vase
- b. A bomb hidden in a cuckoo clock
- c. A heroin-filled doll
- d. Rare stamps pasted on a common envelope

16. While the film looks all right without it, 1953's *House of Wax* was filmed in 3-D (by a one-eyed director, no less): when viewed "flat" one scene looks peculiar; a man on roller skates plays with a _____ outside the House of Wax. What kept leaping out into the movie audience?

- a. Kite
- b. Paddleball ball
- c. Jack-in-the-box
- d. A dart

17. William Castle's 1958 release *Macabre* had such a gory ad campaign even Stephen King's mom wouldn't let him go see it (but, according to *Danse Macabre*, Stevie went anyhow). By today's standards the film's "scare" situation is rather mild ... a man kidnaps a little girl and --

- a. Eats her
- b. Turns her into a zombie
- c. Lets her go to camp with Jason Voorhees
- d. Claims he buried her alive

18. One of the slickest, most demeaning and *cruelest* slasher films ever made was Brian De Palma's *Dressed To Kill* (1980), for De Palma very subtly suggests that his victim (Angie Dickenson) "deserves" her bloody fate in the elevator, by previously having her character:

- a. Act strangely around her own son
- b. Have a brief fling with a stranger
- c. Shop lift an object d'art from a museum
- d. Spy on her cross-dressing shrink

19. Another gory slasher film in the *Dressed To Kill* vein (pun not intended) was 1981's *The Fan*, starring Lauren Bacall as an aging actress harassed by the world's worst fan. This fairly unpopular film was adapted from a novel by Bob Randall; the book was narrated in a rather unusual manner, in that it was told:

- a. In the first *and* third person
- b. Through only letters, memos, telegrams, etc.
- c. As a dream on the part of the killer fan
- d. In semaphore

20. In 1965 Roman Polanski directed *Repulsion*, in which a young woman (Catherine Deneuve) left alone in her sister's apartment slowly goes insane; in 1976 Polanski directed *The Tenant*, in which a youngish *man* slowly goes insane, "possessed" by the former owner of his apartment. In *The Tenant*, Polanski did something somewhat unusual when it came to casting the role of tenant Trelkowsky, he:

- a. Played the role of the Polishman himself
- b. Cast several actors in the one role
- c. Cast Catherine Deneuve in drag
- d. Used a non-Polish actor

BONUS: Among all non-supernatural horror films, Todd Browning's *Freaks* (1932) stands apart in pure horror, for the freaks were real, and only the evilness of the actors was faked ... until the very end of the film, when trapeze artist Cleopatra (Olga Baclanova) feels the wrath of the wronged freaks, and is mutilated into a side show attraction called The "_____."

Answers on page 58.

It's happening right here, in these pages.

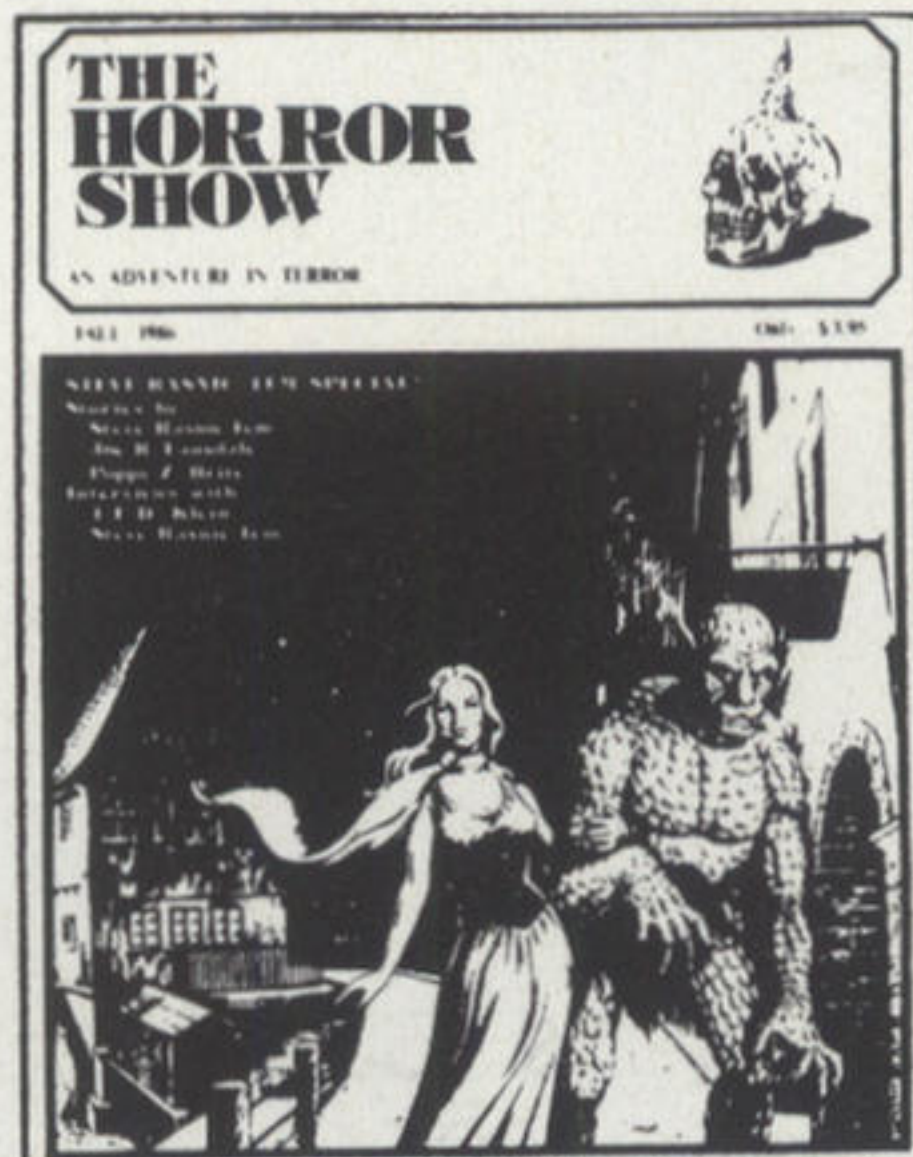
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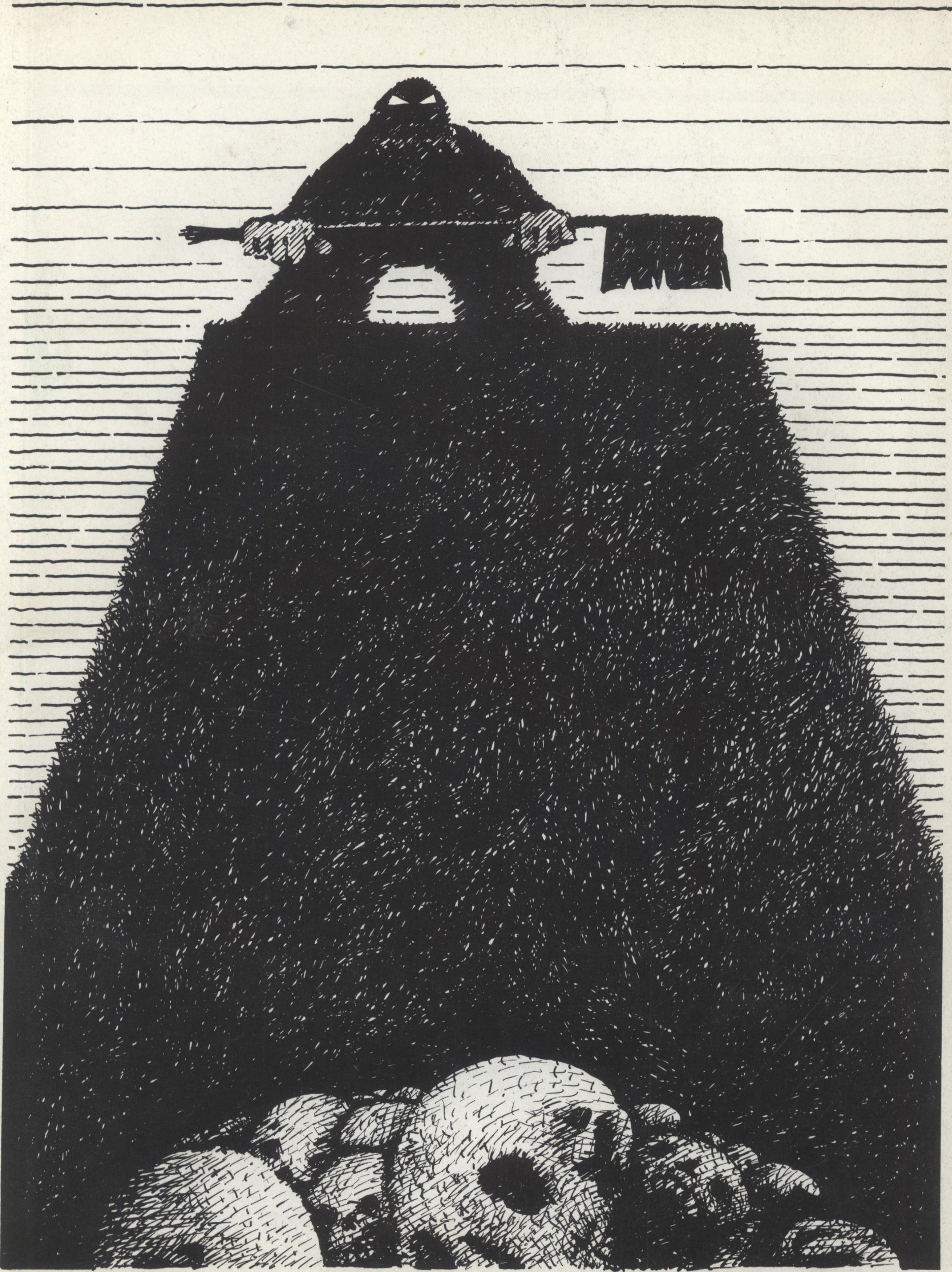
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