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CEMETERY DANCE

WINTER 1990 / Volume Two, Issue One

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From the publishers



I HAVE GOT YOUR STAFF. THEY
ARE SAFE.. FOR NOW.

IF YOU ~~don't~~ don't buy my
story and print it.. you'll
never see them alive
again.

I'll be looking at your
next issue very carefully.

—A fan



—Keep 'Em.



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blow if you so much as think about reproducing anything without permission. Oh yeah. Bernie Wrightson's illustrations for *The Stand* are copyright ©1990 by Doubleday and are used with their permission. *Submissions Dept.*: Some of you guys seem to think that SASE means Send a Submission Everyday. And you do—but some of you are forgetting your SASE, which means to enclose a Stamped, Self-Addressed Envelope so we can return that 200 page novelette you have honored us with. Who do you think we are, Simon & Schuster? Here's a good rule of thumb: If it costs more than \$1.50 to send—it's too long. As soon as it's safe to use my eyes again, I'll read 'em. Now get outta here, you knuckleheads—this is the *indicia*, not the magazine.

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THANKS TO

you, for making our first year such a success



T H I S I S S U E

THIS ISSUE, WE TAKE A MYOPIC PEEK AT WHAT SQUIRMS inside some people's heads. It's a scary world in there, let me tell you. Who can even guess at the chaos and compulsions which govern the mind of someone like Charles Manson or Ted Bundy? Though the overt acts of their abnormalcy are usually tallied by a body count, the subtler forms of psychopathology aren't necessarily easy to distinguish—call it the difference between quirky and deadly.

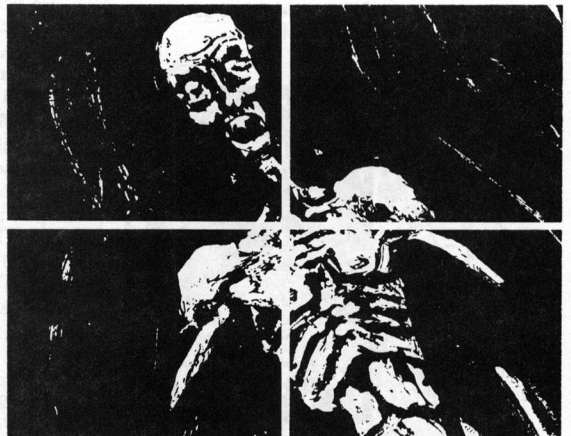
Harlan Ellison's essay scrutinizes the uneasy relationship between authors and their fans; a catalogue of behavior ranging from small annoyances to disturbed, threatening acts. Our fiction covers a different spectrum, from the quiet, inwardly-directed tone of K.W. Jeter's story to the full-blown assault of Nancy A. Collins, while Mick Garris and newcomer Anne Scott inspect other dark corners of the psyche.

Perhaps most chilling is the true story of Ed Gein, the template for Robert Bloch's best-known book, *Psycho*.

The case histories of many psychopaths reveal one sobering and frightening fact: time and again, they're indistinguishable from "normal" people. They eat, they sleep, they work, they have pets, drive cars, shop at the corner market and mow the grass on weekends—until one day the frayed binding holding it all together finally snaps. You can only hope you're someplace else when it happens.

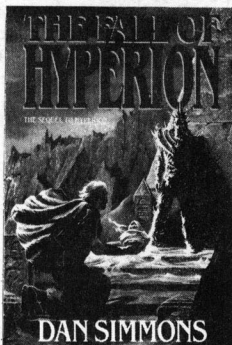
Sweet dreams 'til next issue.

Jessie Horsting

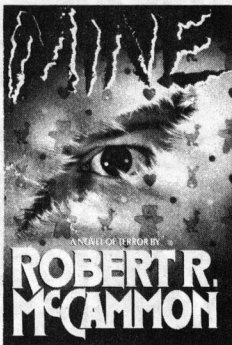


From Beyond

CLIVE BARKER SIGNED
BOOKS, GUITARS,
JACKETS, AND FLESH
FOR OVER FOUR
HOURS AT L.A.'S
OUTER LIMITS.



DAN SIMMONS BREAKS OUT
WITH *THE FALL OF
HYPERION*.



MINE—MEGA McCAMMON?

PAGES

Clive Barker signed a £2 million deal with Rupert Murdoch's latest print acquisition, Collins Publishing, for Barker's next four novels—all sequels. *Cabal* will be followed up with two more novels, and there will be second and third novels in *The Art* series, which kicked off with his latest novel, *The Great and Secret Show*.

Barker criss-crossed the country during the month of February, promoting both the film *Nightbreed* and his latest book. He signed at several locations in California, including *Change of Hobbit* in Santa Monica, and ended the tour at the *Outer Limits* in Sherman Oaks. The store was inundated by Barker fans, as well as a camera crew from CNN who were in the process of filming a special two-part segment on the author. Barker stayed an additional two hours over the scheduled time in order to sign books for everyone who stood in line. Barker also signed a guitar, several jackets and one woman's breasts—one woman, two breasts. "Clive" on one, "Barker" on the other. We have pictures.

Dan Simmons was swamped at a signing on Saturday, March 10th at *Dangerous Visions Bookstore*, also in Sherman Oaks. Dan signed copies of *The Fall of Hyperion*, just out in trade from

Doubleday, as well as a very limited edition from Lord John Press of his novella, "Entropy's Bed At Midnight." There was no word of any breast signings, however.

Due in at NAL is an anthology tentatively titled *Splatterpunk*, edited by Paul Sammon, collecting several of the best efforts by writers David J. Schow, John Skipp and Craig Spector, Steven Boyett and others. No one's quite sure if they like the title, however. In fact, we can't get anyone to pick up their *Splatterpunk* membership badges anymore.

Whitley Streiber has turned in yet another UFO novel, *Majestic*, but this time he's calling it fiction. Morrow/Avon had originally contracted for the novel but were unhappy with it—possibly disappointed that it had no basis in fact as did Whitley's previous UFO novels, *Communion* and *Transformation*. Avon sold the book back to Whitley who in turn sold it for more money to Putnam/Berkeley—who probably don't care if the facts are real or made up.

Scheduled for a May release from Pocket Books is *Mine* by Robert McCammon, a psychological thriller about a disturbed woman who kidnaps a child and the mother who attempts to hunt her down. Pocket is gearing up for a big campaign, in the hopes of pushing McCammon into the ranks of best-selling authors Dean Koontz and Thomas Harris.

Bantam is planning a sequel to Skipp and Spector's successful anthology, *Book of the Dead*. They'll probably call it *Book of the Dead II*, but I'm hoping for *Book of the Really, Most Sincerely, Dead*.

S.P. Somtow, after an extended tour signing his latest novel *Moondance*, reports that the hardback is now in its third printing. First editions sold out within three weeks of release.

Dean Koontz's latest, *The Bad Place*, scooted to first position on the New York Times bestseller list in the second week of release—the quickest climb yet for the California novelist.

For those of you who may be receiving your restored version of Stephen King's *The Stand* by U.P.S. or by mail, be warned: the book in hardback will weigh in at 3 lbs. 12 oz.

KILLER ART

When *Midnight Graffiti* showcased the paintings of John Wayne Gacy in issue 2, we didn't know we were going to start a trend. The irony we were striving for by reproducing the art has now bloomed into celebrity for the artist. In the March issue of *Vanity Fair*, in an interview with filmmaker Jon Waters about his new film *Cry Baby*, Waters said one of the things he and star Johnny Dep had in common was that they both owned paintings by John Wayne Gacy. It seems that Gacy has a thriving little business running in his cell at Joliet State prison where he is serving a life term for the murders of 33 boys. For as little as \$40.00, John will paint his version of the Seven Dwarfs or other Disney characters, and for a few more bucks, you can get a skull or two, or a likeness of Frankenstein, Freddy Kreuger, the Werewolf, or other famous monsters. No, we're not going to publish the address where you can send \$29.95 for a book which collects the letters John has sent and received from people such as Nancy Reagan and Charles Manson. John

explains that he needs to buy art supplies and postage—he is not doing these things for a profit. That would be against the law.

PSYCHOS II

Speaking of Psychos, what would we do without L.A.? What other city would attract the sort of minds that would conceive of—and attend—a gallery showing featuring the art work of several famed serial killers? The show, held through March 25th at the La Luz de Jesus gallery on L.A.'s Melrose Avenue, was titled "Tortures and Torments of the Christian Martyrs" and showcased the work of 40 different artists including Charles Manson, Richard "Nightstalker" Ramirez, Ted Bundy and the ubiquitous John Wayne Gacy. It wouldn't be so weird if these guys could paint—but as regular readers of *Midnight Graffiti* know, Gacy looks like he'd have trouble painting a barn. And I've seen the works of Charles Manson. He could be arrested. Look for our report on the showing next issue: *Our Field Trip to an Art Show*.

COMING SOONER OR LATER

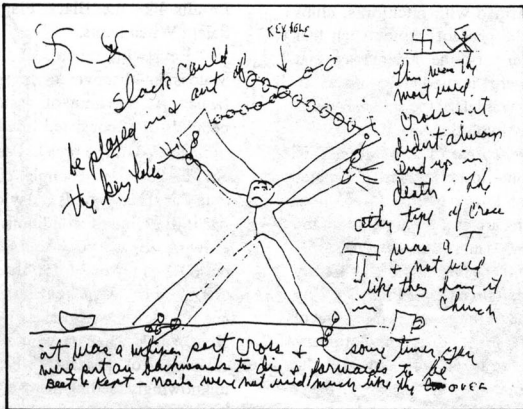
On the slate for summer releases are William Peter Blatty's *Exorcist III*, based on his novel *Legion*, with Blatty as the director.

Lorimar's plans for a television

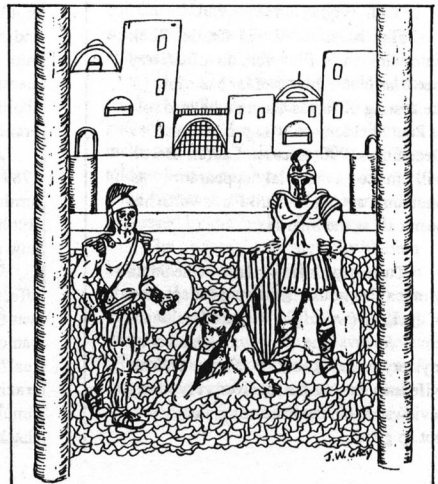
adaptation of Stephen King's *It* have stalled, though it is still planned as a six-hour mini-series on ABC.

Karen Black, fresh from her triumphant portrayal as Mom in *Invaders from Mars*, is cast in the lead role for *Evil Spirits*, a black comedy based on the San Francisco case of a landlady who murdered her elderly lodgers for their Social Security checks, then buried them in the back yard... and the front yard... and under the gazebo... and in the alley—you get the idea.

Concorde Films, Roger Corman's production arm, has scheduled *Watchers II* for April, based on the Dean Koontz book. Director Thierry Notz (*The Terror Within*) shot the \$2.1 million film in a quick 25 days at Corman's Venice,



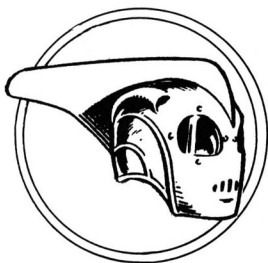
CHARLES MANSON—A SCRAWL FOR POSTERITY. GACY'S CONTRIBUTION ON THE RIGHT.



California studios. Producer Roman Flender told *Daily Variety*: "[*Watchers II* is] not really a sequel or a remake, we just went back to the book." The central character—played by teenager Corey Haim in the first film—is played in the sequel by *Beastmaster*'s Marc Singer. Einstein is played by a Golden Retriever named Dakai.

Another Corman protégé, Jon Davison, is finishing up production chores on *Robocop II*, for release this summer. The script, co-written by *Dark Knight*'s Frank Miller, is "very different from the first one," according to a production assistant. Peter Weller reprises his role.

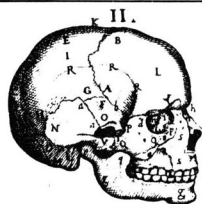
Also in production at Disney Studios, after two years of delays, is *The Rocketeer*, based on Dave Steven's sensational comic character. Thought the project was originally planned to have *Harry and the Hendersons* director William Dear behind the camera, Dear's scheduling conflicts forced him to bow out of the project. Director Joe Johnston (*Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*) has been signed to helm in his stead.



MORE STEPHEN KING AT THE MOVIES

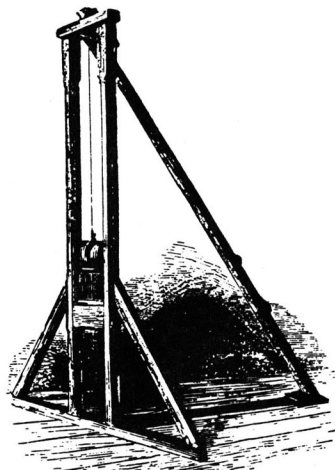
The latest word on Castle Rock Entertainment's film version of *Misery* (see *Blue Notes* this issue for basic info) is the casting of James Caan in the lead role of Paul Sheldon. Now in production for a December 1990 release, Lauren Bacall will make a special appearance as Sheldon's agent. Richard Farnsworth has been cast as the Sheriff.

Currently playing in L.A. at the Santa Monica Playhouse is the stage adaptation of the King (writing as Richard Bachman) novel *Rage*. The play was adapted by mystery writer Robert B. Parker and his wife Joan, but has not received very strong reviews. Well, they're strong, but they're not so good.



Headlines

BY RUSS BUCHANAN



JUST SAY NON!

For three blood-soaked weeks in the summer of 1789, panic-stricken peasants rampaged wild-eyed through the French countryside burning chateaux, slaughtering land owners, and generally creating a serious law-enforcement problem. Armed with pitchforks, clubs and rocks, the peasants struck such fear into the hearts of the aristocracy that measures were immediately taken to abolish what was left of the *ancien regime*, France's pre-revolution social order.

La Grande Peur (The Great Fear) of 1789 has come to be known as a major turning point in the French Revolution. But historians are at a loss to explain the how and why of this strange event.

Why, for instance, did the lunacy affect only certain parts of France? Why was the mood of the peasants more that of panicked paranoia than revolutionary zeal? And, stranger still, how did the craziness manage to beset villages simultaneously, rather than shack to shack, town to town?

According to Mary Kilbourne Matossian, University of Maryland historian and author of *Poisons of the Past: Molds, Epidemics and History*, the answer lies in the fungus ergot—LSD in its natural form.

You just never know about LSD. It's impossible to predict what it might do to a person on any given trip. I once saw a guy laugh at his *hand* for four hours. Another friend of mine, in the grip of some particularly hellish micro-dot, spent an entire day trying to convince a telephone operator at Jerry Falwell's "prayer line" that he was Jerry's illegitimate mulatto son. People jumping off skyscrapers to fly with the birds, people looking into the mirror only to find that they have somehow become Ethel Merman, we've heard all the horror stories. But the idea of thousands of acid-stuffed peasants feeding on the hearts of guys with powdered wigs and beauty marks is just *too* weird.

Matossian argues that ergot, a mold which infects rye grain during particular weather conditions, was not only responsible for the psychosis of *La Grande Peur*, but may also have added to the odd behavior of other historical free-for-alls like the Black Plague and the Salem Witch hunts.

Reviewing records of these events, Matossian discovered these pertinent facts: At the time of each crisis, the people's diet consisted mainly (if not exclusively) of rye bread. Peasants of *La Grande Peur*, for example, consumed as much as three pounds a day of the stuff. Also, the climatic conditions during the growing season prior to each freak-out period were perfect for the growth of ergot. And the hallucinations, delusions and utter terror experienced by the people were exactly what one would expect from a bunch of peasants who had been unknowingly feeding themselves massive doses of a hallucinogenic every day for a few weeks.

HELL LOCATED

If you haven't been watching Paul and Jan Crouch's Trinity Broadcasting Network lately you've been missing some great television. You haven't experienced Jan Crouch's new hair-style, which in terms of strength and scope is even more miraculous than her old one. You haven't witnessed the "Power Squad," a group of five glandular cases who break baseball bats over their knees for Jesus while an admiring studio audience shouts exuberant praise-the-Lords. And you probably don't know that Hell has been found.

Yes, in a show recently broadcast over TBN, it was revealed that a team of "researchers," using a "mighty long drill" and a microphone (with a mighty long cord, I would imagine) drilled many thousands of feet down into the earth and were amazed to hear the faint but unmistakable sounds of human screams. Hell. They never mentioned where the "sound-drilling" took place but the team plans to stay there in order to gather more evidence.

I thought you should know.

BLOWED UP REAL GOOD

A Sudanese truck driver was slightly injured and extremely shaken when the corpse he was hauling to the Khartoum Airport *exploded*.

The body of a French citizen killed when his plane was shot down by anti-government forces had been booby-trapped to explode in the air but didn't quite make it.



ON THE EDGE AWARDS

In keeping with this issue's *Psychos* theme, *Headlines You May Have Missed* is pleased to introduce the "On The Edge Awards."

As a tribute to psychos and near-psychos everywhere, the semi-often "On The Edge" will go to those men and women who, by committing acts of extreme weirdness, have distinguished themselves as movers and shakers among the ranks of the seriously twisted.

This, the first "O.T.E.," was a very tough call because so many people did so many strange things. But before we announce the winner, honorable mention should go to Los Angeles garbage truck driver Felipe Espinosa Suarez who, protesting lousy working conditions, dumped his truck's ten-ton load on the street in front of Los Angeles City Hall. Way to go, Felipe!

And now, without further adieu—**THE WINNER.**

Boogaloo Bob is a man on a mission. Showing real ingenuity, good rhythm, and his nakedness (to anyone who falls for his scheme), Bob has brought the age old art of

exposing oneself to new heights.

No raincoat-on-the-street-corner for him, Bob boldly walks up to the door of a woman and announces that he is a male stripper hired by one of her friends as a present. Once inside, Boogaloo Bob cranks up his boom-box, does his swinging-salamander dance and then he leaves. Ta-da.

In recent months, Bob has managed to put on his show for several Chicago area women while eluding arrest. In fact, the only reason police know about him is a complaint they received from one suspicious lady. She began to think something was up when she noticed that his underpants didn't look quite male-stripper issue. "They were kind of dingy and the waist-band was torn in the back," she told police.

Headlines salutes you, Boogaloo Bob, wherever you are, as the recipient of the first-ever "On The Edge Award." We will buy you new underwear if you will be the entertainment at our yearly presentation banquet.

REPOSSESSED II

An innovative technique in child discipline is being perfected at Children's Country Preschool in Canyon Country, California. It doesn't require the use of drugs or counseling...or much thought, for that matter. All one needs is a pair of arms strong enough to pin a four-year-old to the ground, and a good firm

speaking voice capable of persuading demons to flee.

"The boy was acting up and possibly possessed, so I rolled him over on the floor," said Karen Soper, director of the preschool. "I'm a Christian and I believe in evil spirits so I yelled, 'Spirits of anger, if you're in there, come out of him.' And the boy calmed down after that."

The four-year-old's parents, Cathy and Carrol Uthe, were not happy with their son's "deliverance" and have filed a child-abuse claim with police.

"They held my son's face down on the floor, pulled his arms behind his back, and screamed, 'Jesus, release the demons inside this boy,'" said Cathy Uthe. "They told me he was possessed. Four-year-olds, mine included, may have problems, but possessed by the devil? Exorcism?"

The pastor of the Bethlehem Lutheran Church, which operates the preschool, sees nothing wrong with the exorcism, however. "He was saying strange things," said Rev. Dave Sauer. "He was bizarre, acting wild. It was out of our trained capability to deal with him. I have no problem with what was done."

THE STAND: A SHELF TO CALL ITS OWN

NOW THAT THE HOLIDAYS are all behind you, and all the tacky ties and sweaters have been exchanged and/or returned, comes the time

to settle down before the fire at night and read some good horror as those icy winds howl mournfully around your house. If you don't have a fire or a howling wind, hire a little kid to make spooky noises behind you, and look forward to some of these things, coming from Stephen's King-dom over the next year or so...

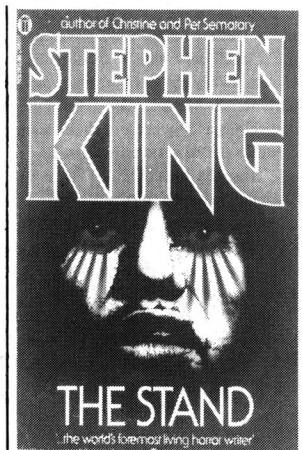
Diligent searchers may still be able to find a copy of the fourth issue of Walden Books' newsmagazine *W/B*, circulated free to members of the chain's several book clubs, and available at the counter for \$1.00 to everyone else. That issue features a lengthy interview with King on the subject of *The Dark Half*, one of the longest interviews King has done in some time.

A couple of unusual items should be available early on in the year. King has done an article, set to appear in *The New York Times* in late 1989 or early 1990, entitled "The Boys of Summer." At presstime, we had not been able to confirm a date for that piece, but the paper should have that information.

In March, King makes a rare appearance in the pages of *Seventeen* magazine, with an article entitled "What I Read for Love." The magazine is readily available at most supermarket checkout counters and newsstands.

King's first major book appearance for the year will come with the publication of *The Stand: The Complete, Uncut Edition*, which is to be published by Doubleday in May, which means that it will ship in April. This edition of what many fans consider King's best novel will feature 150,000 words of new material—new to general readers, of course. This material was originally trimmed from the book prior to its first publication at the publisher's request. This will, according to King and project editor Peter Schneider, add approximately 400 pages to the already-hefty novel.

The first trade edition of this book will be preceded by the true first edition, an



BACK IN: THE NOVEL LEFT
OUT OF THE NOVEL

unprecedentedly lavish limited edition, also planned to ship in April. The edition will be limited to 1,000 copies, signed and numbered by both King and artist Berni Wrightson, who provides a number of line drawings for the limited edition *only*. Contrary to earlier published reports, the Wrightson illustrations *will not* appear in the trade edition of the book.

Also, the book will be bound in full-grain leather, with gilt-edged pages, and will be slipcased, although the final details of the packaging remained to be worked out with Stephen King at presstime. However, the publisher plans for this to be a limited edition far superior to most of the books encountered in the genre which travel under that name.

"We're really pulling out all the stops on this one," Schneider told me.

The price for the limited edition has not yet been finalized, but is expected to be in the \$300.00 range. A number of book dealers throughout the country are expected to be stocking the book, such as Weinberg Books, Dave Hinchberger's Overlook Connection and others. Doubleday is not accepting direct orders for the book as of presstime.

Another peculiarity of the book may be of interest to diehard collectors. The first printing of the trade edition will have

a slightly different title from the limited. Its title page will read: *The Stand: For the First Time, Complete and Uncut*. Future printings of the trade edition will revert to the title mentioned earlier.

Beginning in January, Doubleday will have a special telephone line which will contain frequent updates on the book, and this will be the best source for the up-to-the-minute poop on the book—or, to put it another way, the best way to find out where things stand with *The Stand*. Call 1-800-44STAND.

It would seem that over 1,000 pages of Stephen King would hold readers for awhile, but just in case it proves not to be enough for some of you (and I know you're out there, I can hear your pages turning!), King does have an all-new fiction book warming up as well (not to mention one I can't quite mention yet) for later on in the year.

Entitled *Four Past Midnight*, this book will be published by Viking, King's regular hardcover publisher, and will be similar to his 1982 collection *Different Seasons*, in that it will consist of four short novels. The book's lineup consists of: *The Langoliers*, a story in excess of 300 manuscript pages; *The Sun Dog*, a 200-plus page novella which began life as a short story for the King newsletter, *Castle Rock*, and then got out of hand; *Secret Window*, *Secret Garden*, the shortest of the quartet at just over 100 pages; and *The Library Police*, a 300-pager which grew out of a joke story told to King's son Owen by a relative, regarding what would happen to him if he ever returned his library books late.

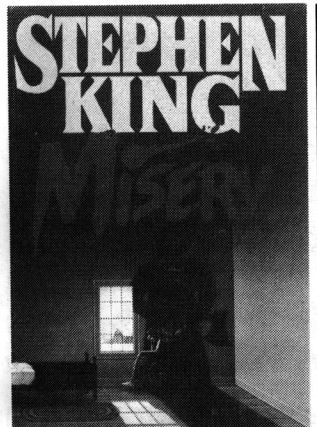
(Actually, when you consider that a Gwinnett County, Georgia, woman was recently jailed for just that very thing, this story may not be quite so far-fetched!)

King conservatively estimates the length of *Four Past Midnight* at around 900 pages, which will make for another hefty chunk of King reading for his faithful.

There are two additional novels in the long-range fearcast, the first entitled *Needful Things*, which King recently revealed features the new Castle County sheriff first introduced in *The Dark Half*.

In one of the final issues of *Castle Rock*, King was quoted as saying that he planned to destroy the fictional community of Castle Rock, where so many of his novels and stories have been set, in a future novel. Whether this is that book remains to be seen. Stay tuned to this space for details.

The last confirmed King project is a novel entitled *Dolores Claiborne*. Nothing more than the title is known about the project at this time, but we'll pass it on to you as soon as we can.



MISERY FINDS COMPANY:
CASTLE ROCK ENTERTAINMENT.

On the film scene, Castle Rock Entertainment recently announced the casting of stage actress Kathy Bates, a Tony Award winner for her performance in *Night, Mother*, in the pivotal role of Annie Wilkes in Rob Reiner's film of King's novel *Misery*. The role of Paul Sheldon has yet to be cast, but the production is expected to begin shooting in February near Reno, which will double for the Colorado Rockies. Interiors will be shot in L.A., and shooting is expected to last 4-6 weeks. As reported earlier, the screenplay for the film was written by William Goldman, best known for his work on *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and *The Princess Bride*.

Scheduled for airing in May is ABC's six-hour miniseries based on King's epic novel *IT*. At presstime, no publicist had yet been assigned to the project, so no information was available about the series, except that George Romero is slated to direct.

Laurel Entertainment is working on *Tales From the Darkside: The Movie*,

which will include a film adaptation of King's short story "The Cat From Hell." Also in the early planning stages is *Creepshow 3*, which will tentatively include four King tales of terror—"Dolan's Cadillac," "Popsy," "The Rainy Season," and an original script, "Pinfall."

King fans can also look forward to *The Shape Beneath the Sheet: The Complete Stephen King Encyclopedia*, edited by Stephen J. Spignesi. The book, to be published in the fall by Ann Arbor-based Popular Culture, Ink., will also appear in a slipcased, signed, limited edition of 350 copies, to be published by The Overlook Connection in a rare venture into publishing. No price on either edition has been set as yet, but further information may be obtained from The Overlook Connection at P.O. Box 256, Woodstock, GA 30188.

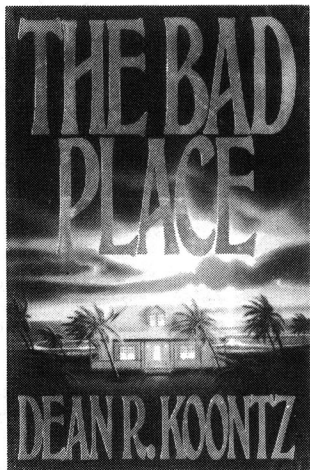
The book will include a number of features of interest to King fans, including a detailed King concordance, listing over 15,000 entries; an alphabetical listing of the interesting and gruesome ways in which King has done in his fictional victims; reviews, character listings, and abstracts from King's books and a detailed index to every issue of *Castle Rock*; as well as essays and interviews by Rick Hautala, Michael R. Collings, and some guy named Blue.

The book also features the first wide-circulation printing of "Before the Play," King's prologue to *The Stand*, giving some unrevealed background about the Overlook Hotel (for more about this piece, see my *The Unseen King*).

And Big Steve's not the only resident of Maine who's got an iron in the fire this year. Rick Hautala has a new novel, *Dead Voices*, due from Warner Books, which we covered in detail last time. The big news now is that the book will also be released in a limited edition hardcover by the Illinois-based small press, Dark Harvest, in their usual trade and signed, slipcased editions. The novel, which is a terrific, graphic horror tale about communicating with the dead, will be illustrated by Charles Lang, who also illustrated the Dark Harvest hardcover of Robert R. McCammon's *Swan Song* which appeared in 1989.

Rick advises us that he's also hard at work on another new novel, *The Mountain King*, and we'll pass along information about that one just as soon as we can.

THE DEAN OF TELEVISION? KOONTZ HITS THE SMALL SCREEN.



Hot on the heels of the January 1989 release of his latest novel, *The Bad Place*, by Putnam, Dean R. Koontz will have another book out, also from Dark Harvest. In February, the fourth in DH's series of hardcover reprints of Koontz' five novels written under the pseudonym "Leigh Nichols" will appear. *The Key to Midnight* is a taut thriller about a young woman who suddenly finds out that her every memory is a fake, and that she has an entire past of which she has no memory. As with the three preceding volumes in this series, the book is illustrated by Phil Parks, including a color dust jacket and half-tone interiors.

Koontz is also busy working on his CBS anthology series, which may or may not be called "Dean Koontz Theater." The series will consist of television adaptations of four Koontz tales, with Koontz himself as executive producer. This gives him such perks as final script approval and the option to write some of them himself—he's already done one. The shows may possibly begin airing in the late spring.

Also on the Koontz front, a sequel/remake is underway for the recent disastrous film version of most folks' favorite Koontz novel, *Watchers*. This is especially good news to Koontz himself, who was never too fond of the original film.

These are just a few of the things that are going to be coming up over the next few months, but that should be enough to keep you busy. See you next time.

I L L U S T R A T I N G

THE STAND

THE NICE FOLKS AT DOUBLEDAY (WITH AN ASSIST FROM TYSON BLUE) PROVIDED THIS PEEK AT BERNIE WRIGHTSON'S ILLOS FOR THE RESTORED FULL-LENGTH VERSION OF *THE STAND* BY STEPHEN KING.

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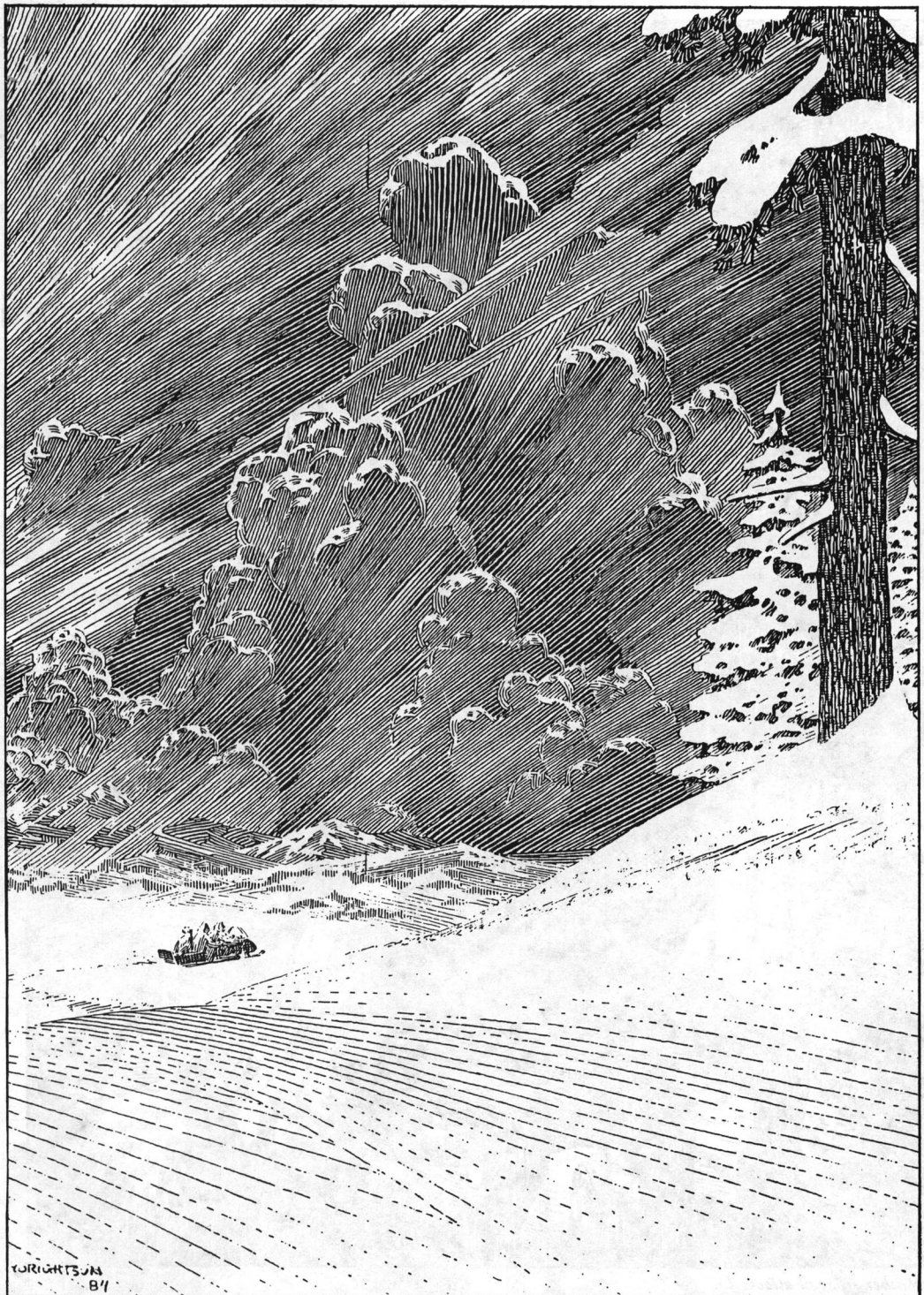
Trasby



The Plague



Stu takes a fall



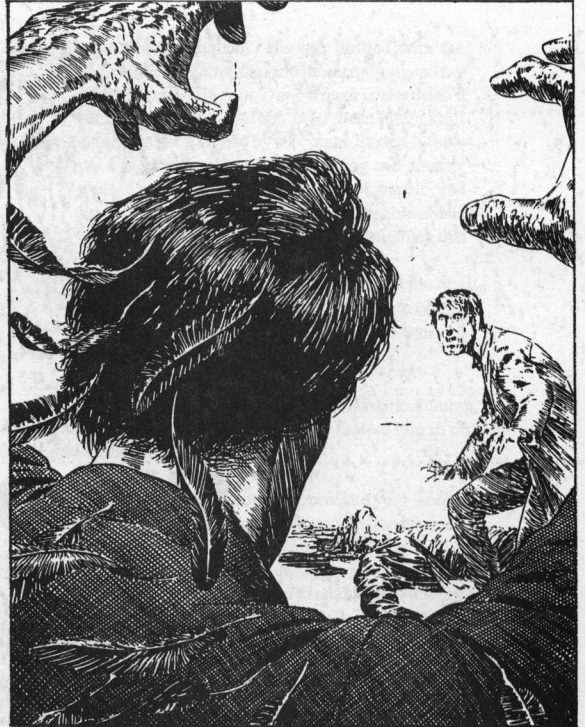
Stu, Tom and Kojak heading for Boulder



Mother Abigail attacked



Sue



The Dark Man



Larry



Lloyd

HARLAN XENOGENESIS ELLISON

Much of this essay has been excerpted from letters solicited specifically for this purpose. The editor of this magazine vouches for the authenticity of these letters, and further attests he/she has seen them in their original forms. Xerox copies of these letters remain in the possession of the editor. *JE*

The front door of my home is beautiful beyond the describing of it. Created for me many years ago by two fine sculptors, Mabel and Milon Hutchinson, whose work equals in style and gorgeousness the finest woodworking of Louise Nevelson, it is a construct of "found" woodblocks and assorted other pieces. Mabel is quite old now, and she still lives, tended by some of her most loving students, in Capistrano Beach, California. Milon died in 1977, leaving Mabel alone after fifty years of love. He was 72 when he passed over. I admired and loved them both, and the beauty they brought to my life and my home never dims.

One Friday night in 1979, I appeared on a radio show well-known in Los Angeles: *Hour 25*, hosted by Mike Hodel. It's a science fiction program that covers film and television as well as print mediums, and on that evening in 1979 I gave my opinion of the first *Star Trek* movie, which I had seen the night before. It

didn't deserve much kindness, that film, and I was not very kind in my remarks. †

After the show, and after Mike and I had gone for our usual pie, coffee and chat at Du Par's, I came home around one o'clock. It was dark in the entranceway to my home, and I unlocked the beautiful door Mabel and Milton had made for me, entered the house, and closed the door. I went to bed.

Next day was a Saturday, and unusual for my secretary to come in, but she had something to finish, and when she showed up at ten o'clock she said, "What happened to the front door?"

With a soft, nasty melting feeling in my chest, I went to the front door and opened it.

In the night, probably while I was still at the radio station, someone had thrown several dozen eggs on that work of art. It took many days to clean off the mess, from the hundreds of surfaces and interstitial crevices. I could not concentrate on writing while the door was wounded. I picked and scoured and worked at it with toothbrushes and polish till the day grew dark. Finally, it came as clean as I could get it, but the egg had dried overnight and today the door remains discolored in some places, scored in others where my cleaning marred the surfaces.

Every time I unlock my front door, I hope that if Mabel comes to visit, it will be at night. For her, in the last years of her life, the art that she and Milton produced is solitary balm for her loss. I could not bear to see her expression if she were to see the ravages done to that important bit of her past. I think of the pithecanthropoid fan who slung those eggs, and I also hope I never find out which one it was.

My friend James Blish died in 1975.

Here is an extract from a letter I wrote to M. John Harrison—Mike Harrison, the brilliant English author of the Virconium novels—on July 31st of that year:

Dear Mike:

By now, of course, you know Jim passed away. I was planning to fly to England to see him. I'd been meaning to do it for almost a year but the usual nonsense work-load and deadlines and personal bullshit prevented the journey. I'd decided I was coming early in August, but when I wrote Jim and Judy, and then followed it up with a phone call earlier this month, Judy told me August might be too late.

I'd dedicated a new book to him. I sent him a copy of the dedication page. He wrote me back about two weeks ago...maybe the last thing he ever did write...I don't know...and he was so damned tough, so bloody *Jim*, as he'd always been, saying he was feeling better and he was delighted I was, at last, coming to visit; that I should stay on a long while and we'd catch up on the past few years during which we hadn't seen or communicated with

each other too much. He was thrilled with the dedication to *Shatterday*, and he not only signed my personal copy of *Again, Dangerous Visions* that I'd packed up and sent, but he'd been thoughtful enough to get it signed by Josephine Saxton—there on a weekend visit—thereby saving me another transatlantic shipping. Even at the last, in pain, and having difficulty writing, he'd been capable of one more act of friendship and concern: something that had always been his hallmark.

But now he's gone. And I missed the final appointment. The long and endlessly fascinating conversation Jim Blish held with the world is ended, and I miss him terribly.

Mike replied, and like so many others that dark Autumn, he wanted to share his sorrow at Jim's death. I wrote him in response on August 12th:

Thanks for the note. I appreciate your words. (How odd: Judy Blish actually sustains the loss, and here are we, getting strokes on the passing of Jim. What miserable little creatures we are, wallowing in other people's sorrow just to enable us to tolerate our pain.)

I'd thought I had it all contained, and today Judy's letter came and she said, "Jim loved you. He always said so," and I fell apart again. I'm not a sentimental type, god knows, but there is some part of me that feels an inconsolable loss at the going of that dear man who taught me so much. Christ, it's awful.

Within three weeks of my sending that letter to Mike Harrison, I received from New York the most recent (at that time) of a series of hate letters from an unsigned correspondent who had been poisoning my mailbox with his vicious notes for almost two years. His note read, in part:

I understand James Blish died. You know he was a publicity flack for the tobacco industry for many years and I understand he died of cancer of the throat. That's real poetic justice, don't you think? One more of you phonies down, pretty soon it will be your turn.

For years I did not know who was behind those letters sans name or address, except that they were all postmarked out of New York City and they were obviously from someone who was very familiar with science fiction and fandom, someone who knew what I was doing on a continuing basis, and someone who probably subscribed to *Locus*.

† Those of you who have read the introduction to my most recent collection of stories, *Angry Candy*, know that Mike Hodel died in May of 1986, little more than two years after I delivered this essay as the Guest of Honor speech at the 37th annual West Coast Science Fantasy Conference ("Westercon 37") in Portland, Oregon, 1 July 1984. He had recently celebrated his fifteenth consecutive year as host of *Hour 25*. As he lay dying in Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, Mike asked me to take over the show, to keep it going even though he wasn't there to continue at the controls. We had co-hosted the show on 14 March 1986, just before he went into the hospital, and on 4 April I became the host, renaming the show *Mike Hodel's Hour 25*. I stayed at the task for sixty installments, every Friday night through 19 June 1987. At the end of my run the show was passed into the capable hands of J. Michael Straczynski, and Joe has kept the show alive from that time till present, every Friday night, 10-12:00 midnight in Los Angeles, on KPFK-FM, 90.7 on the dial. Mike Hodel lives on in memory and, ironically, only a few months ago Joe Straczynski played the audiocassette of this speech, as delivered in 1984 in Portland, on *Hour 25*, thereby renewing interest in the material being updated and published here.

For years I saved all the letters, in a file labeled "Mr. X." Then one day in late 1983, it chanced that a piece of mail addressed to The Harlan Ellison Record Collection was shown to me by the then-Director of The Collection, Shelley Levinson. I forget now why she showed me that note, as I seldom see correspondence sent to that arm of The Kilimanjaro Corporation. But when I began reading the letter, I could not see the words, I could see only the typewriter face that suddenly I recognized from protracted and intense scrutiny of Mr. X's vile communiques. Peculiarities of some of the letters as they'd been typed seemed familiar. I rushed upstairs to my office and pulled the file. Yes, the "t" had a broken cross-bar; the "q" had a loop filled with gunk that reproduced solid black; the "r" on the machine had settled, appearing slightly below the level of all the other letters.

I checked the membership roster of The Collection and found that Mr. X—whose identity had been sedulously disguised for ten years—was Norman Epstein, who lived at 110 East 36th Street in New York, New York 10016. His phone number was (212) 679-8092. He had been one of the earliest members of The Collection, and had received every newsletter issued by The Collection. Records of purchases showed he had bought first editions of my books at inflated prices.

I called him. Late one night. Very late one night.

"Mr. Epstein?"

A sleepy, querulous "Yes?"

"This is Harlan Ellison, Mr. Epstein."

A worried, startled "Uh..."

"For a long time now you've been having fun with me, haven't you, Mr. Epstein?"

A slow, reluctant "I guess so."

"Well, that was because you knew where I was, and who I am; but now I know who *you* are, and *where* you are. Now I start having some fun with you, Mr. Epstein. And as nasty as your sense of humor is, mine is plain downright ugly. I'm a winner, Norman, and nothing is beneath me to make the other guy lose. *You're* the other guy, Norman. You'll be hearing from me. Not immediately, but soon. Soon, Norman. I look forward to it."

He began babbling, trying to tell me it was all a gag, that he meant no harm. But I had the dozens and dozens of his wretched little notes in front of me, the ones that defamed Phil Farmer and Damon Knight and other of my friends. I was easily able to dip down into the well of memory and bring back the anxiety and frustration I'd felt each day one of those unmarked envelopes appeared in the mail. The fury of not being able to respond! His cowardly anonymity! I hung up on him. I never learned his motivation for spending so much time and nastiness harassing me.

Norman Epstein has changed his phone number.

He's done it several times.

Do you have any idea how easy it is to ferret out a new, unlisted number, particularly if you represent yourself to Nynex, the New York Telephone Company, as Detective-Lieutenant Hemphill of the Los Angeles Police Department?

When I sat down to write this article on June 6th, 1984, I had not heard from Norman Epstein for the many months since I'd spoken to him, very late that night. As I finished typing the preceding paragraph, the mail arrived. I went downstairs and brought it in. Atop the stack, a mere five minutes ago (as I sat writing *this* paragraph), was a postcard—without return address, postmarked New York—that read as follows:

Harlan, I liked "Stalking the Nightmare" very much. Keep writing. Best wishes,

Norman Epstein

With charming familiarity, he has signed it "Norman."

Have you ever noticed how few people in this life know what's good for them?

Soon, Norman. I look forward to it.

In biology there is a phenomenon known as xenogenesis. It is a pathological state in which the child does not resemble the parent. You may remember a fairly grisly 1975 film by my pal Larry Cohen titled *It's Alive!* in which a fanged and taloned baby gnaws its way out of its mother's womb and slaughters the attending nurses and gynecologist in the delivery room and then leaps straight up through a skylight, smashes out, and for the duration of the film crawls in and out of the frame ripping people's throats. Its natural father is a CPA or something similar. Most CPA's do not, other than symbolically, have fangs and talons. Xenogenesis.

In the subculture of science fiction literature and its umbilically attached aficionados, we have the manifestation of a symbiotic relationship in which the behavior of the children, that is, the fans, does not resemble the noble ideals set forth in the writings and pronouncements of the parents, the writers. For all its apocalyptic doomsaying, its frequent pointing with alarm, its gurdyloos of caution, the literature of imagination has ever and always promoted an ethic of good manners and kindness via its viewpoint characters. The ones we are asked to relate to, in sf and fantasy, the ones we are urged to see as the Good Folks, are usually the ones who say excuse me and thank you, ma'am.

The most efficient narrative shorthand to explain why a particular character is the one struck by cosmic lightning or masticated by some nameless Lovecraftian horror is to paint that character as rude, insensitive, paralogical or slovenly.

Through this free-floating auctorial trope, the canon has promulgated as salutary an image of mannerliness, rectitude and humanism. The smart alecks, slugs, slimeworts and snipers of the universe in these fables unfaillingly reap a terrible comeuppance.

That is the attitude of the parents, for the most part.

Yet the children of this ongoing education, the fans who incorporate the canon as a significant part of their world-view, frequently demonstrate a cruelty that would, in the fiction, bring them a reward of Job-like awfulness.

One demur, herewith offered, but doomed to be ignored or misinterpreted: *not all fans are malevolent*. Let me repeat: there are many wonderful fans. Kindness, courtesy and self-sacrifice are as frequent, as common, among fans as flowers in the spring. In more than thirty years of linkage with sf and its fandom, I have made friends whose decency and support have made life infinitely more tenable. Casual generousities and life-saving assistance have ever been available to me, not only from those I know well, but through the good offices of readers I've never met, random acquaintances at conventions, passersby who saw an opportunity for largesse and leaped at the chance to be of aid. What I say here will, please note, exclude all the Good Guys. They know who they are. I'll say it a third time, and hope the message gets through: I speak here not of *all* fans!

The ones who will produce static at this essay are the ones whose consciences chew on them. The ones who will pillory the messenger serve their own secret agenda. They feel unconscious guilt, so they will try to behead the messenger. Nonetheless, what we deal with in this tract are the ones known to us all...the rude, the vicious, the stunned and the insensitive. And they *don't* know who they are, because the very meanspiritedness and playground bully cruelty that marks them also poisons them with an arrogance that prevents their perceiving how vile they are to the rest of us,

how embarrassing they are to the preponderance of decent and gracious men and women who make up the literary support-group we call fandom.

What you will confront in these pages is the colony of grubs that has already driven too many writers and artists from the company of the rest of us; the maggots whose random and irrational gaffes have compelled those we come to conventions to meet, to say, "No more. I can't face another weekend with those creeps!" (Or haven't you wondered why you never see Stephen King at conventions these days?)

They are the result of xenogenesis. They are the ones who yell *Jump!* at the damned soul on the ledge. They are the meaning of arrested adolescence. They are the canker on your rose, the worm in your apple. And the rest of you, the fans and readers, have to stand the gaff for their leprous behavior. And here is the litany.

One fan who was invited into my home stole more than two thousand dollars worth of rare comic books during a period of more than six months of friendly visits. Another fan walked off with the virtually irreplaceable Shasta Press books that bear Hannes Bok covers, all of them in mint condition, all of them bearing my bookplates. Yet another fan I caught as she walked out the front door of my house, with the first three issues of *Unknown* in her tote bag. And there was one who pocketed as memento of his visit, a collectible pinback button from the old Kellogg's Pep cereal series of comic book characters, Annie's dog Sandy. Another relieved me of the worry of winding a wristwatch sent to me by an executive of the Bulova company; an instrument produced in the number of two: one I owned, the other belonging to Winston Churchill. Another took a leisurely riffle through my files in the dead of night while the rest of the household was asleep, and got away with a series of original letters from the author of *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, B. Traven, as well as the carbons of my letters to him in Mexico. And still another managed to cop—one by one, under his shirt—several dozen first editions that I'd bought new in the mid-fifties, when I'd been a fan myself, and had started collecting, paying for the books by saving lunch money. At the Kansas City Worldcon a number of years ago, a fan who still comes to conventions showed up at a party in my room and stole the only Virgil Finlay artwork I've ever been able to find for a reasonable purchase price.

These are not isolated instances of theft so casually performed that the question of morality never occurs to the footpad. If you want to hear other such tales, speak to Forrest J. Ackerman, whose home has been robbed again and again by young fans he's been kind enough to show through his vast collection. Or speak to Lydia Marano of the Dangerous Visions Bookstore in Sherman Oaks, California, or Sherry Gottlieb of A Change of Hobbit in Santa Monica, or *any* dealer or bookstore owner at any convention you ever attend.

I didn't know slans had such taking ways.

A fan from the Seattle area pulled the subscription coupons from more than fifty magazines ranging from *Good Housekeeping* to *Hustler*, typed in my name and address, and signed me up for subscriptions. Have you ever tried to get *Time* magazine to stop sending you its journal, and billing you endlessly? Have you ever received twelve dunning letters from bill collection agencies for goods you never requested, all in one day? Have you ever considered how much time and money you expend calling computerized subscription services in Colorado, trying to get them to trace where bogus subscription coupons came from?

And the ugliness of that fan's nature reveals itself in an additional little twist put on the scam. Each subscription was made in the name of *another* science fiction professional...Isaac Asimov or

Stephen King or...well, here, take a look at this bogus gift subscription returned to me by the *National Review* fulfillment department:



Thus, each stone bruises at least two of us. Casual, sidebar wickedness; and the creep thinks it's cute. The subscription was sent to an approximation of my address, to "Helen Arlison." Yeah...cute.

But the prank went further: the fan also ordered a raft of expensive art items from The Franklin Mint, signed me up for The Columbia Tape Club, for a whole series' of porcelain figurines and vases from The Collectors' Society, for albums of country and western golden oldies, for junk mail addressed to pet shops, for catalogues of clothing, women's lingerie, computer supplies, yachting equipment, farm implements. In one week I received six Slim Whitman albums. In the space of one year I had to hire an assistant at considerable cost, just to handle the cornucopial flow of magazines, catalogues, unordered product, retail credit demands and time-wasting problems this single fan visited on me.

I am not alone in suffering thus. This has happened to almost every writer I've queried. They have asked me not to use their names. Monkey-see, monkey-do: they're afraid a few of you might not yet have had this perverted behavior occur to you, that once you learn of it, you'll do it to them.

And each company that received my name sold the name and the address to a dozen *other* mail order companies whose unsolicited junk mail jammed my mailbox every day. I came to dread the arrival of the postal truck.

There was the fool who signed me up for every book club in America, from the Literary Guild to the Time-Life Library of World War II. We had stacks of unordered books to return every day for six months. Consider the packing, the trips to the post office. Consider what happens to one's writing schedule!

There was the jerk who registered me for lonely hearts clubs, organizations that supply the names of Oriental women who want to become American brides, computer dating firms, pen pal associations, porn photo outfits that run ads that say, "Hi, I'm Rhonda, and if you'd like to see candid, full-front shots of me and my friend Roxanne, doing what we like to do best, just send us fifteen dollars and your special wants; we'll do the rest."

There was the monster who anonymously called the police when I was living in New York in 1960, and told them I had an apartment filled with drugs and weapons, and on a quiet day recorded in my book *Memos From Purgatory*, I was arrested and taken off to the Manhattan holding tanks called the Tombs, and though there wasn't so much as a NoDoz tablet in my apartment, I was arraigned and had to go before the grand jury.

Amazing. All terribly amusing. Each little high school prank a giggle. And how many hours spent cleaning up these unnecessary

Most of the assaults upon me by fans have been verbal.

Marta Randall

MIDNIGHT GRAFFITI-17

rote me sycophantic letters from Florida
and eventually wound up asking me for a
nd dollars for his legal defense, and I'
me crazy fan letters (or letters from cr
but the only incident that I found myse
ing at was the young woman who passed me
et-the-authors reception" at the World
timore, squinted at my name tag, and said
antly, "I never heard of you." *etc.* One thing

ISAAC ASIMOV

*"A BOOKSTORE OWNER ASKED
IF I COULD SIGN 'A FEW'
BOOKS FOR HIM...I GOT HUGE
PACKING CRATES CONTAINING
EVERY BOOK HE HAD OF MINE
IN THE STORE...SCORES
AND SCORES..."*



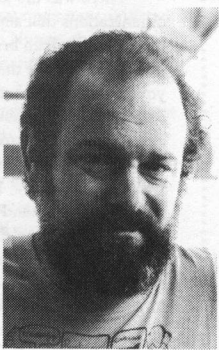
ROBERT HEINLEIN

*"SINCE WE RETIRED BEHIND
AN UNLISTED PHONE
NUMBER AND CHAINLINK
FENCE AND ELECTRIC GATE,
WE'VE BEEN PRETTY FREE
OF HORROR STORIES.
EXCEPT ONE..."*



JOE HALDEMAN

*"I'M NOT SO WORRIED ABOUT
THE CRAZY LETTERS AND THE
OCCASIONAL FAN...SPUTTER-
ING AT YOU IN PUBLIC. I'M
WORRIED ABOUT THE QUIET
GUY WITH A HAIR UP HIS ASS
AND A PISTOL IN HIS POCKET."*



contretemps might have been spent producing more stories? How many hours wasted, how many books lost, unwritten? Now multiply what has happened to me, the hours lost, by the number of writers who've had this kind of crap pulled on them, too. A writer has only talent, a finite amount of visceral material, and a little time...never enough time. Amusing.

They are cowardly little scum, these brain-damage cases who demean honest fans by calling themselves aficionados of the literature of imagination. They spread the gossip behind your back, they make the snide remarks as they zip past you in the convention halls, they put no return address on the vile letters, they make up false names when they write the hate letters to the magazines that run your stories, they use the telephone. For them, courage and rational behavior are alien concepts only to be read about in slambang space operas. Such concepts do not impinge upon their miserable lives in the real world.

This essay came into being one evening at a reception given for John Brunner during one of his visits to Los Angeles. At that gathering, I found myself sitting at a kitchen table with Robert Bloch, Philip José Farmer and the late Kris Neville. We were discussing what had happened to me the night before.

I had only recently, at that time, begun living with a woman I'd met in Boston. She had come out to L.A. to stay with me, and we had gone to see the Woody Allen film *Stardust Memories*. In one scene of the movie, Woody, playing himself in the role of a world-famous comedy director, attends one of those film weekends held all too-frequently at resort hotels in the Poconos. He is swamped by pushy, impertinent, gauche and sycophantic fans of his work. They chivvy and harass him; and at one point a woman stridently demands he autograph her hand. When he refuses she gets insulting.

I leaned over to whisper to my new friend from Boston, "That's my life you're looking at."

She laughed at me, and later, when we had left the theater, she accused me of unjustified self-importance and advised me that even though she was from Boston, she hadn't fallen off the turnip truck that day before. I smiled and said no more.

Two nights later, on the Friday before the reception for John Brunner, I had to speak at a fund-raising event for imprisoned writers in Latin American nations, sponsored by P.E.N., the international journalism society, and as we sat in the front row waiting for the event to begin, a stout woman behind us gave a hoot, clamped a paw on my shoulder, and demanded, "Are you Harlan Ellison?"

I turned with fear, saw this behemoth apparition, and acknowledged reluctantly that I was, indeed, that doomed soul. My new friend from Boston also turned, her eyes wide, as the woman proclaimed, with the rustic charm of a farmhand calling in the hogs, "I've read everything you've ever written! I love your stuff! Here, sign my breast!" And she wrenched aside her ruffled top to expose a mammary the size and richness of Latvia. My lady friend stared with horror, then looked at me and blurted, "Jeeezus, you weren't kidding, were you?"

I was discussing this not-uncommon event with Kris and Phil and Bob, at John's reception, and in fun we began telling each other of the horror scenes we'd gone through with fans.

Kris Neville regaled us with a story of pyramiding impositions by a young male fan who had come to pay homage, culminating in his taking up residence on Kris and Lil's front lawn until they were forced to call the juvenile authorities.

Bob's most bizarre fan story involved the receipt, one day in the mail, of a birthday card from an unknown enthusiast who had attached to the felicitation, a green gemstone. Bob tossed the card

with rock attached, into a junk drawer. Years later, when the drawer's contents were sent to one of the university archives that preserve the papers of famous writers, Bob received a call from the curator who advised him that they'd had the stone appraised, and it was valued at seven thousand dollars.

On the day I sat down to write this essay, June 6th, 1984, apart from the Epstein postcard mentioned earlier, and hundreds of other items of postal wonderfulness, I received a letter from one Leroy Jones of Philadelphia. His request was not unlike hundreds of other similar missives I receive in a year. It was as follows, and I quote directly from the scrawled note before me:

Dear Mr. Ellison—

I collect quotes of authors (sic) works. Could you please pen a few dozen quotes from your work on the enclosed cards? I'm only 16 so have not read too much on you. I'm not sure I'd like all you write but I know you've done a movie *The Oscar & I* saw that. I need some quotes.

Thanks—Leroy.

When I saw that note, with its casual impertinences and its gratuitous rudeness and its utter lack of understanding of the value of time to a writer, I thought, *I can't be the only poor devil who gets this lunacy every day.*

And I remembered the conversation with Kris and Phil and Bob, and I put together a letter that I Xeroxed and sent off to eighty-five writers and artists of my acquaintance. The letter was an imposition precisely of the kind I despise most, and so I made it very clear passim the copy that this was a lark, a frippery, an amusement, and if it interfered with the recipient's writing in even the smallest way, it was to be ignored.

The letter read as follows:

Companions in Suffering:

This is a minuscule request for a bit of data. If it's convenient, respond. If you're busy, forget it. It's strictly by way of small favor, and if it imposes at all, just smile and toss it. No guilt attaches to a no-response. Honest, folks.

What it is, is this:

Your friend and mine, that little dickens Ed Bryant, somehow conned me into being the guest of honor at Westercon 37 up in Portland (29 June - 3 July). As you may know, I look on the prospect of appearing naked at conventions with all the joy I reserve for root canal surgery. Nonetheless, I said I'd do it, so I'll do it. Smiling all the way.

But for my "guest of honor speech" I would like to present a talk that came to me as a lark during a conversation one night with Phil Farmer, Bob Bloch and the late Kris Neville. We were shootin' the breeze, us old hands, around the kitchen table at a party thrown for John Brunner, and we began exchanging horror stories of the most bizarre things fans had done to us through our long and exhausting careers.

I can't remember the weird stories Phil told, but there were at least half a dozen of them, about impositions (like this one) on his time and sanity by malign or simply overzealous readers. Kris told a story about some kid who took up residence on his

front lawn. Bob remembered someone had sent him a birthday card with a green gemstone pasted on it, which he tossed in a drawer and which, years later, while preparing some papers for one of the university archives, he sent along; he received an alarmed call from the curator of records that they'd had this frippery appraised, and it was worth about seven grand!

As for me, and what fans who've never met me but have decided I'm loathsome, have done... don't ask. The worst was not the ass who signed me up for fifty book clubs, who ordered goods in my name that had to be returned, who subscribed me to dozens of magazines from *Time* to *Crocheting*. The worst was not the fool who entered my phone number in his college's computer, with a program that had calls being made six or eight times a day, with immediate disconnect, thus waking me up at 5 AM, getting me off the potty at high noon, driving my secretary crazy. The worst was not the jerk who egged my front door. The worst was not...

Well, you get the idea.

The point of all this is that I want to present a speech (that can later be written up as an article to be read by the mass of fans lurking out there waiting for all of us) with so much weight of actual anecdote, so filled with the intentional and unintentional crap we all have to endure as part of "the business," that perhaps it will deter a few of the little sophomoric darlings.

Now, many of you take it all stoically. I've talked to some of you and you shrug, you smile, and say "what the hell." One well-known lady swears she loves every fan who reads her books and she really doesn't mind at all that they call her when she's at the business of working on a novel. I don't believe her, but... what the hell. I'm addressing the rest of you, who have had experiences that make the eyes water and the mind reel.

I ask that you jot down your anecdote as fully or briefly as you choose—and pick your *most* unbelievable horror story—and send it to me as soon as it's convenient. If you don't want your name mentioned, well, I'll reluctantly but sedulously abide by your wishes, though use of your famous name will have more impact, of course. Just add that caveat, and I'll respect your privacy.

Just grab a piece of second sheet and dash it off, if you will.

It's nothing that you owe me, or anything that will put a penny in your pocket, but mayhap it will pay off in saving you just one looneytune intruding on your life.

I'll send along a Xerox of the finished piece, of course; and any smallest effort you expend in aid of this project will win you my undying thanks. But since I just turned fifty, that "undying" part may not mean a diddy-bit.

In any case, thanks for letting me intrude as the looneytunes do.

Thanks, folks.
Harlan

Dear Mr. Ellison - I collect quotes of authors works - could you please pen a line or two from one of your works on my card. I'm only 16 so have not read too much on you
Leroy

a collection of my old LEFTY FEEP s
said he'd go into specialty publish
himself -- all I had to do was choo
an introduction. My former agent a
work. After a year of unanswered l
up with this joker at a Convention
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A second fan pr
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Since he was al
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out Jules Verne
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I rushed the stuff out to him and w
right in time for the convention! -
me he'd changed his mind and there

ROBERT BLOCH
"THREE TIMES BITTEN;"

I thought perhaps I'd get one or two responses from my closest friends, maybe Silverberg and David Gerrold, maybe Ed Bryant and Vonda McIntyre. What I did not expect was the instantaneous tidal wave, the floodrush, the *tsunami* of responses from people I hadn't heard from in years, each one recounting a horror more unbelievable than the one preceding.

I will recount some of them here. Most have the names of the victims attached. A few, of the most horrible, do not: the true and actual anguish that came from these incidents remains, and I have been asked by the tellers of these tales not to specify into whose lives this shitrain fell.

One more interesting sidebar.

Almost without exception, every letter begins, as does, say, Isaac Asimov's response: "Dear Harlan, In general, my readers are a very nice bunch of people who virtually never impose," and then *every single one of them* goes on, in the second paragraph, to say, "However, there was this *one fan* who..." and then proceeds to recount a monstrous invasion of privacy or gratuitous bit of ugliness that makes the back teeth itch.

It is as if the writers in this genre, hedging their bets in the unlikely event fandom rises like the followers of Madame DeFarge in the streets of Paris, have prefaced their true feelings with a disclaimer that will save them from the guillotine. Have no fear, friends, the letters will go with me to my grave. Soon after the publication of this

essay, most likely.

And here are the stories, so that those who suggest—as did Donald Kingsbury in his communique with the words "Each of our Karmas is very different. As L. Ron Hubbard used to say, 'We create what we expect.' Have a happy root canal job"—wilfulness on the part of Ellison puts him solely and alone in the path of such vile behavior, will have evidence that this is a plague that touches all of us, sweetheart or monster.

Here are the faces of the demons we deal with:

We'll begin slowly. The first response was from the late "James Tiptree, Jr."—Alice Sheldon—who, because of her government security clearance, maintained pseudonymous anonymity as a matter of serious consequence. All i wrote me, "Harlan, love... Lovely idea, the egregious fan examples. I've combed memory and nothing comes up. The problem is that for years I was insulated and little happened except the 3-day stakeout of my post office box when the WorldCon was in Baltimore..."

Here's one from James Gunn, professor at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. A very quiet and pleasant man, a *gentle* and *courteous* man. "Dear Harlan, I must not arouse the same passions in fans as some of my colleagues. Oh, I've had people send me books and gummed stickers to sign, and one...wrote me sycophantic letters from a Florida jail and eventually wound up asking me for a thousand dollars for his legal defense...but the only incident that I found myself marveling at was the young woman who passed me at the 'meet-the-authors reception' at the WorldCon in Baltimore, squeaked at my name tag, and said indignantly, 'I never heard of you.' All I could do was stare."

Barry Malzberg could do *weeks* of horror stories, angst incarnate. But here's what he wrote: "Harlan, I think it's a bad idea altogether, this topic of Great Fan Lunacies Me and My Colleagues Have Known, because this only encourages the troops, stirs them up, like one political disaster has been known to trigger another. The 95% who cannot conceive of being similarly loathsome will laugh and applaud and enjoy and see trivialized real pain, and the other 5% will be taking notes."

In the process of bringing this manuscript up to date, after five years, it was suggested by one editor that perhaps I should drop the anecdote of the "seven thousand dollar gemstone" as Robert Bloch reported it, because it redounded to Bloch's benefit. Well, yes, I could have dropped that story; but the intent of this piece is to show the reality, not a carefully manipulated special-pleading slant on that reality. I submit, nonetheless, that anyone crazy enough to send a rock like that, casually, without advising anyone of its value, is a looneytune by any analysis, and might as easily do something dangerous or inconvenient the next time out...or heaven forbid the object of such a person's admiration should rebuff the attentions! But that wasn't even what Bob Bloch chose as his most outstanding fan horror story. Here's what he wrote:

Dear Harlan: You know the old saying, "Once bitten, twice shy?" Well, I got a new one for you. "Three times bitten; what a dummy!"

A fan I'd known for thirty years kept pestering me to do a collection of my old Lefty Feep stories. Finally he said he'd go into specialty publishing and do the book himself—all I had to do was choose the yarns and write an introduction. My former agent agreed, so I went to work. After a year of unanswered letters I finally caught up with this joker at a convention and pinned him to the wall.

"Hey, I forgot to tell you," he said. "I decided to put out somebody else's collection instead."†

A second fan proposed to put out a new collection of my fanzine pieces as a sequel to *The Eighth Stage of Fandom*. Since he was already heavily into specialty publishing I saw no harm in the idea and, as requested, went over my material, selected the best, and prepared an introduction. Unlike the first yo-yo, this one did reply to my letters, but never took any action. Eighteen months later I finally managed to pry my material back from him.

The third fan was on the committee of a convention where I was scheduled to be guest of honor—after they found out Jules Verne was dead. This turkey wanted to do a volume of my hitherto-unreprinted stories, both as a convention special and for subsequent sale through a publishing outlet. In this case I needn't wait a year or a year and a half—time was of the essence and he needed my choice of stories plus introductions to same. I rushed the stuff out to him and within two months—right in time for the convention!—he called to tell me he'd changed his mind and there wasn't any book.

I am not releasing the name of the first fan, because he's dead.

And I'm not releasing the names of the other two fans, because I just might kill them yet.

I selected dear Alli Sheldon, gentlemanly Jim Gunn, and the ever-fan-helpful Bob Bloch as the first three invokers of the litany, for a reason. I mentioned earlier that Donald Kingsbury's letter suggested we bring such iniquity upon ourselves by having sodden karma. His letter glowed with the wonderful experiences he's had at conventions. Apparently, the only thing dismaying ever to have involved him was this:

"Once I was sitting forlornly at an autograph table all alone because everyone was lined up for Asimov and Ellison, and a sweet young thing who felt sorry for me ran out and bought a book by me, even though she didn't know me from Adam, just so I'd have at least one customer." And then Don finished off the note—as I mentioned earlier—with this: "Each of our Karmas is very different. As L. Ron Hubbard used to say, 'We create what we expect.' Have a happy root canal job."

I expected a bite of that. Because I have chosen to suffer this kind of behavior not at all, mythology has grown that I am rude, mean-spirited, brutal and often violent with sweet-faced, innocent fans who merely wish to convey good wishes.

That is probably as valid as an arrant suggestion that Donald Kingsbury is a jealous chucklehead who wouldn't know if he were being insulted or put-upon if the offenders performed their acts using jackhammers and IV drips.

Nonetheless, to remove from the equation any slightest hint of special pleading, of self-defense, of rationalization for a monstrously uncivil Ellison...I have obtained the letters, have seen to an editor's attestation that they're real, and I've opened the parade of the damned with three writers who have been known for their kindness, civility, leaning toward fan interests, their good upbringing and unblemished courtesy.

So even if one one-millionth of the ugly tales told about your compiler-of-the-facts is true, it has no bearing. Let us simply look at

Donald Kingsbury
Each of our Karmas is very different. As L Ron Hubbard used to say, "We create what we expect." Have a happy root canal job.

what other writers say.

Listen to Marta Randall:

Dear God, Harlan,

I'm absolutely appalled at this idea you've generated about your Westeron speech. Not that I think it shouldn't be done, and that it's high time, and all that stuff, but I admire the sheer, unadulterated, brazen *guts* it takes to get up before a roomful of fans and tell them about all the terrible things they've done through the years. Visions of stonings and crucifixions, vituperation and much noise, howlings on panels and illiteracy in the pages of fanzines—it's positively delicious. Do it. I won't be there to see it, but I'll be with you in spirit.

Most of the assaults upon me by fans have been verbal. The chubby young woman in Renaissance drag who interrupted me at a party, pushed my companion aside, stared at me, and said: "Oh, that's what you look like. I read a book of yours once and I couldn't understand a word in it." The intense fellow who approached me in a hucksters room, asked if he could ask a question, and when I said yes, he said, "I've read everything you've ever written, from your first short story on. I really loved that first short story a lot, but the rest of your work stinks. Would you care to comment on why your writing has gone downhill?" Two years ago, I was injudicious enough to write letter to a 'zine responding to someone's typically fug-headed statements about another writer, and received a response telling me that I was obviously a neophyte because this bozo had never heard of me, and if I'd send this guy a copy of my books, he'd be glad to tell me what was wrong with them. The fan who got blotto at a dead-dog party, fell asleep in the con suite at my feet, and spent the next day telling everyone he'd spent the night with me. The Trekkie at the one *Star Trek* convention I was inveigled into attending, who said of my books, to me, "Well, if they're not about *Star Trek*, they're full of shit."

It ain't much, thank God, but you're welcome to use it, and my name.

I just had a terrible thought: what if your speech simply gives them more ideas?

Do you begin to see a thread? This is the second time the suggestion has been made. As nervously as many writers sing the praises of their fans, do you begin to perceive: they're *afraid of you*, afraid of what you're capable of doing, as lark, as gag, as obsessive self-amusement.

Here's Asimov.

In general, my readers are a very nice bunch of people who virtually never impose. ... There are the teachers who force all their students to write me painstaking scrawls and make it necessary for me to answer politely because I can't bear to disappoint kids. (I'd like to strangle the teachers, though.)

† Bloch wrote that in June of 1984. In 1987 a new specialty publisher called Creatures at Large (sited in Pacifica, Cal.) run by John Stanley published the first of a proposed trilogy of Bloch collections, *Lost In Time and Space With Lefty Feep*. Stanley is *not* the party referred to in Bloch's letter. But Bloch, when contacted about this, said that if he had a fourth horror anecdote to relate, he'd use the Stanley publication of the first volume of Feep stories. Apparently there will be no second and third volumes.

However, *once* I blew my top. A bookstore owner asked if I could sign "a few" books for him. I sighed and said okay.

Next thing I got huge packing crates containing every book of mine he had in the stores, scores and scores and scores of them. My first impulse was to throw them away and claim they never came. My second was to keep the books for use as gifts (or to a deserving charity). But I couldn't do that. I had to sign them all, reassemble the packing cases, hang them together with ropes and then my wife and I had to stick them on luggage carriers and lug them to the postoffice which was several blocks away (and I'm not exactly in my first youth any more). The only satisfaction I got was to write the bookstore fellow an eloquent letter that probably singled all the hair off his head and body.


Which is as likely as that the idiot understood he'd made an impertinent fool of himself to begin with. I've told Isaac a hundred times that just because we're both Jewish, does not mean that we must suffer two thousand years' retroactive persecution at the hands of human trash like this bookstore fellow. And did he even *understand* what he'd done, after Isaac apprised him of the monstrous imposition? No, I'd venture not. Because, you see, that's another aspect of this:

Stupid enough to commit the sin in the first place, means a singularity of tunnel-vision, a self-involvement, a lack of empathy, that blinds them to the awfulness of what they've done...even when you explain it slowly and simply.

For instance, I'm rewriting this essay in my bed, as I went in for fairly serious surgery little more than a week ago. A number of fans found out about this, and so I was pleased, three days before Christmas, by a bookstore owner in the LA area, who has known me for years, who called and asked if I'd mind if he came by with a book of mine someone had just bought, for a personal signature. He had spoken to me the day before, and knew I couldn't move out of the bed for fear of the sutures giving way, but he called to ask if I'd mind, during my recuperation, if I'd sign some goddam book for a customer.

I was astonished and told him I was in bed. He asked a second time. I said, "I'm recuperating! I was three hours under the knife! What the fuck do I care about signing some book for a stranger at this time!?!?" So he suggested he come by tomorrow, instead. I hung up on him.

Do they understand, Isaac? Not bloody likely!
They feel as if *we're* being rude to *them*.

 Barry Longyear wrote one of the most touching of the letters I received in reply to my query. For personal reasons, I'll only reproduce excerpts here...the totality is too intimate.

Early in my career, shortly after the publication of my pun story *Duelling Clowns*, I was at one of my first conventions (a Boskone, I think). This fan, equipped with the disposition and general build of a gorilla, stops me in the hallway and asks, "Are you Barry Longyear?"

"Yes," I replied, preparing to bask in author's glory.

He hauled off and decked me. "That's for *Duelling Clowns*," he said; then he stormed out of

but all I could do was stare.
.....
L. Sprague DeCamp nitting me in the face with a cherry pie

the hotel. ...

About a year after completing my treatment for alcoholism and drug addiction at St. Mary's Rehabilitation Center in Minneapolis, I attended my first convention since sobering up. This was the time when my *real* fan horror took place.


At that time I was still very uncomfortable in drinking situations. Even with a year of A.A. under your belt, early sobriety is a fragile thing. Since MiniCon was being held in St. Paul, about a ten minute drive from St. Mary's Rehab, I figured if I was ever going to be safe at a convention, MiniCon would be the best bet...

The next morning I was up early trying to figure out what one does at a convention at 7 AM, never before having had this experience. I was a mite shaky in the self-image department, so I decided to give a fan a thrill and let him eat breakfast with a real-live big time SF pro. This particular fan was on the con staff and had just gotten off duty. In the hotel restaurant we sat down and placed our orders. Every pore on my body was open, waiting to absorb sorely needed compliments. He finished his breakfast, sat back in his booth and smiled at me as he looked up from my name tag. "Well, Barry," he said, "what is it that you do that rates you a guest ribbon?"

As I watched the staved-in hull of my career sinking into oblivion, I focused on my grapefruit and muttered something about doing a little scribbling now and then.

And they say fan sensitivity is dead.

Terry Carr isn't with us anymore, but here's one he told me, that you might not've heard. When his first novel came out, half of an Ace Double called *Warlord Of Kor*, it was around the time of DisCon, 1963. The first wife of a well-known fan (who was sitting in the audience as I delivered this essay verbally), came sauntering up to Terry, and Terry was expecting some small recognition from her that his first book had at last been released, and she said to him, "I've just read your novel. I wanted to introduce myself." And Terry smiled, because we all expect kindness our first time out, and she said, "What did you write that miserable piece of shit for?" And she stood, hands on hips, waiting for the pain to translate itself into guilty apology. And Terry said, "I wrote it for seven hundred and fifty dollars," and he walked away.

 This one is from Gene Wolfe:

The worst was inviting me to be guest of honor at Icon in Iowa City. Rusty Hevelin was fan guest of honor, and we were told we would give our speeches Friday afternoon.

Then Friday evening.

Then Saturday morning.

Then Saturday afternoon.

Then Saturday evening before the play. At no time were explanations of any of these postponements made.

I arrived at the play at about eight p.m., once more keyed up and ready to speak. First Rusty, then me. Right.

I guess the worst was several years ago in Boulder, when

The co-chair got on stage and announced that the guest of honor speeches would be given *after* the play, and I walked out.

About fifteen minutes later, Rusty found me and asked if I were going to speak after the play. I told him no—he could, if he wished; but I would not. He explained that he intended to refuse, and he'd wanted to suggest we act in concert. Our little meeting ended with our agreeing to strike the convention, which we did. To the best of my knowledge, it was the only time the fan and pro guests of honor (all the GoH the convention had) have staged a concerted labor action.

This was the convention at which the banquet (Saturday evening before the play) was held in the corridors and on the stairways, because the committee had failed to arrange for a room, tables, and chairs.

Here's a nasty little one from the elegant L. Sprague de Camp.

On the whole fans have treated me very kindly. There was, however, a time a few years ago when a group of admirers of H.P. Lovecraft became so exercised over the critical remarks in my biography of HPL that they discussed hitting me in the face with a cherry pie at a convention.

At the Fantasy Convention in Fort Worth, in 1978, word reached me that someone in this group would undertake this form of literary criticism. A pair of large, muscular fans, who make a hobby of martial arts, appointed themselves bodyguards. When I finished my presentation, a young man, bearing a brown-paper package of about the right size, approached. My defenders asked him what he wanted. Without a word, he turned and went away. So I shall never know for sure what was in that package; but I can bear my ignorance with becoming fortitude.

From Bob and Ginny Heinlein.

Dear Harlan,
Since we retired behind—

Get this, folks!

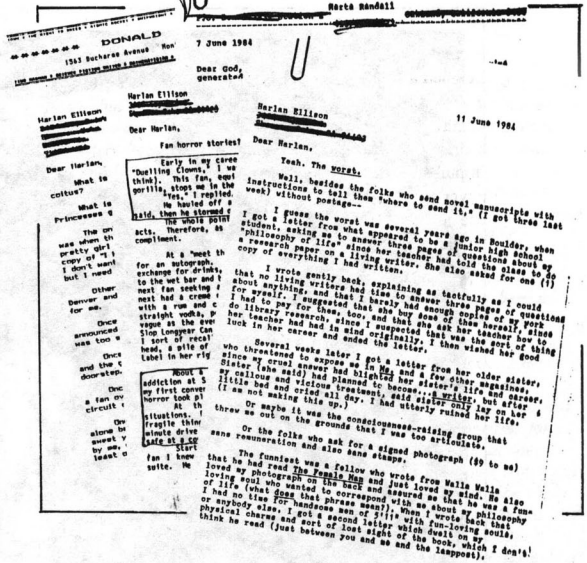
Since we retired behind an *unlisted telephone number and chain link fence and electric gate*, we've been pretty free of horror stories. Except one.

One night I was working in my office. There's a pane high up in the door, but it would take a giant to look in through that pane of glass. I can't see anyone shorter than that if I look through the pane.

The bell rang. Startled, because I hadn't let anyone in the gate, I answered the door, and there was a creep. His first words were, "Someone killed my peacock."

I'm afraid that I told him to get out, and that if he didn't, I would call the sheriff.

He didn't climb the fence again, but for days there was some kind of wire "sculpture" left at the



mailbox. Each day a new one. And letters. Etc. I never laid eyes on the man again, but I haven't forgotten him. ...

There were endless drop-ins years ago when we lived in Colorado, and quite a few here until we had the gate installed. Robert once had a phone call—during a cocktail party we were giving. A woman called from Kansas, wanting to know whether she should go to the Menninger Clinic. And we've had our trees decorated with toilet tissue, and so on. We've even had our lovely house sign stolen.

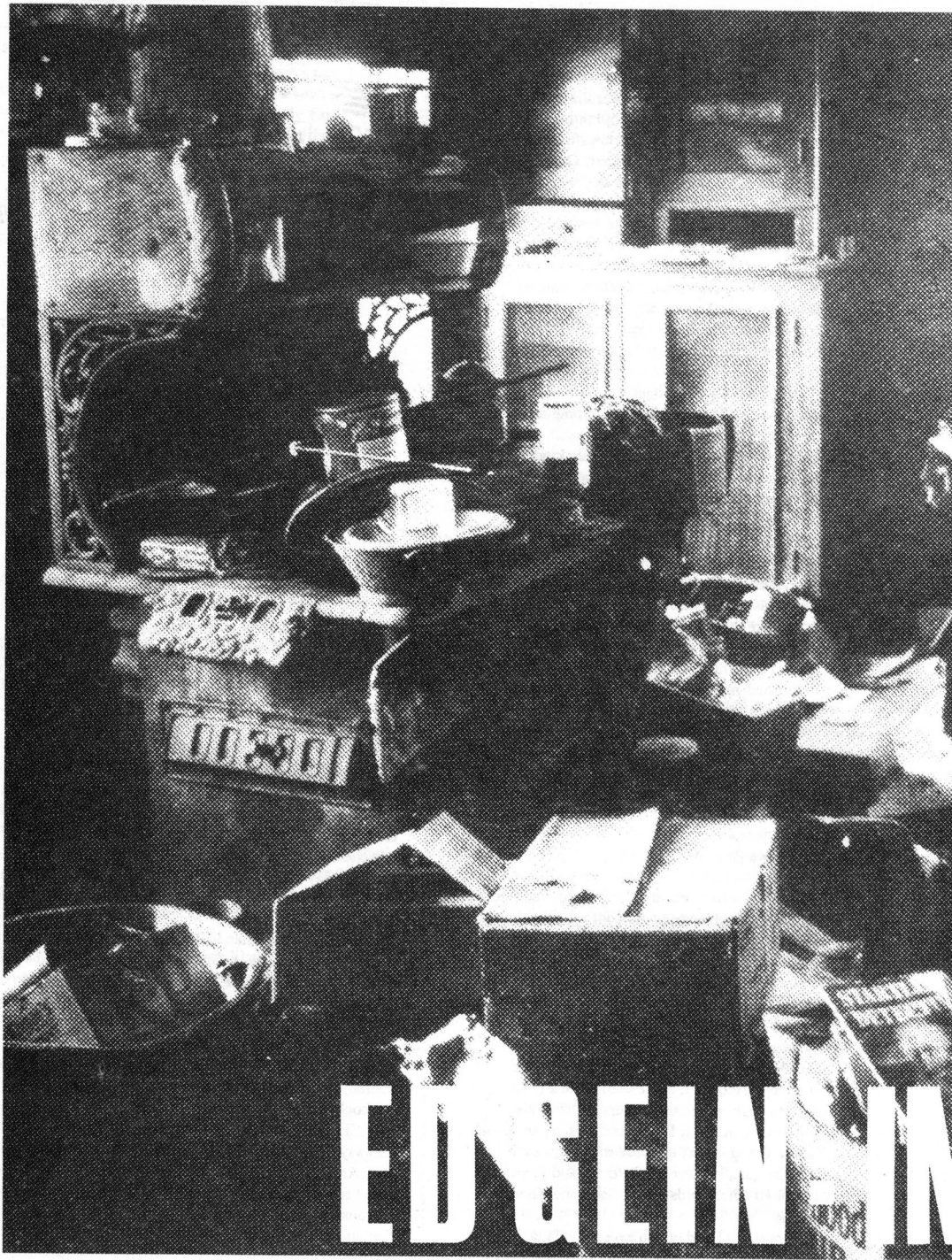
Here's a quickie. Raymond E. Feist tells one about a fan who showed up at his door a bit before seven a.m. of a Sunday, while Ray's nursing a fever of 102, after a restless night and he'd finally fallen asleep. So he staggers to the door, looking like hell, and here's this cheery little fan cherub with a paper bag full of books to be signed. Maybe a dozen books. But since Ray had only had a few titles published at that time, what he was looking at was three of each, probably to be sold.

And this kid demands Ray sign the books, right there, right then. And Ray says, "Look, I don't mean to be rude, but I'm sick as a dog, hundred and two fever, I feel like hell." And the kid sorta blinks and doesn't say anything, but he just stands there. So Ray says, "Could you come back another time, this is a little inconvenient," and the kid says, "I'm flying back to Hawaii." And Ray snuffles, and says, "I'm sick...couldn't you maybe..." but the kid just keeps on demonstrating this absolutely *sensitive* demeanor, and keeps wanting the books signed.

"That, and the death threat I got on my answering machine," Ray says, "convinced me to take my number out of the phone book."

Another major writer I contacted for this piece was so nervous about fans giving him trouble, though he called them "creeping morons," that he refused to let me use his name in any way. He said that attending conventions had thrown him so far off his writing that all he wanted to do was absent himself utterly from any access by fans to his life.

I won't yank your chain on this. There *were* some writers



LIFE MAGAZINE PHOTO OF ED'S KITCHEN SHORTLY AFTER HIS ARREST. © COPYRIGHT LIFE MAGAZINE, 1958



THE FLESH

Oh, the poor tarnished Fifties: Once revered as the decade of peace and prosperity, demand-driven consumerism, 2.5 children with Howdy Doodly futures and Davy Crockett hats, the decade has lately been revealed as an age of hype, hypocrisy, arrogance and indifference to the world community. While Coca-Cola exported America's goodwill beverage to the world's hinterlands, the government's atomic testing exported clouds of radioactive dust throughout the atmosphere, carrying a different, if deadlier, message to our global brethren. We're still discovering the poisons spawned in that era, both geographically and socially, but there is one story above all which crystallizes what was festering beneath the Saturday Evening Post image of America in the 1950s: Ed Gein. In 1957, America learned a new word—Psycho.

Ed Gein's name has grown in legend but the deeds have become distilled by time, muddled by faulty memories, and confused in the telling and retelling. It is the story that "shocked the nation." It forced a whole new generation of aphorisms for female genitalia: while every newspaper and magazine in the country tried to relate the horror of the events, editorial constraints prevented them from using the words necessary to describe them. Ed Gein, was and remains, the inspiration for countless books and film stories, notably Robert Bloch's Psycho and Tobe Hooper's Texas Chainsaw Massacre, but even these well-known stories pale at the truth revealed in Plainfield, Wisconsin.

ED GEIN WAS THE SECOND SON OF AUGUSTA AND GEORGE GEIN, PRO-NOUNCED GEEN. HE WAS BORN ON

August 27, 1906 near La Crosse, Wisconsin. The family owned and ran a grocery store in the small town, while Eddie and brother Henry attended school. During interviews conducted at the Central State Hospital after his arrest and commitment, Eddie stated he remembered very little of his childhood at La Crosse, but did share two incidents that he recalled very strongly. He told the psychologist that one afternoon while standing at the head of the basement stairs in his home, something that felt "almost like a push" nearly caused him to tumble down the steps. He recalled that his mother was in the kitchen at the time, and it was she who prevented him from falling. He was horrified at the obvious suggestion that his mother may actually have tried to push him down the stairs. He would insist, in testimony and interviews that, "My mother was a saint," though every psychologist who interviewed Ed over the years of his confinement would later assert Augusta was a dominating, rigid, and very likely, abusive head of the household.

Eddie's second recollection is certainly the most chilling. The family lived behind their grocery store and often prepared their own meats for resale, which was common at the time. The slaughter shed stood some distance behind the main house, but both Eddie and Henry were forbidden to enter. Naturally, Eddie was filled with an intense curiosity about the shed and one afternoon, his parents nowhere to be seen, he recalled sneaking back to the building and peeking through the unlocked door. There stood his mother and father, wearing ankle-length leather aprons splattered with blood. A pig carcass hung upsidedown from a chainfall bolted to the ceiling, blood and offal spilling into a pan on the floor of the shed. He watched while his mother pulled the viscera from the slit belly, and vividly remembers her head turning toward the door, her arms still elbow deep in the belly of the pig, to meet his gaze of stunned surprise.

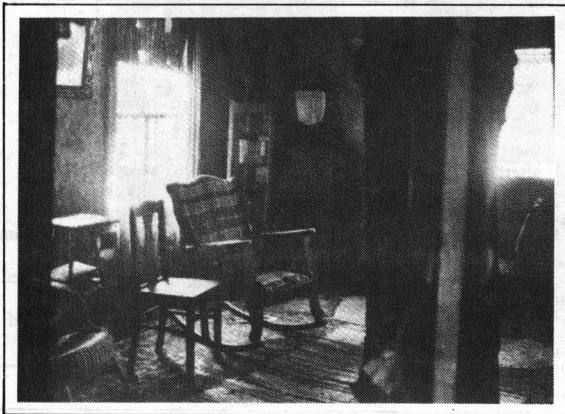
B Y J E S S I E H O R S T I N G

The rest of Eddie's childhood was fairly uneventful. When he was eight years old, the family moved to a 195-acre farm just outside the small town of Plainfield, Wisconsin. Eddie attended school and was recalled by those who knew him as a very small and quiet child, unusual only for his drooping left eyelid and his habit of laughing at inappropriate times. Eddie quit school after eighth grade and stayed in Plainfield to help his family run the farm. He often did odd jobs for other farmers and townspeople, and was thought by the people of Plainfield to be a likeable, though quirky, member of the community. From 1914 to 1940, the Geins lived anonymously in Plainfield, surviving the Depression, being untouched by the World War because both sons were too old for military duty by the time the U.S. entered the war. On April Fool's Day of 1940, Ed's father George died, the first death in the tight-knit family that seemed to prompt a series of tragedies in Ed's life. At the time of his father's death, Ed was 34, still a virgin, and still strangely attached to his mother. That attachment only grew firmer after George's death and caused a rift between the brothers. Henry thought the relationship was "unwholesome." Three years later, Henry's mysterious death marked the first time Eddie came under the cold light of suspicion.

The morning of May 16, 1944, the brothers started a fire to clear some marsh land on their farm, but the fire grew out of control. They separated in order to contain the blaze and, according to Eddie, Henry failed to return to the house after the fire was put out. Eddie asked some men to help him search for Henry but they were unsuccessful. However, later in the day, when Sheriff Frank Engle came to Eddie with a second search party, Eddie was able to lead them almost directly to where Henry's body was discovered. Eddie's only remark was, "Funny how that works." Although Sheriff Engle noted at the time that the body was sooty, but unburned, and the head showed bruising, Coroner George Blader declared asphyxiation as the cause of death and no inquest was held.

Eddie and his mother continued to manage the farm until, after a series of strokes, Augusta died on December 29, 1945. The effect of her death on Eddie was profound—he blamed her death on the hardship of farm life and the moral degeneracy of the citizens of Plainfield, about whom Augusta complained ceaselessly. Ed also stated that he believed his mother's fatal stroke was caused by the stress of witnessing a neighbor beat a puppy to death.

In the space of five years, Ed had lost his entire family and at the age of 40 was alone for the first time in his life. The facts reveal that, after sealing off his mother's room and the parlor from the rest of the house, Eddie began his descent into madness, perversion, and murder.



The citizens of Plainfield, Wisconsin, saw nothing sinister in Ed Gein's eccentricities. He was described as "helpful" and "reliable" by those who knew him. He was not overly sociable, but would occasionally be seen at Mary Hogan's tavern in nearby Pine Grove, and would often have supper with neighbors Irene and Lester Hill, and do errands for whoever asked. He had no known intimate relationships with local women, though he had reportedly asked both Mary Hogan and shopkeeper Bernice Worden on different occasions to go out for a movie or dancing. Mary and Bernice were both fairly robust, middle-aged women whom Ed would later confess "reminded" him of his mother.

In the period between 1946 and 1958, the communities surrounding Plainfield suffered a number of unexplained disappearances. On May 1, 1947, eight-year-old Georgia Weckler disappeared after a babysitter dropped her off in the driveway of her home. In 1952 Victor Travis, his dog, and a companion, failed to return from a local deerhunting outing. Though the dog and pieces of clothing were eventually recovered, the hunters and the car had vanished from the area. On October 24, 1953, 15-year-old Evelyn Hartly was apparently abducted from the house where she was babysitting. All that remained of her in the house was her glasses, one shoe, and a bloody trail that led out through a basement window. None of the bodies were ever found.

The disappearance that aroused the community was that of Mary Hogan. On December 8, 1954, local Portage County farmer Seymour Lester was the first to discover her missing when he walked into her usually busy tavern to find the place empty but for a pool of blood on the floor and a spent .32 cartridge shell nearby. Tracks of dried blood indicated Mary had been dragged to the back of the shop and loaded into a vehicle. Portage County Sheriff Harold Thompson had no leads or suspects and the case of Mary Hogan remained unsolved until 1957, when evidence of the most damning sort was discovered in the possession of Ed Gein. It was later reported that shortly after the disappearance of Mary Hogan, a neighbor of Eddie's had mentioned to him that, "if you'd spent more time courting Mary Hogan, she'd be cooking for you instead of being missing." Eddie was reported to have smiled and said, "She's not missing. She's down at the house now."

Between 1954 and 1957, the rumors in and around Plainfield regarding Eddie Gein grew stranger and stranger. Neighbors noticed his farmhouse had fallen into disrepair after the death of his mother. Although he survived by leasing parcels of land to surrounding farmers, and at one time made an effort to sell the property—word got around that he wouldn't allow prospective buyers to see any more of the inside of the house than the parlor and the upstairs rooms. Children in the area reported being shown "shrunken heads" that Eddie told them had been purchased through mail order. And there were persistent rumors of a "ghost" which had been seen at night in Eddie's yard: It appeared as a naked woman dancing, hair streaming, in the moonlight. Two children reported, after actually visiting Ed's house, that he had "a bunch" of heads in his bedroom and that they didn't appear to be shrunken at all, but appeared to be dry, full-size heads.

On Saturday, November 16, 1957, the first day of deerhunting season, most of the shops in Plainfield were closed as the local residents took to the woods. Bernice Worden, proprietress of the local grocery store, opened early and had told her son Frank that she expected a busy day.

Bernice's first customer was Ed Gein. Ed had been there the day before, inquiring about the price of antifreeze, and as he had promised, had returned this Saturday morning just before 9:00 with a container. She sold him the antifreeze, wrote up the receipt and watched him leave. A few moments later he returned. Could he try the Marlin .22 rifle? He had some shells in his pocket and wanted to see if the rifle could accommodate both the short and long .22.

Across the street, Bernard Muschinski was pumping gas at his Phillips 66 station, and recalled seeing the Worden delivery truck leaving the back of the store sometime between 8:45 and 9:30, but didn't think much of it at the time.

Neighbor Elmo Ueek, returning from hunting near Ed's property, was tying down the deer he'd shot when he saw Ed returning home. Hoping to apologize for hunting without permission on Ed's property, he turned to wave Eddie to slow down, but Eddie just waved and smiled without slowing his car.

Bernice Worden's son Frank returned home from hunting that afternoon. He was surprised to find his mother's store with the lights on but locked, with no one in sight. His mother had said she was going to keep the store open all day. Frank hurried home to get a key and came back to enter the store. He noticed first that the cash register was missing, then he noticed the blood. There were stains near the cash register and smears leading to the back of the store. The delivery truck was gone. Frank immediately called Sheriff Art Schley who, with Deputy Arnie Fritz, sped to the store. When they arrived, Frank Worden blurted out, "He's done something to her."

"Who?" Schley asked.

"Eddie Gein."

Frank had been at the store on Friday when Eddie had been in. On the counter this Saturday morning was Bernice Worden's receipt for the sale of one quart of antifreeze.

Elmo was troubled that Eddie would be angry about the deer he shot. Late on Saturday, he drove to the Gein farmhouse to apologize. Eddie was out front, changing the tires on his Ford. Eddie said not to worry about the incident, but Elmo was later struck by the fact that Eddie had been taking the snow tires off his Ford—before winter had even begun.

Ed had one more visitor that afternoon, Bob Hill, the son of his neighbors Lester and Irene Hill who owned the next farm over. Bob wanted Eddie to give him a ride into town to get a car battery. HeB came into the yard calling for Eddie. Eddie hurried out of the house, his arms bloody. He explained that he had been dressing a deer, but would wash up and give Bob a hand. He drove into town with Bob, picked up the battery and returned to the Hill farmhouse. He stayed for dinner. That evening, Ed Gein was taken into custody by Deputies Dan Chase and Poke Spees in the Hill's driveway for the murder of Bernice Worden. Deputy Dan Chase was not convinced—even though on his way to pick Gein up for questioning—that the quiet little man could have had anything to do with the violent act at Worden's. However when he questioned Gein, sitting in his car in the Hill's driveway, and got different versions from Gein about his activities for the day, Gein abruptly blurted out, "Somebody framed me."

Deputy Chase asked, "Framed you for what?"

"Well, Mrs. Worden."

"What about Mrs. Worden?" asked Chase. Chase had not yet mentioned why he was questioning Gein.

"Well, she's dead, ain't she?"

Chase asked, "How do you know she's dead?"

"Well, they were talking about it in there," said Gein, indicating the Lesters. Gein's stuttering reply was all the convincing Chase required.

Sheriff Schley, his deputies and several other officials proceeded to Gein's farmhouse to look for evidence. Nothing could have prepared them for what they found. They entered the home through the summer kitchen, a screened-in shed attached to the kitchen of the house. It was about 8:00 at night and the men used flashlights.

ED, BEING LED TO HIS ARRAIGNMENT.



Caught in the beams, suspended upsidedown from the ceiling by a length of wood threaded through her tendons, hung the body of Bernice Worden. She hung naked, slit from her pubic mound to just under her collarbone, disemboweled and decapitated. The cavity had been washed clean, in the manner of dressed livestock. The men continued the search of the house with flashlights and kerosene lamps. Entering the kitchen, they were staggered by the smell, the filth, and the accumulation of rubbish. A small path lead through piles of newspapers, old cartons, bits of food, empty tins and unwashed dishes. The washbasin was filled with sand. Boxes of pulp magazines, feed sacks and dirty clothing were piled helter-skelter around the room. On a shelf above the stove was a coffee can filled with old wads of chewing gum, surrounded by half-filled glass containers of moldy liquid near a set of dentures. On the stove itself were several unwashed tin bowls. In front of the stove, wrapped in a plastic bag, was the heart of Bernice Worden. Nearby, wrapped in newspaper, were her entrails.

On the kitchen table, amid discarded clothing and old papers, was the top half of a skull Ed used as a soup bowl. He would later tell investigators that he got the idea from a magazine. One of the kitchen chairs, on closer inspection, had had the seat rewoven with strips of human flesh. An investigator later commented that, "It was not a very good job." Bits of dried fat hung from the underside where Ed had not cleaned the strips carefully.

A portable generator and floodlights were brought to the farmhouse. More chairs were found to have been reupholstered with flesh. In the room off the kitchen which Ed used as a bedroom, they saw two skulls impaled on his bedposts. A crude lampshade and wastebasket made of skin were near the nightstand, as well as a belt which appeared to be made of several females' nipples dried and sewn together. They found a knife with a handle fashioned from human bone and several more skull caps. In Ed's bedroom, they discovered a shoe box with eight dried vulvas and one fresh one. Some had string attached to each side

and one appeared to have been painted with silver paint. The fresh vulva had been recently salted and was determined to fit the area missing from Bernice Worden's body. They found a collection of four human noses in another container, sets of lips and other sort parts from the head. The flesh from four faces were stuffed with paper and hung on the wall and five other faces were found elsewhere in the room. The hair was still attached to these "masks" which had been carefully peeled from the skulls and preserved. Some had been dried and the flesh hardened, but some appeared to have been oiled to retain softness and flexibility. Some had lipstick applied to the lips.

They discovered several pairs of leggings fashioned from skin and a complete female upper front torso that had been dried, with strings attached to the sides, so it could be worn. Behind a kitchen door, bundled into a bag, was the dried face and hair of another female which was identified by one investigator as that of Mary Hogan. The rest of the house had been closed off and investigators now moved to search the rest of the house and the upstairs. Opening the door to the downstairs parlor, they were stunned to find the room tidy and undisturbed. Other than a layer of dust over the furniture, nothing was out of order in the parlor, nor his mother's room. The upstairs of the house was virtually empty, and the investigators concluded that the remains of Gein's madness was confined to the two bloody rooms below.

Sifting through the rubble in the two occupied rooms of the farmhouse, investigators discovered dozens of defleshed bones, assorted noses, breasts and lips from an inestimable number of bodies. Late in the night, Bernice Worden's head was discovered in a burlap sack hidden beneath a blanket in the summer kitchen. Two long nails, bent as hooks, protruded from her ears, with a length of twine attached to the nails so the head could be conveniently hung. The coroner's examination of the head revealed the entrance wound from a .22 caliber at the back of the head, just above the hairline. X-rays revealed the bullet lodged just behind the left eye. The mutilations, they determined, had all occurred after death.

THE GEIN FARMHOUSE. THE SUMMER KITCHEN IS ON THE RIGHT.



Gein was questioned that night by Sheriff Schley and District Attorney Earl Kileen. Although he admitted being at the Worden's store, and admitted seizing the body of Bernice Worden and butchering it, he insisted he did not recall the events of her death. Later Gein would admit that he had loaded the Marlin rifle he had been handling and that it had discharged, and that the bullet had struck Bernice Worden, but that the shooting had been unintentional. He would maintain that the shooting was accidental the rest of his life. He at first denied any involvement in the death of Mary Hogan, or the disappearances of Evelyn Hartly, Georgia Weckler or Victor Travis, but later confessed to the killing of Mary Hogan. His explanation for the great number of bodies and body parts present in his home was that he had robbed nine graves in local cemeteries between 1947 and 1954. He could not recall all the graves he had robbed, but did recall the name of Eleanor Adams whose grave he claimed to have robbed on an August night a few hours after her burial. Mable Eversen was another, both in the Plainfield Cemetery. Gein claimed to have made over forty visits to the Plainfield and Springfield Cemeteries, though he only took bodies on "nine or ten" occasions. Upon exhumation, the graves of Adams and Eversen had indeed been violated and the authorities ceased further exhumation.

Though Gein could only account for 12 bodies, including Bernice Worden, the coroner's office was able to identify a minimum of 15 different bodies, or parts of bodies, in the Gein home. Gein's ash heap was examined, as well as a trench where he disposed of garbage, and many other bones and pieces of clothing were discovered. The bits of bone and teeth that were sifted from his ash heap were impossible to identify positively as belonging to the known victims found on the premises.

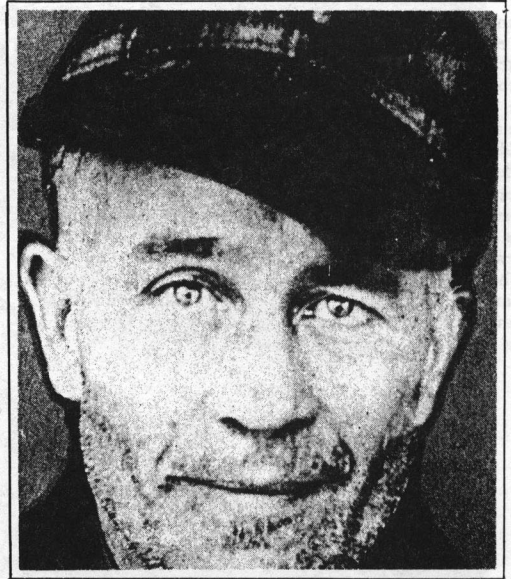
Investigators also suspected there were several other victims buried somewhere on Gein's 195 acres, though only a few more bones were recovered from the grounds.

The news of the "Plainfield Butcher" broke on Sunday and, on the following Monday, Plainfield was overrun by reporters from all over the country. The most sensational headlines and radio reports only hinted at the facts. Rumors of cannibalism and a "murder factory" were reported as news, and the newsmen were so dogged in their attempts to speak to Gein that he was removed to Madison, the state capital, following his arraignment later in the week. He was questioned many times in both Plainfield and Madison, and eventually admitted to a variety of perversions, but only two murders.

His home and its contents—after all evidence was removed—was schedule for auction on March 30, 1958. Ten days prior to the auction, the house was destroyed by a fire of unknown origin. The remaining property, including the maroon Ford used to transport Bernice Worden, was sold for a total of \$5,375.00. The car fetched \$760.00 from a promoter who exhibited it around the country as "The Ghoul Car." Most of the proceeds went to settle a suit filed by the estate of Eleanor Adams and Frank Worden for reparations. The balance went to the state and the county to cover the cost of the investigation.

At Ed's sanity hearing on January 6, 1958, he was found unfit to stand trial and was committed to the Central State Hospital until such time he was judged able to assist in his own defense. Transcripts of Gein's questioning, psychiatric interviews and hearings, as well as his eventual trial are singular in that he rarely made a direct statement. Virtually every answer was prefaced by "I may have done . . ." or "I could have done . . ." Though he was indirect, he showed little conscience and no remorse for the mutilations and murders he admitted to performing.

Gein confessed that many of the body parts he had preserved were meant to be worn. He would undress and strap on the preserved breasts and leggings, tie a vagina over his penis and don a face mask and "dance" in his yard on warm nights, or would simply don a mask or a vagina and wear it while indoors. He



denied having intercourse with any of the corpses, saying "they smelled too bad." He did admit, however, to selecting corpses that reminded him physically of his mother. One psychiatrist noted that Gein's denial conflicted with "hearsay" from earlier confessions in which he admitted to having sexual relations with some of the resurrected bodies. He denied eating any of the body parts, but admitted having made a study of cannibalism and seemed very knowledgeable on the subject. He said he would not eat any of the parts because, "they could make you sick." He never indicated, however, how he made that discovery. He reported having suffered hallucinations, seeing "faces" in piles of leaves, and having once seen a flock of vultures in the trees near his home. He admitted having olfactory hallucinations, often smelling what he described as "flesh" smells at his home and in the hospital where he was confined.

After ten years of confinement, Central State Hospital Director Dr. Shubert notified Wisconsin Supreme Court Judge Robert Gollmar that, in his opinion, Gein was fit to stand trial. Waushara County District Attorney Howard Dutcher and Milwaukee attorney Robert E. Sutton would prosecute and Gein would be represented by the man who represented him at the time of his arrest, William Belter. The trial began November 7, 1968. Gein was charged only for the first-degree murder of Bernice Worden. The verdict was to be followed immediately by a determination of whether or not Gein was sane at the time of the murder. Gein was found guilty, then not guilty by reason of insanity and returned immediately to Central State Hospital. In 1974 he applied to be released, but was denied. Had he been imprisoned for murder, Gein would have been eligible for parole by the late seventies, but he remained confined for the rest of his life. He was eventually moved to a low security Mendota Mental Health Hospital at the age of 72. He died on July 26, 1984 of respiratory failure and was buried next to his mother in the Plainfield Cemetery.

Though the case of Ed Gein was a sensation at the time, his name and deeds have become overshadowed by the serial killers who have come in his wake. The forces compelling him have become clichéd: a lonely little man, abnormally attached to his mother and influenced by her rigid views of the world, becomes incapable of forming relationships and perverts his need for

companionship into murder, necrophilia, and transvestitism. It seems evident that much of Ed's behavior was enacting his wish to recreate his mother, to physically enter and become her. In Hitchcock's film, *Psycho*, the director instinctively hit on the theme, as Norman Bates gives life to his mother in his own peculiar way.

Ed's story has obsessed filmmakers and writers since the time it made headlines, perhaps because the grisly nature of the crimes contrasted so sharply with the age. But the fascination is more likely attributed to the intimacy between this murderer and his victims. Certainly their bodies were experienced in a way the living can never experience the living.

They were tended, preserved, and worshiped in a way: pieces of them surrounded his life; he created adornments of them; their faces and body parts were revered; and, finally, in a most perverse tribute, he placed their flesh over his own.



ED DURING
HIS 1968 TRIAL. OLDER,
HEAVIER, AND LOOKING QUITE HARMLESS,
HE WAS FOUND GUILTY OF THE MURDER OF
BERNICE WORDEN. HE WAS NOT
TRIED FOR ANY OTHER CHARGES.

Principal references used to research and compile this article were Deviant, by Harold Schecter, and Edward Gein, by Judge Robert H. Gollmar. Additional information was found in True Detective (August, 1958), Hunting Humans, by Michael Newton, and several other sources.



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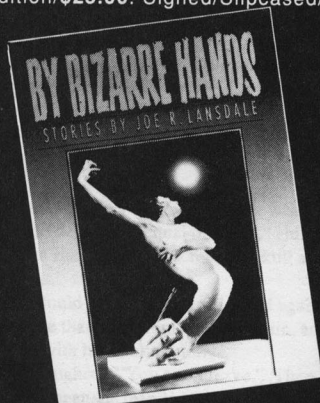
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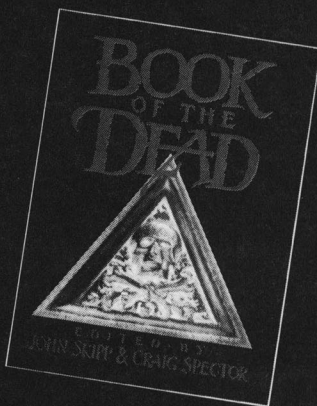


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Writealike Contest

Here's our contest winner—an irresistible take-off on Rex Miller.

SLOBBER

by Lex Chiller

On his second birthday he already weighed more than sixty pounds. Three score pounds of distended baby fat and drooling back-straining blubber that defied you to call him infant. Imagine him thudding across the floor toward you, holding out his thick-as-a-brick arms and going "Goo." Imagine feeding the little bastard, using a big wooden spoon and pouring whatever you could find (it didn't seem to matter to the kid) into that yawning maw, restoking the fires that drove him, kept him roaming from room to room on chubby, furniture-shaking feet.

And it was never enough. Always he returned to his favorite position in front of the refrigerator, reaching out in mute supplication, shaping the folds of loose skin around his mouth into a mocking parody of a grin. But you didn't want to say No." That would be bad, that would be very bad indeed. Because then he would have one his tantrums and everyone would suffer. You'd find a gnawed chunk of misshapen rubber and fake fur that used to be one of your husband's slippers or a pair of your panties that weren't crotchless when you bought them or...something worse.

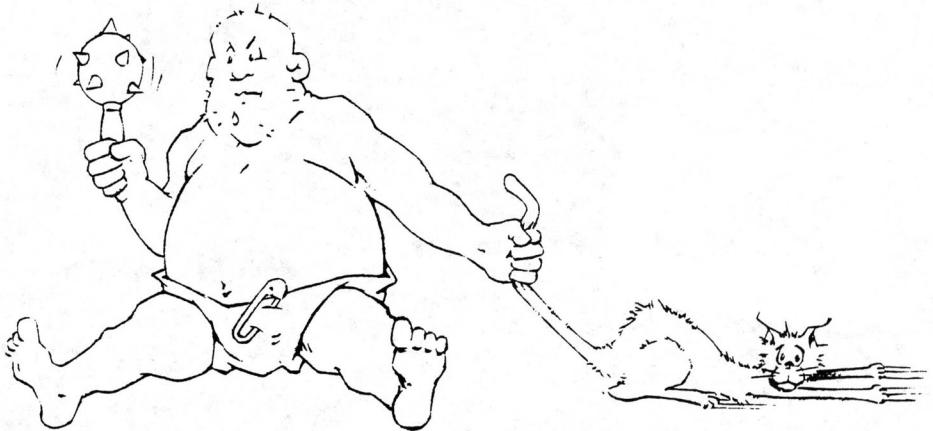
Once while you were at the movies and had left little Danny with one of the rotating cadre of women who agreed to

babysit (they usually did it only once), she ignored him when he asked for food, begged for food, bellowed for food. And then, after her program was over she went looking for him...

...and found him crouching beside Sylvester, the old tom who was too lazy to move and too stupid to know better when Daniel Edward Flowers Bunkowski tramped into view. Danny looked up and the woman caught only the briefest glimpse of something long and stringy and purplish hanging from the corner of his mouth before she fled yowling into the night.

Why couldn't they see? Why couldn't they understand? There was a life force inside this boy that would not be denied. It fed on the dead for a time but then it became dissatisfied with this poor fare and then those who walked the earth on two's and four's and eight's came to know and to fear the girlish giggle, the stubby food-encrusted fingers and those titanium tough baby teeth.

This is a picture taken at his third birthday party. Eighty-one pounds and still going strong. He's finished the cake and now he's going for the candles. Grandma tries to stop him and grandma learns a painful lesson. It's a pity about her fingers; she used to knit the most marvelous things, you know...



*Maybe this is the way Clive started out...
Some weird ideas and a sense of humor.*

THE HELLHOUND'S BARK

Not by Clive Barker

"What's your pleasure, sir?"

Jerry Cockhownd blinked in astonishment, then bewilderment. A dirty, once-white linoleum countertop stretched before him where only a moment ago his mahogany worktable had sat. Gone was the quiet retreat of his darkened den, the dimmed reading lamp, and the inanimate shelves of books. Staring at him in the unapologetic light was a very live man with stringy black hair and fishhook earrings inserted hooks-first through the ear lobes.

Fishhooks repeated his entreaty. "What'll you have, sir?"

Jerry surveyed his surroundings. There were empty stools to either side of him, and empty display cases at either end of the counter. Behind the counter up on the wall was a menu with but two listings: Hell's Event, and bread.

"Where am I?" Cockhownd demanded. Then he observed with mounting alarm that there were neither windows nor doors in the diner.

"Someone's here!" Fishhooks called out over his shoulder, above the sound of greasy hair slapping against his back. Turning again to Mr. C., he replied, "You're in Mr. Barker's Amusement Park. In the hills. The cities."

Jerry's brow furrowed. He had been in his den, alone, only moments ago, solving a jigsaw puzzle. It had been a smaller one, 500 interlocking pieces, forming a picture of autumn foliage. He had completed it, snapped in the last piece, then he was here, like switching on the lights and seeing a whole new reality.

"Might I suggest today's house specialty: Hell's Event, with bread? We just ran out of yattering and Jack." Greasy hair might have been a waiter, just as this place might have been a diner.

"And especially bread, son," a different voice resonated into the room. The nine-foot newcomer carried a steaming bowl and a loaf of bread to the counter, and seemed oblivious to the fire burning across the top of his head.

"Hot Head Tex," Fishhooks introduced.

Hot grease the color of water ran down Hot Head's face and dripped into the bowl. "Eat, Bub," he ordered, sliding Hell's Event and bread in front of Jerry.

Jerry looked at the serving. Something was moving in there.

"There is no delight the equal of bread," Hot Head informed him. Orange-red flames rippled across his skull as he pushed the loaf closer. "Now eat."

"I think I should be going," Jerry looked again for a door. There was none. Maybe that light would switch again, and he would be back in his den, with his books, and...

Fishhooks laughed. "You can't leave." Then looking both very earnest and very mean, he leaned into Jerry's face. "Nobody leaves

Mr. Barker's Amusement Park without first solving the puzzle..." Greasy hair's left eyebrow lifted like the top of a question mark, "...The puzzle of the HellHound's Bark."

Hot Head looked into the soup bowl. "Not quite right. Needs one more thing." He jerked greasy hair's foot off the floor and pulled of his shoe. "I'll tear your sole apart." This he did, and stirred the pieces in with the brown thickness.

"Try it now," Hot Head shovelled a spoonful of Hell's Event at Jerry's mouth. Something moved across the spoon.

It's a nightmare, of course, Jerry decided.

Jerry reached out and plucked the movement out of the ladle. It squealed like fingernails down a chalkboard.

And nightmares should be humored, like unruly children.

"You've found part of it!" Fishhooks exclaimed. "It's a piece of the HellHound's Bark!"

Jerry held it squealing between his fingertips. It was translucent like water, had neither substance nor form, yet he could feel it in his hand and in his ears, like pinching a screaming marble.

Nightmares can even be savored.

"Now you must find the remaining pieces in order to complete the bark. You'll find the others scattered in different places throughout Mr. Barker's Amusement Park."

Jerry put the fragment of the HellHound's Bark in his shirt pocket and it became quiet. He marveled at that, then asked, "How do I get to the next place?"

"Simple. Cut your belly apart like this." Greasy hair snagged Jerry's gut with a hook and opened several inches before miring up in muscle and shirt. "Look inside and repeat after me: wherever we're opened, we're red..."

"Everybody is a book of blood..." Jerry awoke himself repeating the phrase. He looked around. He was back in his den.

What a dream. Or was it? He felt his stomach. No wound, but his shirt was torn. And in his pocket, there was a little round lump. He hesitated, remembering the hellish sound, then left it undisturbed.

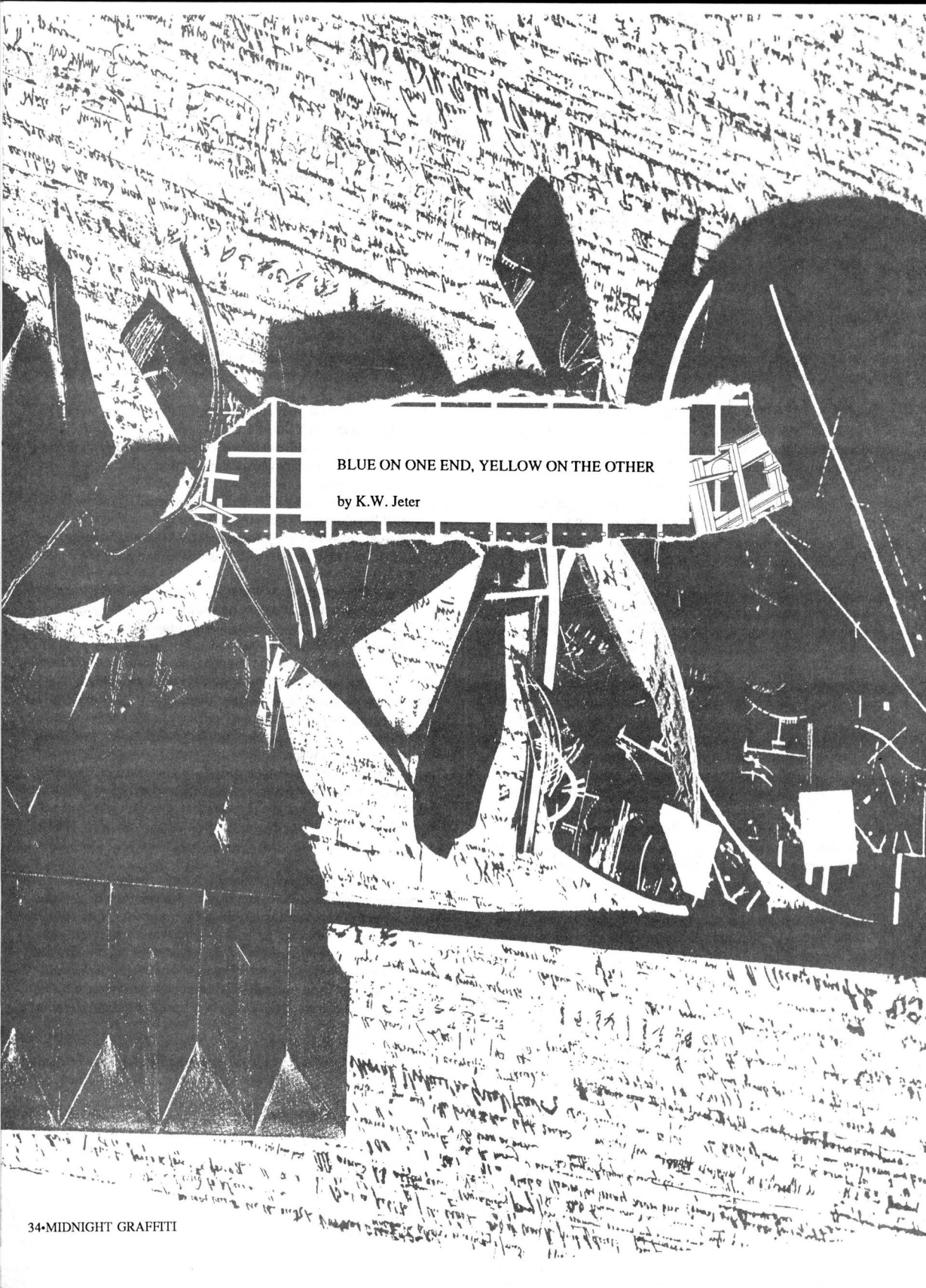
All was quiet in the room. The jigsaw puzzle lay as he had finished it. The lamp was still low, the bookshelves were still dark and filled with jigsaw puzzles. *Jigsaw puzzles*. Not books! He kept books on his bookshelves, but now hundreds of boxes of jigsaw puzzles sat there.

He turned to get up, and saw greasy hair walking toward him, one shoe missing, fishhooks through the ears, carrying a dozen boxes of jigsaw puzzles.

"What's your pleasure, sir?"


Really by Bill Foley

Thanks for all the entries from our readers...and be sure to enter next issue's contest: Bring Us The Head of L. Ron Hubbard!



BLUE ON ONE END, YELLOW ON THE OTHER

by K.W. Jeter



DRINKING WAS GOOD. DRINKING WAS GOOD because it allowed him to fine-tune the process, to stretch out the delicious, scary, on-edge moment, to play with it as though it were some infinitely elastic substance, thinning from a rope to a cord to a string to a thread...the words danced in a happy nonsense song inside his skull...to a line of atoms, one right after another...

Until the elastic string, the delicious moment snapped. That was the whole game: to see how far he could stretch it, without it snapping. Without screwing up. Without going over the edge. He most definitely did *not* want to screw up. Not again, not another time. That part was no fun at all.

He sat at the bar, rolling the capsule with the tip of his finger across the scarred and cigarette-burnt wood grain. (*Very* interesting wood grain; he'd looked at it, times before, long and hard enough to read the microscopic words hidden there.) He had to be careful about that, too. If he pushed down on the capsule too hard, it could split and break open, the bitter white powder spilling out. Which was uncool, as everyone would be able to see him and watch him scraping up the powder and sucking it off the end of his finger. They all knew already, all of them, the bartender working the beer taps and eyeing him, the other customers scattered around, with their sneaky gazes tapping at his spine... They all knew, but he wasn't supposed to fuck up and be *obvious* about it. That was part of the game, too. So he pressed down on the capsule just hard enough, just light enough, rolling it away from him, avoiding the wet circles where he'd set his own glass down, then drawing it back the same way.

With his other hand, he raised his glass and took a sip. He could, if he wanted to, pick up the cap between his thumb and forefinger and set it gently on his tongue, and wash it down, the little bullet sliding down his throat. He was in a position to do that: glass with beer, warm and flat, in one hand, the outstretched finger of his other hand pinning the capsule down on the bar. He looked at himself in the mirror behind the ranks of bottles. The reflections of his hands were hidden behind the stacked-up glasses, but he knew they were there. It'd be the smart thing to do; all he had to do was swallow the cap, and the world would be a safer place. And duller. That was the problem. If he swallowed it, the game would be over, at least until the morning. He might as well go home and let the grey wash of the TV rise over his head, a mumbling tide through which he would gaze up as though he were at the bottom of some luminous sea.

A glass squeaked as the bartender rubbed it with a towel. The bartender glanced up from the pink hands doing their work and looked at him sitting there; the hands went on smearing the damp cloth inside the glass. Behind him, out among the bar's tables, the other drinkers fell silent, sounding like birds then...like the silence of birds sitting on a wire overhead...he closed his own eyes and saw the telephone lines splitting a heat-shimmering sky, the small black shapes suspended there and watching him...a crushed insect, perfect down to the spines on its stiff paper legs, scabbling in the clamp of a bird's beak, the silence of the others scanning the dust and road for their small prey...

He opened his eyes. He could see them in the mirror, just barely. But they were there, behind him; the shapes of birds, with their dark, glossy wings, claws gripping the glasses on the tables...their bead eyes staring at him with incalculable hate and appetite...

He had to bend down low over his own glass to hide the smile that was threatening to split his face open. You weren't supposed to—wherever you went—you weren't supposed to sit by yourself and let some big loony, shit-eating grin break out. That'd be like pinning the hospital commitment papers to your chest and walking around with them like a neon sign. But it really *was* funny: thinking about crows sitting around a table, nursing their beers. Heckle and Jeckyll Tie One On. They knew he was laughing about them, inside himself, and he could feel, without looking up at the mirror, their scowls growing more jagged and hateful.

That's what playing was all about. He watched his fingertip rolling the capsule back and forth a couple of inches. Sailing so close to the edge that you saw things like that—*really* saw them—things you'd never see otherwise. Things they didn't want you to see, that they gave you the caps for, so you wouldn't see them. He tilted his head back for another swallow, and let the beer uncoil, a benign liquid snake, inside his stomach.

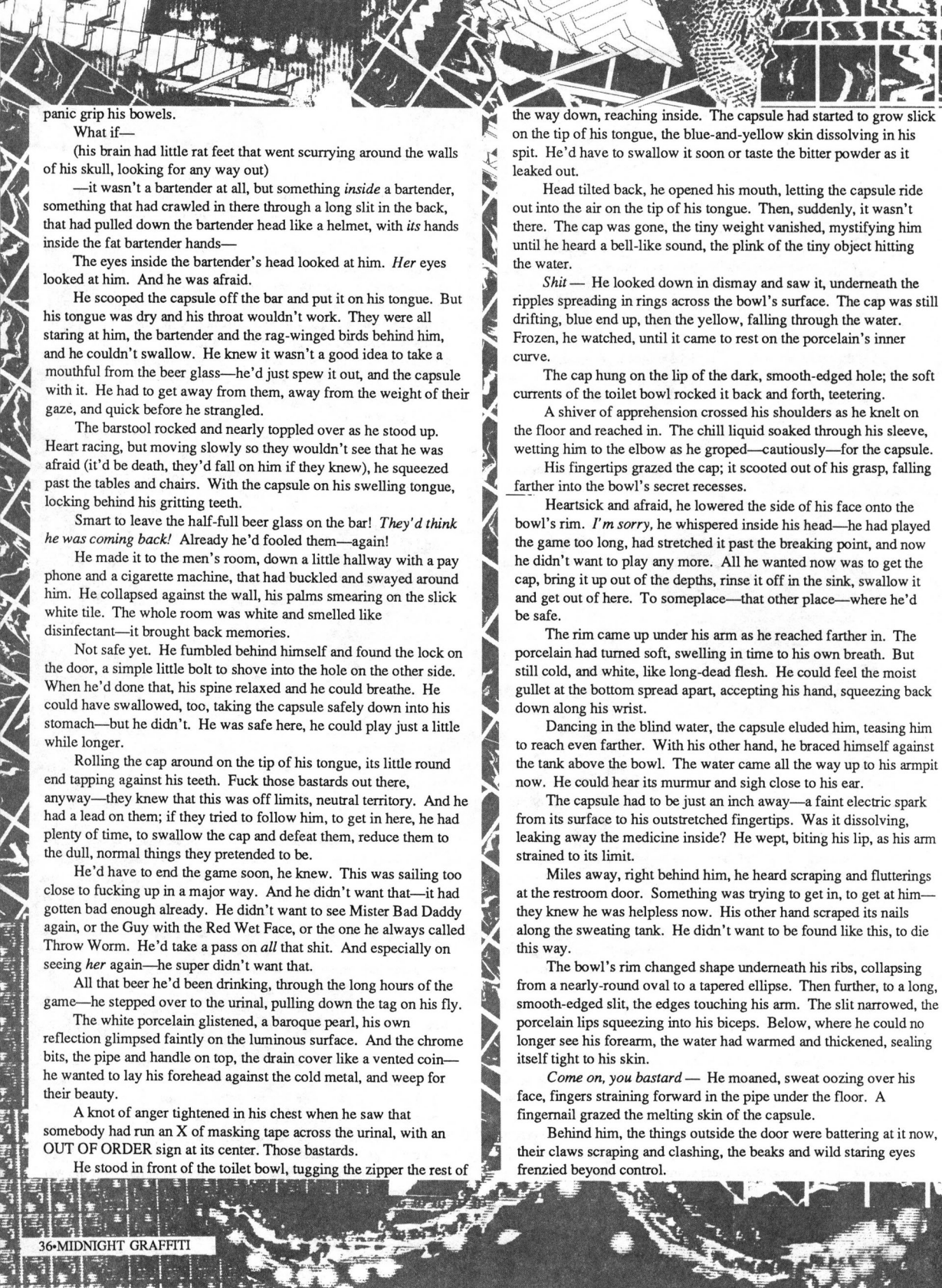
When he'd been married...and weren't there a lot of stories that started out *that way*...ancient saga time, the other epic opening opening line being *When he'd been in the hospital*... He took another swallow, down to the last half-inch in the glass, and concentrated, working the little splinter of memory out of his waltzing brain.

When he'd still been married, and she'd come to see him at the hospital...*that story*...he'd had the idea in his head that he'd gotten it from her, the way you catch the flu from somebody else. As though it were a virus, something he'd tasted in her sweat or in some pink recess. A sexually transmitted disease, as it were. He hadn't told the doctors and therapists about that, because he didn't want them to take it away from him. The secret hope, that took a long time to die—the memory of it soured the beer in his stomach—was that when he got out they'd be together, he and his wife, in this new world all their own.

It hadn't worked out that way. That made him sad. He leaned his numbed face against the knuckles of one hand and watched the capsule being rolled back and forth on the bar. The capsule was two bright colors, blue and yellow, with the name of the pharmaceutical company in tiny white letters along the side. They must love their work, he figured, to paint their name on every little blue-and-yellow capsule that came rolling off the assembly line, painting on the letters with a one-hair brush, delicate as an eyelash... He bore them no ill-will; they just didn't know.

And it was too bad about his wife. It would've been fun. She would've thought the black birds at the table behind him were funny, with their ragged, water-dripping feathers and glitter-eyed malevolence. She had thought all sorts of things were funny... That had been the problem; he had to admit it.

The sound of a knife and something wet broke into his head, sending all the old memories flying. He looked up and saw the bartender cutting a lime into wedges, filling up the little plastic bin with the bright red cherries and all the other garnishes, skinned-raw little onions and the like. The bartender looked at him over the wet hands pressing down the knife's point, and he felt the hand of sudden



panic grip his bowels.

What if—

(his brain had little rat feet that went scurrying around the walls of his skull, looking for any way out)

—it wasn't a bartender at all, but something *inside* a bartender, something that had crawled in there through a long slit in the back, that had pulled down the bartender head like a helmet, with *its* hands inside the fat bartender hands—

The eyes inside the bartender's head looked at him. *Her* eyes looked at him. And he was afraid.

He scooped the capsule off the bar and put it on his tongue. But his tongue was dry and his throat wouldn't work. They were all staring at him, the bartender and the rag-winged birds behind him, and he couldn't swallow. He knew it wasn't a good idea to take a mouthful from the beer glass—he'd just spew it out, and the capsule with it. He had to get away from them, away from the weight of their gaze, and quick before he strangled.

The barstool rocked and nearly toppled over as he stood up. Heart racing, but moving slowly so they wouldn't see that he was afraid (it'd be death, they'd fall on him if they knew), he squeezed past the tables and chairs. With the capsule on his swelling tongue, locking behind his gritting teeth.

Smart to leave the half-full beer glass on the bar! *They'd think he was coming back!* Already he'd fooled them—again!

He made it to the men's room, down a little hallway with a pay phone and a cigarette machine, that had buckled and swayed around him. He collapsed against the wall, his palms smearing on the slick white tile. The whole room was white and smelled like disinfectant—it brought back memories.

Not safe yet. He fumbled behind himself and found the lock on the door, a simple little bolt to shove into the hole on the other side. When he'd done that, his spine relaxed and he could breathe. He could have swallowed, too, taking the capsule safely down into his stomach—but he didn't. He was safe here, he could play just a little while longer.

Rolling the cap around on the tip of his tongue, its little round end tapping against his teeth. Fuck those bastards out there, anyway—they knew that this was off limits, neutral territory. And he had a lead on them; if they tried to follow him, to get in here, he had plenty of time, to swallow the cap and defeat them, reduce them to the dull, normal things they pretended to be.

He'd have to end the game soon, he knew. This was sailing too close to fucking up in a major way. And he didn't want that—it had gotten bad enough already. He didn't want to see Mister Bad Daddy again, or the Guy with the Red Wet Face, or the one he always called Throw Worm. He'd take a pass on *all* that shit. And especially on seeing *her* again—he super didn't want that.

All that beer he'd been drinking, through the long hours of the game—he stepped over to the urinal, pulling down the tag on his fly.

The white porcelain glistened, a baroque pearl, his own reflection glimpsed faintly on the luminous surface. And the chrome bits, the pipe and handle on top, the drain cover like a vented coin—he wanted to lay his forehead against the cold metal, and weep for their beauty.

A knot of anger tightened in his chest when he saw that somebody had run an X of masking tape across the urinal, with an OUT OF ORDER sign at its center. Those bastards.

He stood in front of the toilet bowl, tugging the zipper the rest of

the way down, reaching inside. The capsule had started to grow slick on the tip of his tongue, the blue-and-yellow skin dissolving in his spit. He'd have to swallow it soon or taste the bitter powder as it leaked out.

Head tilted back, he opened his mouth, letting the capsule ride out into the air on the tip of his tongue. Then, suddenly, it wasn't there. The cap was gone, the tiny weight vanished, mystifying him until he heard a bell-like sound, the plink of the tiny object hitting the water.

Shit — He looked down in dismay and saw it, underneath the ripples spreading in rings across the bowl's surface. The cap was still drifting, blue end up, then the yellow, falling through the water. Frozen, he watched, until it came to rest on the porcelain's inner curve.

The cap hung on the lip of the dark, smooth-edged hole; the soft currents of the toilet bowl rocked it back and forth, teetering.

A shiver of apprehension crossed his shoulders as he knelt on the floor and reached in. The chill liquid soaked through his sleeve, wetting him to the elbow as he groped—cautiously—for the capsule.

His fingertips grazed the cap; it scooted out of his grasp, falling farther into the bowl's secret recesses.

Heartsick and afraid, he lowered the side of his face onto the bowl's rim. *I'm sorry*, he whispered inside his head—he had played the game too long, had stretched it past the breaking point, and now he didn't want to play any more. All he wanted now was to get the cap, bring it up out of the depths, rinse it off in the sink, swallow it and get out of here. To someplace—that other place—where he'd be safe.

The rim came up under his arm as he reached farther in. The porcelain had turned soft, swelling in time to his own breath. But still cold, and white, like long-dead flesh. He could feel the moist gullet at the bottom spread apart, accepting his hand, squeezing back down along his wrist.

Dancing in the blind water, the capsule eluded him, teasing him to reach even farther. With his other hand, he braced himself against the tank above the bowl. The water came all the way up to his armpit now. He could hear its murmur and sigh close to his ear.

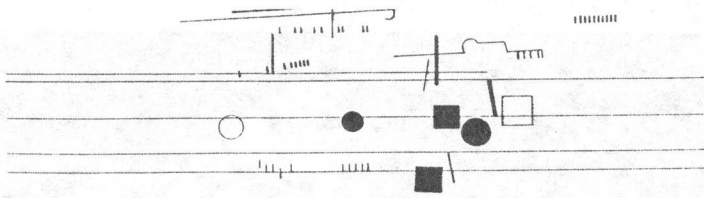
The capsule had to be just an inch away—a faint electric spark from its surface to his outstretched fingertips. Was it dissolving, leaking away the medicine inside? He wept, biting his lip, as his arm strained to its limit.

Miles away, right behind him, he heard scraping and flutterings at the restroom door. Something was trying to get in, to get at him—they knew he was helpless now. His other hand scraped its nails along the sweating tank. He didn't want to be found like this, to die this way.

The bowl's rim changed shape underneath his ribs, collapsing from a nearly-round oval to a tapered ellipse. Then further, to a long, smooth-edged slit, the edges touching his arm. The slit narrowed, the porcelain lips squeezing into his biceps. Below, where he could no longer see his forearm, the water had warmed and thickened, sealing itself tight to his skin.

Come on, you bastard — He moaned, sweat oozing over his face, fingers straining forward in the pipe under the floor. A fingernail grazed the melting skin of the capsule.

Behind him, the things outside the door were battering at it now, their claws scraping and clashing, the beaks and wild staring eyes frenzied beyond control.



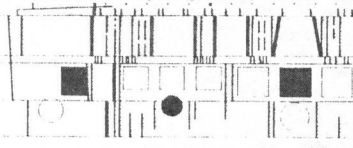
The pipe softened and closed around his arm, up to his elbow, closing and releasing a fraction of an inch, with a surging rhythmic contraction. He could feel the veined surface, blood trembling behind this membrane walls, the warmth growing to heat as the contractions sped up in time to his own pulse.

The restroom door started to splinter from the impact of the blows.

You fucker, you sonuvabitch — He wept, anger rolling up from his heart. The contractions shivered into his spine, a snake tightening and burning, blinding him.

He caught hold of something, his hand squeezing into a fist, the knuckles sliding against the soft walls. Not the capsule, but something bigger, that yielded as he hardened his grip. Its center pulsed, then exploded, down in the darkness hidden to him.

The same black explosion blossomed in his chest, snapping his ribs apart. Even as the door fell and the terrible faces rushed upon him, he fell into the darkness, knowing that he'd cheated them, and had been cheated himself, of everything.



He came to as they were loading him into the ambulance. The bad things had gone back into their hiding places—he couldn't see them anymore, for which he was grateful. Maybe they had given him a shot of something, one of the major tranquilizers, which worked even faster and better than the capsules did.

A paramedic, with a coffee-colored, smiling face leaned over him. "Don't worry—you've just had yourself a little cardiac arrest. That's all. We're gonna take you someplace where they'll take good care of you."

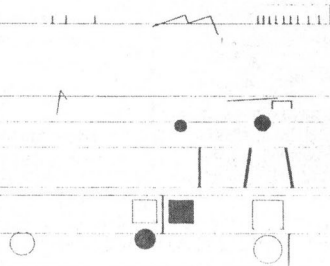
The gurney's straps bound his arms close to his sides, but he didn't mind. It was nice to be an object again, in the care of others. Let *them* make all the decisions. He closed his eyes, enjoying the flying sensation as they lifted the gurney up. Somebody climbed in after him and pulled the doors closed.

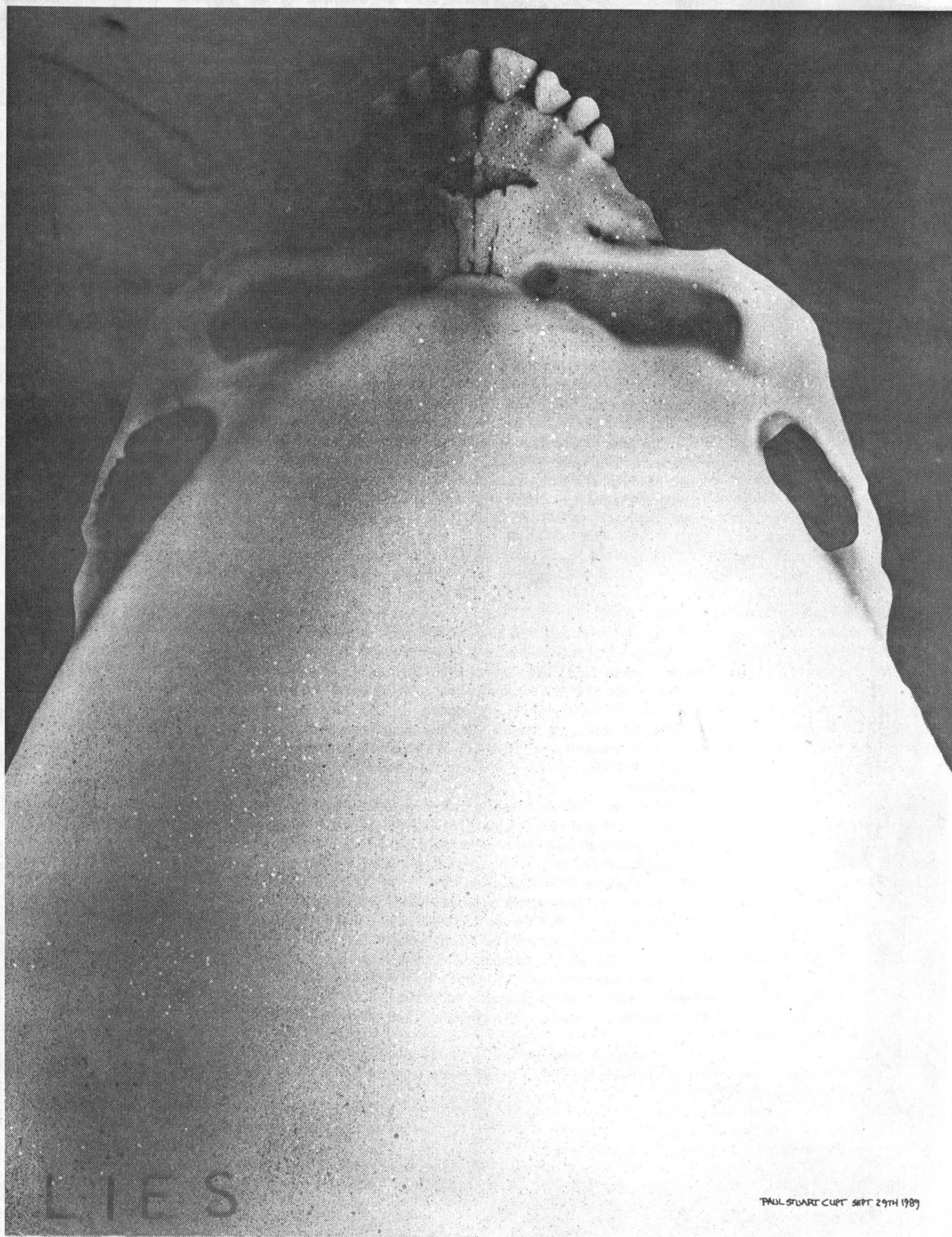
He opened his eyes, looking around at the intricate fixtures. Asphalt rolled beneath the wheels; he could hear it. Behind the chrome and black rubber bits, everything was as white as the restroom's porcelain, the last thing he remembered from before.

His heart crawled under his throat. He was all the way inside now, he realized. Not just his arm. All of him.

The nurse turned around and looked at him with his ex-wife's face.

She smiled and already he felt the warm, soft walls closing in on him, wrapping him in their fierce, endless embrace.





JOY

B Y M I C K G A R R I S

THE WINDOW-SHAPED BOX OF HONEYED sunlight crept its way up the body, incrementally traversed the length of the bed with a warming caress and met his smile with a kiss. Wrapped in the innocence of sleep, smoky tendrils of dreams taking leave for the day, Jon seemed every inch the peaceful, content buddha in a blanket.

As the earthly world beckoned him from dreamland, gently nudging him awake, the beatific smile only broadened. A new day opened its arms and folded him into a loving embrace, and his face shone more brightly than the new sun that woke him. Shrugging off the cowl of sleep, he breathed deeply of the morning, sucking huge draughts of the world inside. He was the happiest man in the world.

That Jon woke and lived with such joy was not so surprising; that others didn't perplexed him. The complexity of his very being so overwhelmed him and filled him with an awe and respect for the creator that his life was lived in His honor.

He cast off the bedclothes and stood naked at the window. The city below had already yawned and rubbed the sleep from its eyes, and was abuzz with people: in cars, in buses, in shoes, in hats, in love.

It all worked so well! People needed air to breathe, and air was there! It rained the water we needed to drink; plants and animals were in plentiful supply for food. How could anyone not live in gratitude of God's wondrous plan? He gave us wisdom, knowledge, the ability to fend for ourselves. If the weather turned inclement, he gave us animals to skin, stones to build with, hands to fashion, and minds to create the mortar.

The city was a monument to His gifts. Jon reached out of the window to touch life, felt it touch him back and shivered with the

thrill. He watched nature and technology (which was, itself, borne of man's mind, which in turn was borne of nature, and therefore natural) shake hands under a grey-orange shawl that turned to an icy blue, scudded with cotton candy. He saw the street below, and craned his neck to see the towers of the skyscrapers that were built to raise the level of the earth to meet Him.

It made him smile. Life made him smile. He was filled with joy.

He became aware of the life around him: first, of course, the teeming masses on the streets and behind the windows around him. Then the pets, the dogs, cats and gerbils. The moths in his closet, the ants in the pantry that had no right to his Lucky Charms. They were obvious and evident. But he was aware, too, of the invisible life around him: the microbes, the germs, the little one-celled beasts that he was no doubt breathing in and out of his own body now. He was happy to host them, celebrated their house party inside him. It tickled, made him laugh.

Just standing naked as a newborn in the eye of God, a bright light to the moths of life, sent an electrical charge through his body that prickled his skin in gooseflesh, and shrank his scrotum so tight that his testicles grunted in protest. He knew he could be seen by anyone who chose to peer beyond the eighth floor window, and the thought renewed the delightful shiver. There was nothing dirty about the vessels we'd been given; they were beautiful adorned or unadorned. And besides, his penis was mostly hidden by his girth.

The thought of his penis made him aware of his suddenly overwhelming need to urinate. As he relieved himself in the superhero peanut butter jar, he marveled anew at the human mechanism. We eat, we drink, our systems process it, and reject what we don't need. The miracle of elimination, experienced on such

regular occasions, gave him so many opportunities to thank the creator for the blessed life he lived.

He filled the jar with hot, gold tears, and walked it over to the window and poured it onto the thriving marigolds, making steam in the morning coolness. "This is for you," Jon said to heaven, "with all of my love."

Suddenly stroked by the brisk morning's fingers, Jon slipped into loose-fitting clothing and out of his tight-fitting room.

**"EVEN THOUGH HE COULDN'T
HEAR THEM, HE KNEW
PEOPLE WHISPERED ABOUT
HIM BEHIND HIS BACK. EVEN
THAT MADE HIM SMILE.**

The Child of God walked among the people, and they were oblivious to his love. But Jon didn't need to speak his love to them; it radiated from his every pore. He was but a cell in the massive creature that inhabited the earth. He was part of the machine He'd created in His image; and so were the others. Where was their joy? How could their every thought, their every waking moment not be dedicated to the euphoric appreciation of His bond, His will... His glory?

It lay all about them as it did about him. Everywhere one looked—even with closed eyes—He was present. His magical, wonderful plan ubiquitous and evident. He could hardly keep from laughing out loud with the joy.

But Them...

They were joyless, empty husks, littering the planet with their worthlessness. He was immediately sorry for the thought that anything He created was worthless, and he didn't really mean that. It's just that they should be more grateful. That's all. He felt guilty.

He was surrounded by them, a cherub bobbing in a sea of expressionless faces. When they did flash expression, it was invariably anger, hate, viciousness. Faces on fire with resentment barked and howled and spat at one another, and he knew when night fell it would only be worse. Under the blanket of darkness, they scurried off into secret places, groping, tasting, using, and fighting one another, rending the night with flashes of gunfire, the glint of knives, a river of life flowing into the soil at their feet. And He let them do it. He gave them the choices, but They had to make them.

And so Jon walked among Them, loving Them through their hatred, giving Them his life. But all they gave him were their backs. The little round man in the ill-fitting clothes might well have been the Invisible Man for all the notice he was given. He knew he wasn't the sort of man who solicited looks, but he looked at them, marveling at their magnificence and variety. They were an endless array of artful flesh sculpture, and they didn't seem to even know it. And he... well,

he wasn't handsome, really, but he was pleasant enough. And certainly they could feel the joy he generated. Perhaps it was the scars that made them—not really look *away*, since they never looked in the first place. They weren't disfiguring; they were barely noticeable pale lines etched on his face and body.

But even though he moved through Them like an unwelcome virus, he knew they shared the planet, the organism, and he was, as ever, at peace. His face, despite the white lines, was innocent, ageless, rosy, and devoid of the crevices left by a life lived. He could be in his twenties or his fifties; it was hard to tell. But he was thirty-nine.

But even though his innocent sweetness and love were ignored, they would continue to be broadcast. He was in love with them all, these walking, talking, hearing parts of God's body. He wanted to crush them in his embrace, smother them with the love and passion he felt for them, feel flesh against flesh in an act of global communion, feeling the blood of life rushing through their bodies together.

But all he could do was watch them.

Even though he couldn't hear them, he knew people whispered about him behind his back. Even that made him smile. *Everyone* else had the mechanism that allowed hearing; it was ordinary, everyday, average. But Jon was special; he had been chosen to possess twisted clots of solid flesh in place of the cochlea. He didn't have to hear all of the uglinesses multiplying around him. Words could never hurt him. They could say what they pleased, but they could not steer him from living his life for the One Who Counted. He'd never hear them fire their hateful guns, their lovers' quarrels, their corruption of their limitless gifts.

No, it was chosen that he should not hear. His head was wrapped in celestial, blissful cotton, and even a nuclear blast would go unnoticed. When he spoke—which was rare—his deaf-man babytalk earned him special treatment; speaking made people overplay their acts of kindness. He would ask the lady in the convenience store for an Annabelle's Rocky Road, and she would puff and coo with a big, waxy red smile about how they were the best. And sometimes he didn't have to pay for it. He knew people thought he was stupid because he was deaf, but he wasn't. He knew the truth, and that made him smarter than all the others. And he got to be deaf.

Jon walked the same way every day, up and down the city streets by rote. His route was automatic, mindless, unchanging, yet no one ever noticed him, despite the twenty-some years of regularity.

His first stop was always the schoolyard. The joyful innocence of children brought him the closest to God. Their newness and freshness and incompleteness gave him hope and filled him with passion. Winter was best, because when they played foursquare, or tetherball, or hopscotch, or dodgeball, the sight of their breath in the chill air coming out of their little bodies delighted him. Seeing the blood rise to crimson their cheeks thrilled him.

Though he couldn't hear their exuberant cries as he clutched the chain links of the fence, he could feel their energy, their youth, their Life. He wanted to play, too.

But he just watched.

To Jon, watching was participating. He was with them on the broken blacktop, skinning his knees and flushing cherry bombs down the toilets. His joyous reverie had its own peculiar deaf man's music, swelling his head with its cadences. His heart pounded a march that he shared with them, and gave him hunger.

But his heartbeat fluttered when he saw the New Girl. He thought it was Angela at first, but even he knew that wasn't possible. If Angela were still alive, she would be nearly his size now. But she was with Him, now, and had been for nearly three decades. Of course, He could have given her back to him, but Jon knew He didn't work that way. Besides, the New Girl's eyes were brown.

Angela's ice water eyes were the first thing anyone noticed about her. They had a depth and serenity that belied her five years; he could see Heaven in her eyes. Two years her senior, he'd been in love with his sister since her birth, teaching her the Piggy game when she was a baby, helping Daddy give her a bath, teaching her to walk, and sharing a room with her.

He saw Angela in the New Girl, and the House came back for the first time in years. The little house with Daddy's room, Jonny and Angela's room, the kitchen, and best of all, the concrete patio with the cardboard Pictsweet Train on the other side of the sliding glass door.

He had just finished painting her name on the engine when he used his Jerry Mahoney dummy to call her to see. She never hesitated; from the bathroom, her bright-eyed grin leading the way, she ran to her special big brother...

And through the sliding glass door.

It was a spectacular crash, and he didn't even take cover as it rained shards of glass, which shattered into smaller prismatic crystals as it hit the concrete, showering her in rainbows of colored light as she stood before him in shock. He was motionless, uncomprehending on the patio, staring pool-eyed and questioning at him, as an atlas of crimson highways slowly appeared across her face.

He watched her ice water eyes go crimson as she spilled red lava tears down her face. She wilted before him into a pool of her own blood, slowly taking leave of Jon's world. She got to be with Him, and Jon didn't.

And though he couldn't hear it, knew the bell had rung, because when he returned from the pool of Angela, the playground was empty, and the New Girl was gone. And so he continued to walk.

His hand brushed his face, and he could feel a few random, spiky whiskers reaching from his skin. There weren't many, and he never considered shaving them—that would be an affront to the Creator—and he wanted to see them. He had never cut his hair since his parents died. He'd never had the need; it had all fallen out the day of the accident. Even his brows and eyelashes. His body was as hairless as a newborn's. But just in the past couple of weeks, there was the trace of a beard.

He wandered into the subterranean public restroom, breathing deep of the natural scent that couldn't be hidden with deoderizers and perfume. He liked that. He didn't like chemicals.

As a wino knelt in confession in front of a porcelain altar, Jon stood in front of the mirror, his image shivering in the flickering neon light. He could see his beard, and counted twenty-seven hairs—not just dark pores, but actual hairs—on his face.

The neon light made the tiny white scars on his face stand out, and he raised his pudgy fingers to trace them. They were artfully random, almost like the decorations carved into the faces of African tribesmen. He liked to feel them, and his sensitive fingers caressed the slightly raised lines with love and devotion.

He ran his long thumbnail across the numb lines, and found a new space under his eyebrows. Hooking the nail under the hairless

brow, he cut into his flesh, and drew the nail across the brow beneath the skin like opening a letter. He repeated the cut under his other brow, and his eyes were wash with his blood. He leaned over the sink and let it dribble down the drain, where it would eventually meet his Maker.

"I love you," Jon told God as he gave him his blood.

Then he cleaned up, blotting the new wounds with toilet paper, and heading back into the sunlight.

Back on earth, Jon imagined the sounds of the birds and the trucks' air horns, and the chattering of mankind, invented sounds for them in his mind as he melded with the world. He could grant them any sound, and chose colors for them. The old woman was surely talking a blue streak. And the silent squawk of the crow that sat and shat in the tree overhead: almost certainly purple. The blast of the Mack truck that almost crushed the bicycle had to be red. Deep, dark, blood red. Crimson.

He never chose a path. Every day Jon let himself into the world, and let its tide drift him where it would. Today, its pattern was as random as any. It took him to school, to the park, and eventually to church.

He stopped in front of the church. It made him laugh. He watched the old ladies scurrying in and out of the mouth of man's massive testament to himself. They struck him as germs being breathed by the church. They built these monstrous gargoyles of guilt so they could celebrate their lives with He Who Granted Them Life for—what?—maybe an hour a week? Jon just could not understand their selfishness. Who needed to build a temple when there was no escaping its edifice? To merely be alive was to be worshipping at God's feet. These rationalizers, excuse makers, mere *men* with their Holy Bible and their curliqued architecture were beside the point. It was so *obvious!*

The Invisible Man grew corporeal, unable to keep from chuckling at the folly of mankind. And faces turned to look at him as they skittered past, self-consciously racing into the church, eyes pink with tears, rheumy with age and regret, clouded by cataracts. They hoped He'd rescind. They wanted to give back their gifts.

He watched a young mother and her infant skittishly approach the church, and he stopped smiling. The baby magnetized him with the perfection and innocence that came with the new child warranty. Their eyes connected, and Mommy turned to see what made her baby stare so.

Jon was not used to having attention paid to him when he was watching others. His mouth hung slack and dumb as he saw the baby's tomato face brighten and balloon into a toothless grin. Mom flushed with a proud smile at him, but he didn't see it. He and the baby both had expressions that climaxed with saliva drooling from the shiny lower lip.

The baby laughed, gleefully acknowledging another unformed, unstructured, incomplete flesh sculpture, and the wide baby's mouth made Jon gasp in horror. He never expected to see teeth in the infant's mouth, but he *did* expect a roof. Inside, where you would expect soft, pink membranes hard at work to become skin, there was a gaping black cavern. If the child had had no chin, he could koochie-koo her all the way through her cleft palate to her soft little brain.

Though she was at least fifty feet away, Jon's hands reached instinctively up, as if to caress this special, chosen child. Mother reared like a skittish pony, and whisked her daughter into the church. After reeling in the sunshine for what must have only been a minute, but felt like a good chapter of his life, Jon walked with lumpen disorder into a church for the first time.

M I C K G A R R I S

It was a little different from what he had expected. Not nearly so grand or ethereal. It was scuffed and a little grimy; more earthly and real than he had anticipated, with the patina of life all about him. But he was taken aback by the vertiginous height of the ceiling overhead. The sun draped him with images of stained-glass angels; Jesus Christ himself, bleeding from his crown of thorns, lay across his back. Unaware of the whispered prayers that drifted smokily through the church, Jon wandered up and down the pews, eyes to heaven, forgetting for a moment what brought him in.

It was a grotesque manse, founded on fear and obedience, delighting in meting out violent punishment for breaking the sacrament. This was no palace of love and devotion. His God did not live here.

He glanced around at the frightened little mice who lit their candles. This was the home of their last hope, not their first. With his heightened sense of smell, Jon breathed the stench of death, of decay, of hopelessness. It was a joyless building. He didn't want to be here.

But then he saw the Baby again. It had been watching him since his entry, and he had not even been aware, despite the sixth sense that had linked them.

Mommy was kneeling, lighting a candle, and didn't notice the silent communication going on. Jon stared at the child with wide, loving, possessive eyes. He needed to own it, to get closer to God. It was so new and perfectly imperfect, so chosen, as he was. They belonged together.

He made a decision. His eyes never breaking from the child's, he dashed up the aisle, thinking quietly but unaware that his lumbering footfalls echoed mushily through the stone walls. The Mother turned just in time to see Jon's ox-like visage loom up in front of her as he took the googling child in his ham fists. Frozen in senseless un-understanding, her mind finally told her what was happening, and she screamed as she ran after him.

Jon had never run before, and was not good at it. The fear of this house of a wrathful God washing over him, he felt the child's mother on his back, ripping at his face and eyes with her fingernails. Like a frightened bull, he kicked at her behind him, throwing her onto the pews, not hearing the resounding snap of her spine as it ripped apart.

Her screams of agony and despair filled the church, and the baby in his arms filled Jon's heart as he raced it outside.

As all things come to he who waits, the curtain of night fell over the city. Jon stepped out of the shadows and into the moonlit park, still cradling the baby in his arms. He loved his child, tickled it under the chin, and the babe chuckled with glee, and drooled on his finger. Jon stuck the wet finger in his mouth, savoring the newness.

He sat on the earth under a huge tree, the baby in his lap, and rocked back and forth, basking in the moonlight. From the center of the park, the lights of the city seemed a million miles away. They were surrounded by trees and brush and clean, black air.

As they smiled at one another, Jon could feel the beating of the child's tiny heart. He unbuttoned his shirt, just to feel this living thing against his skin. It was so warm, so alive, so foreign. Where hairless flesh touched flesh, there was a sheen of sweat. He slid the baby across his stomach, like running a pat of butter over a hot skillet.

As he held the child against him, it tried to suckle his sizable breast. He let it.

Jon looked from the baby's face to the face of the moon. To him, they were the same. They both reflected God; they were both His handiwork. The Child was the seed, and Jon knew he must plant the seed.

He removed a shoe, and dug through the new dew into the soft soil at the base of the tree. He would plant the seed, and give it nourishment, and in its place would grow a tree. He would tend God's tree, and it would reach high up into heaven, and finally up to God himself. And Jon would climb that tree, and sit at God's feet with Angela, and give him all his love.

Sweat began to drip from his hairless brow as he continued to dig, the child now asleep in his lap. The hole for the seed grew as the sole came off his shoe. But it was big enough. Jon lay the child in the dirt, and as he began to fill the hole over with dirt, the baby—for the first time—began to cry.

He patted the soil into place, muffling the cries that he couldn't hear anyway, lovingly planting his gift to God. Removing his clothing to stand naked over his gift in the moonlight, he could not hear the voices shouting at him.

But they were only words—only *men's* words—and it wouldn't have mattered to him. He didn't hear the frantic warnings through the bullhorn. He didn't even turn when the policeman fired a warning shot over his head. He was too busy offering his Gift to acknowledge mere mankind.

So the bullets took him by surprise. He felt the fist of God rip through his heart, and saw the geyser of blood explode from his chest and rain down on the newly planted soil. He felt one useless ear ripped from the side of his head; he saw a hand gelatinized, and was glad God had chosen to take it.

He smiled as he collapsed to the earth, blood dumping from the cavity where his heart used to be, propelled by its ghost rhythm. He saw his life spill onto the soil, and watched capillary attraction draw it down to fertilize the mewling, muffled seed that lay crying underneath.

As the Blue Men rushed to his monument to unearth the baby, Jon never even saw them. As his vision went dark, his spirit went bright; moonlight glinted off his toothy grin as his corporeal body emptied itself of life at the base of the tree. Before being completely enveloped in night's cowl, the Jon in his head climbed hand-over-hand up its branches, to sit with Angela at the feet of their creator.

But he never got there. There was no there to get. And somebody turned off the moon.

Mick Garris is better-known for his screen-writing and directing, than for his short stories, which have appeared in Hot Blood and other anthologies. He is currently slated to direct a segment of HBO's Tales From The Crypt and is the co-writer of Red Sleep for director John Landis.

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RYAN

THEY will never understand. THEY will see my actions from the outside; sitting in their breakfast nooks, yawning over their newspapers, wrapped in floral pink housecoats, fake dead animals on their feet and frozen orange juice cans wrapped in their tinted hair. Stupid cows.

THEY dare to judge me—me!—the savior of their petty, useless, pitiful lives!—and revile me as a monster! Just like THEY did Hitler, Manson, Torquemada and King Herod! THEY will pass judgement on me and dismiss me from their memories by the time THEY reach the funny papers. But I will not strike them down for that. I am a merciful god. I will not reach out and swat them like the flies they are. I shall bear my cross as my elder brother did before me. No one understood his actions, either.

I will bide my time until I decide it is right. Then I will shed my mortal guise as a lizard does its skin and stand revealed, horrible in my wrath. My face will split, the glory of my divine beauty bursting forth and their eyes will melt in their sockets. No handcuffs will hold me. I will have too many hands. No jail will contain me. I will be bigger than the Sears Tower. THEY will scream and point at me, covering like extras in a Godzilla film. I will crush a hundred with each step. I will drown whole suburbs in a scalding baptism of piss. When I walk the world will tremble and all living things will bow down before me and sing my praises or I will destroy them with a single glance. But not yet. Not yet.

I will wait and play their games. I will look at their inkblots and talk about my mother. It will do them no good. My motives are beyond their understanding. THEY will find long Latin words to describe what their hobbled minds perceive as the method of my “madness.” I will not lie. I will not deceive them, although it would be pathetically easy to do so. I will tell them the Truth. THEY will hear my words but their brains will not comprehend what I say. THEY have been programmed from birth to believe what the International Jewish Conspiracy wants them to. THEY see the Truth every day and their Conspiracy-conditioned logic circuits edit out all reference to “forbidden knowledge.”

When I finally elect to reveal myself to the masses, the scales will drop from their eyes and the synaptic blockades will collapse and centuries of Truth will flood their grey matter. THEY will realize that THEY were played for dupes, sold into slavery by the filthy, scheming Jews who killed my brother and tried to divert the wrath of

the righteous by spreading the Lie that he was born of a Jewess. THEY took all the evidence that he was an Aryan, born of a White mother, and sealed it in the Ark of the Covenant along with the *real* Ten Commandments; the ones that say *None Shall Suffer A Jew To Live* and that fornication between the races is an Abomination in the eyes of the Lord. The Truth shall set them *free!* I will set them free! And the gutters shall run with the blood of the money-lenders and the sky will once more grow black with their ashes!

I'm getting ahead of myself. How is it that I, the Second Coming, the Messiah Reborn, is in prison, watched by cold-eyed Jews in white coats? I was protecting myself from the Anti-Christ, that's all.

I wasn't born aware of my godhood. Now that I look back on my early years, the signs were everywhere for my childish eyes to see. But I was still to young to grasp their implications. I did not understand how impossible it was for two squat, swarthy trolls to produce a tall, fair-skinned boy. I never felt comfortable with my “parents,” and when my “father” took to beating me, I realized I wasn't their natural son. I was adopted. I first became suspicious when THEY destroyed my collection of World War Two comics, claiming THEY were saving me from brainrot. The cow that claimed to be my “mother” said I was morbid. That I had unhealthy interests. When THEY found the cache of clippings about the so-called Nazi “War Crimes” I'd culled from various men's magazines, the man who called himself my “father” beat me until I bled.

While I was unconscious I had a vision. It revealed to me the exact nature of my conception and birth. My mother was a beautiful, Aryan virgin with long blonde hair and blue eyes. My father was God. But not the fierce, storm-eyed God of the Old Testament. He was far older and much weaker now. The Jews and their master, Satan, have made great progress since the Second World War, wringing sympathy from bleeding-heart dupes of the Conspiracy by convincing the world that six million Jews were exterminated in the camps. God is now a senile old deity who drools in His beard. He is disgusting to watch and really quite pathetic. The first thing I will do after revealing myself to the multitudes is depose the old fool. I will banish Him to a suitable limbo. I won't kill Him, like Jupiter did Saturn, although that would be the prudent thing to do. But, after all, He *is* my father.

Anyway, my Divine Father had become forgetful and after I was born I was stolen from my real mother by Jews, who placed me

N A N C Y A.

T

amongst their own to raise, hoping I would remain ignorant of my birthright. Ultimately, THEY failed and I came to manhood aware that I was the Second Coming foretold in the Book of Revelations.

My older brother made the mistake of trying for the hearts and minds of the cows by becoming mortal. He told the parables, performed low-key, tasteful miracles and ended up nailed to a stick for his troubles. I know better than to follow in his stigmatized footsteps. Benevolence, humanitarianism and tolerance are the tools of the Conspiracy. THEY mollycoddle the cows into believing that the Lord doesn't mind what you do as long as you keep it to yourself. When I ascend to my rightful inheritance, I will be a god washed in blood and tempered by fire. The Righteous shall be spared while the Communist Jew Humanist Slut Whore Niggers erupt into flame, their skins crackling like bacon in the pan!

Soft words do not work. The only way to get a cow's attention is to goose it with a cattle prod. My brother tried it before me and failed. I shall not fail. My success is secured.

The Anti-Christ. I must tell you about the Anti-Christ!

The Jew bastards were upset when I saw through their mind-games. THEY were unprepared for the immensity of my intellect. THEY are crafty, I'll give them that. Seeing that I would one day ascend to my father's throne, THEY got to work creating their Anti-Christ.

I have known for years what THEY were planning, but I was uncertain as to where to begin my search. The Holy Land? Hyperborea? Des Moines? The possibilities were endless. I used my x-ray vision, scanning the bellies of all the pregnant women on the street. I knew that their Anti-Virgin would be a Jewess, but THEY might use cosmetic surgery on her nose and bleach her hair to throw me off the track. As much as it disgusted me, I stared into the pelvic cradles of thousands of lumbering, milk-laden cows, seeking my ancient enemy. I knew my future would be in doubt for as long as the Anti-Christ lived. It took me three years, but at last I found the Beast!

I was at a McDonalds, toying with the idea of turning my strawberry shake into wine, when a grossly pregnant woman waddled past with a Filet-A-Fish and a large order of fries. She wore a bright pink sweatshirt and matching running pants. Across her bloated belly was printed BABY. An arrow stabbed her uterus.

Out of habit, I turned on my x-ray vision and followed the arrow, peering into the red darkness of her womb. There, curled in



C O L L I N S

its cage of bone and flesh like a hibernating toad, was my adversary. The Beast. The Anti-Christ. The Son of Satan. The King of the Jews.

Its head was bulbous, the flesh a sickly white. It had no nose, only fleshless slits set under two sunken jaundiced eyes. Its mouth was lipless and full of tiny, needle-sharp teeth. The mouth of a moray eel. And it was grinning at me! I could make out the fabled "666," the Mark of the Beast, traced in fire on the corpse-pale expanse of its bulging forehead. Its body was folded under the malformed head like a Japanese lantern. The arms were long, like those of an ape, and its tiny hands were complete with yellowed talons. Its legs were the crooked, hairy shanks of an infant goat. I was revolted by the glimpse of unnaturally large genitals. I noticed the Abomination sported an erection. I nearly gagged on my strawberry shake.

I knew the unholy fetus was aware that I had recognized it. And it was laughing at me from within the Anti-Virgin's unhallowed womb. I felt hate and fear boil inside me and the voices of the Archangels—broadcast from their secret staging base within the Hollow Earth—raged in my head. By the time Satan's whore finished her meal I had decided on my course of action.

I followed her home.

She lived in one of those bland, pasteurized suburban mushroom colonies the Conspiracy-controlled lies of the television and radio have conditioned the cows to want. Let them numb their minds with useless consumer goods. Let the cows sate themselves with split-level ranches, wall-to-wall shag, microwaves, jacuzzis, food processors and remote-control VCRs! THEY have pulled the wool over their own eyes, blinding themselves with animal comfort, ignoring the signs traced in fire and ice, semen and blood that I Have Come and their time is at hand!

I wandered the neighborhood, making sure I would be able to locate the Anti-Manger after dark. I had little doubt that the Anti-Christ Child's aura would be a beacon, even without my infra-red vision. But it doesn't hurt to make sure. All those clapboard hellholes look alike, especially at night. Just like the soul-less cows who live in them.

I had a couple of bad minutes waiting for the bus to take me back to the city. I was certain the Men In Black, the Conspiracy's elite secret police, were watching me. I have never been able to really see them. THEY manifest themselves as the dark flickerings at the corners of my eyes. Just when I turn my head to try and get a better look at them—they're gone. I pretended not to notice them and began reciting the Lord's Prayer under my breath. THEY hate that and usually don't hang around to hear me finish.

I rode home on the bus, contemplating my next move. I hate city buses. Hate the smelly old crones in their faded shifts, hairy warts sprouting from their chins. Hat their flaccid lips, their liver-spotted talons wrapped around the handles of ancient shopping bags overflowing with meaningless Conspiracy-approved junk. Just like their huge, overinflated bosoms.

I hate the niggers, especially the slut drug addict mothers with their gaggle of pikaninny bastards, who go out to the malls and let their little Tyrones and LaTonys run wild, just like fucking animals. Bad enough THEY chased the Whites out of the city, now they're spilling into the suburbs. Dragging everything down to their level.

I hate the giggling, pimply-faced little teenaged girls who ride the bus because their Daddys won't let them drive the 280Z. THEY sit in clumps like heifers, giggling at me when THEY think I'm not looking because of my hair, my clothes, my complexion, the tape on my glasses. I try to ignore them, shut out the smell of their Baby Soft body perfume, the sound of their caged-bird twittering, the sight of their pert young breasts straining against their blouses, their rounded buttocks sheathed in skin-tight designer jeans. I know that soon—oh so very soon—I shall stand Revealed and all the high school princesses and prick teasers in the world will be mine. THEY will flock to me, fighting like cats in heat for the privilege of tasting my sperm. Even though my mighty penis shall disembowel them like pigs in a slaughterhouse, still they will writhe and yowl in delight and beg for more!

I felt safe at home. I knew the Men In Black could not see me once I entered my room. I disappeared from their demonic radar as soon as I set foot inside the door. That was because I papered the walls of my room with pages torn from the Bible. But not *all* the Bible. The Old Testament is useless trash, nothing more than Jew propaganda. The New Testament has been tampered with and is untrustworthy. No, I papered my apartment with pages torn from a hundred Bibles; King James, New King James, Revised Standard, St. Joseph's Edition, The Good News For Modern Man...Pages torn from the Book of Revelations.

I prayed for two hours, scourging myself with the cord from a steamiron whenever visions of designer jeans intruded on my devotions. My earlier anxiety had passed, leaving a confidence that glowed like a hot coal. My Father was with me. I had nothing to fear. I felt the mantle of my power crackling about my shoulders and sparking from my fingertips. I was eager to go forth and slay my enemy. Still, it could prove fatal to be overconfident. I was going up against Satan, the Anti-Christ and the International Jewish Conspiracy, not a gang of lunchroom toughs.

It was dark when I left. I caught the last bus out to the suburbs. It was empty, for once. I was pleased. I did not need any further distractions from my holy mission.

I found the neighborhood easily enough. I needn't have worried. The Anti-Christ's aura spilled from the windows, an infernal lamplight the color of a ripe bruise. I hunkered in the shrubbery, watching the sickly purple-black glow flit from room to room. It would be a long wait, but I couldn't leave even if I wanted to. I was caught up in the machinery of Destiny. I had taken the first step toward godhead and there was no turning back.

The bruise-light finally moved into what my x-ray vision revealed to be the bedroom. I followed the side of the house, keeping in shadow. I found the window I was looking for. I polarized my magnetic field, the energy leaping from my fingertips in a shower of emerald sparks, and the window latch sprang open silently.

I started creepy-crawling back in high school. I enjoyed walking through houses while the owners were away, looking through their private lives. Secrets were laid bare to my all-seeing eyes. The gin bottles hidden in the Greers' planter. The bundle of magazines featuring nude boys squirreled away in Reverend Sanderson's study. The diverse collection of sex toys in Widow Maynard's dresser. It was like being God. I saw it as a form of on-the-job training. Then, during my senior year, I began creepy-crawling while the owners were home, asleep in their beds of sin.

I eased up the window, levering myself over the sill and slithering into the house on my belly and elbows. Creepy-crawl. Wall-to-wall shag brushed my stomach. Creepy-crawl.

Energy coursed through me. I felt it building up in the pit of my stomach and radiating throughout my body. When I exhaled a fine mist of golden light escaped from my nostrils. My hair stood on end, sparks snapping from every follicle. As my fingers closed on the doorknob, tiny lightning bolts the color of blood shot from my palm. My skin felt impossibly tight, as if barely able to contain my divinity. The bruise-light oozed from under the doorframe and washed my face in its unholy glow as I opened the door.

I saw the king-size bed and the two figures curled within the covers. I had not expected a husband. For a heartbeat I was confronted by my own doubt, tempted by Satan to entertain the possibility I had made a mistake. The sickly, unwarming light pulled me back to Reality. I knew then how my older brother must have felt, standing on the mountaintop while the Father of Jews whispered in his ears. I was sweating and trembling like a man in the grip of malaria. I had to get it over with before my resolve weakened and I fled.

Ghosting along the edge of the mattress, I reached out and touched the bedside lamp. Heavenly choirs sang in my ears, urging me onward to my destiny. One hundred watts lit the bedroom and the dark blots that swam before my eyes had the wings of bats.

The Anti-Joseph started awake as if doused with water. His eyelids flew open, the eyeballs jerking about wildly in their sockets. He saw me standing next to the bed and the fear that radiated from him was the sweetest thing I have ever known. The Anti-Virgin mumbled something from inside her blankets and was still.

The Anti-Joseph gained his footing, his sleep-stupid face showing fright and anger. I stepped back, uncertain as to whether he was mortal or some form of incubus watchdog in charge of protecting the unborn Anti-Christ. The baldspot and junior executive's paunch hanging over the waistband of his underwear looked human enough, but you can't be too sure about these things.

He made a clumsy lunge for the nightstand, clawing at the drawer. The heavy blade of my machete bit through his wrist and tasted the wood underneath. The Anti-Joseph recoiled so fast it was like running a film backwards. His right hand remained on the nightstand.

He stood holding the stump of his wrist before his horrified eyes, his left hand clamped around the severed ganglia. The blood was redder than the heart of the sun. Each beat of his heart covered the eggshell white walls in ideograms proclaiming my divinity. Shock glazed his eyes and he collapsed onto the wall-to-wall shag. Satan had erred in his choice of a guardian for his heir apparent.

I kicked the body to make sure the Anti-Joseph wasn't feigning unconsciousness. He rolled onto his back, as slack as an oversized bag of suet. His skin was white, bordering on blue, and his eyelids fluttered in shock. The eyeballs, rolled back in their sockets, were bloodless. I tugged at the waistband of his shorts and pulled the soiled underwear down around his knees.

Even though he had not shown the strength and wiliness of an incubus, I couldn't take a chance. I'd seen those movies where the heroes turn their backs on supposedly "dead" vampires and werewolves.

The Anti-Joseph shuddered once when the machete sliced off his penis. Like all servants of the Lord of Hell, he was circumcised. I thrust my fingers between the dying Jew's blue lips and pried open his jaws. There was something close to sentience flickering in his eyes, but it fled when I stuffed the slippery wet redness of his sex into his mouth. He died with his own blood and semen pooling in his



lungs, all hopes of resurrection crushed.

The Anti-Virgin was sitting up in bed, flattened against the headboard. Her eyes were huge and mouth a wide, trembling "O." Her swollen belly was crisscrossed with pale blue veins. A roadmap to Hell. She stared at her false husband as he died on the floor. Her thin, tight screams were ultrasonic, the frantic shrieks of a bat. I wasn't fooled by her display. I knew who the *real* husband was. I knew who'd fathered the Beast inside her. In my mind's eye I saw her offering her loathsome, hairy sex to the Black Goat of the Wood. I saw his mammoth, foreskin-less member, engorged with venom. Whore. Whore of Babylon.



She scuttled off the bed as I moved for her, her eyes never leaving me. Her mouth moved spasmodically, but no sound came out. One hand was raised in a feeble attempt to blot me out of her world. She was crying, the tears streaming down her face. The tears of a witch. If I licked the tears from her face I would taste no salt. But I had no need for such crude witchfinding, I already knew *who* and *what* she was. She was working a spell, attempting to conjure forth her lover's minions. Had to work fast. Not much time. Had an erection. Her work. Devil's work. Had to stop her. Stop the Anti-Virgin.

My fist slammed into her mouth and I felt teeth shatter and abrade my knuckles. It was wet and red and warm. She fell, and I heard her cry out for the first and last time.

"My baby!"

I stood over her, staring at her pale face and blood-smeared mouth. Painted mouth. Whore of Babylon. Red laughing mouths. Designer jeans. Floral print housecoats. I saw the Anti-Christ struggling within his mother's pelvic cage, shrieking the foulest obscenities. His tongue was forked and covered with fur. The pale loop of the umbilical cord had become a hangman's noose, throttling the unborn demon as he clawed at the pink walls of his uterine prison. I began to laugh.

The machete had undergone a miraculous transformation. It was a burning sword. Not surprising, considering it was forged from a sliver of the original Sword of Righteousness my Father used to chase those ingrates from the Garden. It sent shockwaves of ice-cold heat up my arm and into my brain.

She screamed when I slit her open, totally ruining the moment. Her scream jarred against the bones of my inner ear like a dentist's drillbit, rattling my teeth in their moorings. Bitch. Cow. Purple-pink entrails unravelled onto the carpet like party streamers. The odor of bile was strong. The Anti-Virgin stared up at me, still alive and conscious. Even though she was beyond speaking, I knew she was asking "why." As if I had to justify my actions to the whore of the Prince of Lies! I was disappointed. It had been too easy. Satan's wife was just another cow, ignorant of the malignancy she carried in her womb.

In answer to her silent plea, I reached into her and pulled out my nemesis.

The thing I removed from the Anti-Virgin's belly was not what I had expected. Gone were the horns, the crooked shanks and pinioned wings. What I held in my hands did not look very human, but neither did it resemble the Abomination I had glimpsed earlier.

Tiny matchstick legs jerked in feeble protest and something inside its brittle ribcage shuddered. It was soft and squishy, like an octopus, with rubber bones and skin as translucent as ricepaper. The eyes bulged in the oversized head and opened wide enough for me to glimpse colorless irises and a dark-adapted pupil. I was overwhelmed by a desire to hurl the half-formed thing against the wall. I had been cheated.

The Host spoke unto me then, their crystalline voices melding into one. The Host told me I was being deceived. My faith was being tested to its utmost. To turn back now would extinguish all hope of achieving my divine inheritance. I had to prove that I was stronger than my rival. I had to take his dark power and make it mine.

I looked into the Anti-Virgin's dumb, uncomprehending eyes as she died. I knew that she would take what she saw to Hell. It made me feel better knowing that.

I was reminded of a poster I used to have as a kid, before my so-called "father" found it and tore it to shreds. It was called *Satan Devouring His Children*.

It was a lot like veal.

THEY tell me I was apprehended walking down the street, laughing and crying at the top of my lungs and that it took six policemen to subdue me. I really don't remember.

THEY've kept me in this damn straightjacket ever since I was arrested. THEY don't even take it off during mealtimes. A burly orderly—a flunky working for the Conspiracy—feeds me spaghetti with a plastic spoon.

When THEY aren't asking me questions, I'm left alone in a room without windows or furniture. It doesn't matter, since I can sleep on the heavy padding as easily as I could on a bed.

I have endured these indignities because I must marshal my energies for the Transfiguration. The time is near. Very near. I can feel my musculature restructuring under cover of the canvas. Soon I will burst my restraints like a butterfly its cocoon and the Archangels shall emerge from their secret staging bases deep inside the Hollow Earth and drive their flaming UFO chariots across the night sky.

Rebirth—like birth—is a painful process. I was not aware just how agonizing it would be. My teeth ache constantly, especially the canines. My eyes feel hot and dry and it's a struggle simply to blink. My spine feels like it's turning into a question mark. Sometimes I suffer immense, painful erections that threaten to tear the seams of my pants.

I have been visited by the Host on at least two occasions, its multitude of voices begging me to have patience and wait out the Transfiguration. I shall bear my agony in silence, as befits a god on earth. But even a god incarnate has moments of doubt, and this is one of them. The pain that attends the discarding of my mortal form has weakened me.

I've begun to wonder if I was mistaken, after all. Not about the unborn thing being my nemesis. Of that I'm certain. But maybe...just maybe, mind you...I got my wires crossed concerning my origins...about who, or what, my Father *really* is...

I wish I had something to drink. The fur on my tongue tickles something awful.



*Nancy A. Collins is a resident of New Orleans. Her short stories have been included in several prestigious anthologies and she made her debut as a novelist with 1989's critically-acclaimed *Sunglasses After Dark*.*



SAFE
for all
Washables

50-MIDNIGHT GRAFFITI

HERA
HERA

PAPER BAGS

by Anne Scott

There were some days when Sara thought she would slash her wrists. There were other days when she thought not. On those days, she thought she would take the pills. She had tried to think as she drove along, her station wagon filled with children on their way to school or softball practice, but they always interrupted her concentration with their silly games.

She liked it best when she was alone with her full grocery bags on the way home from the market. She lined them up precisely on the rear seat just as she did with the children. She never went straight home, but always took a little ride. The brown paper bags with their drab orange printing bobbed in agreement as she told them the pills wouldn't work without alcohol. She would never have figured that out with the children in the car screaming and laughing.

If it hadn't been for the bags, she might not have solved the problem. Pills had been her first choice, but the gun was fine. Noise was something familiar to her. A loud explosion, an eruption of blood and brain from the left side of her head and it would be over. Her decision was made.

She spent Thursday morning organizing her coupons and compiling her grocery list. She categorized the list; cleaning supplies, after school treats, fruit, frozen dinners, cheese and crackers, beverages, sweet rolls. Everything her family would need those first two days after she was dead.

She made labels for each bag she would ask the checker to fill. One label read "To be served to guests." She planned to paste that on the cheese and cracker bag and the sweet roll bag. She wanted everyone to feel comfortable when they came to visit. She made another label, "For immediately after." She was going to use that for the cleaning supplies. She thought she would carry that bag upstairs with her and position it carefully so that when she fell she wouldn't knock it over. She was sure someone would see the bag and remember how she hated messes.

SELF-HELP

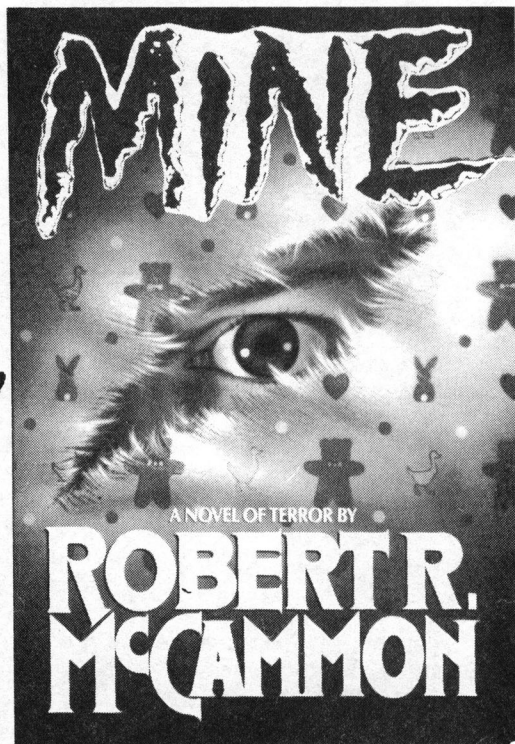
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story
Richard Alan Kaapke
Grim
Perspective
Marcus Allan Dickerson
are

A gruesome,
scarlet image
filled his gaze.

A distorted,

coiled,

lumpy,

glistening
shape...

The pulpy
red lump churned
and writhed
with a seeming
protoplasmic life
of its own.

The image
melted and oozed
together into an
amorphous
mass.

... a fat
crimson finger
reaching
skyward.

The nodule
stretched the membrane
of the red matter,
a swelling protuberance
pulling away from the
main body.

The membrane
broke and the
other nodule floated
higher, freed from its
sticky, vermillion
prison.

A voice
shocked him
alert.

HIS MOTHER!



Gravity
pulled the form back
into a scarlet pool, and it
continued to writhe
frustrated to be bound by
the pull of gravity.

The red
ichorous
mass
swelled

...like
bloody intestines
eviscerated from
a fresh body.

Something
boiled out of its depths,
an other nodule like a
sick pocket of pus that
strained against its
surface.

Ramsey
Campbell



A N I N T E R V I E W

Writer Peter Crowther cornered Britain's horror king in his native Liverpool for this exclusive Midnight Graffiti interview.



For an entire generation on both sides of the Atlantic, Liverpool will forever be the birthplace of The Beatles. Snuggled cosily into the northwest coastline of England, this once-bustling port and its many landmarks became, during the mid-sixties, almost a second home for the millions of fans who thrilled to the romantic, musical images of "Strawberry Fields Forever" and "Penny Lane."

At the time, however, Liverpool was fast becoming the archetypal drab northern England cityscape, littered with graffiti-ridden high-rise apartment blocks and endlessly sprawling inner-city conurbations, seemingly bereft of any greenery save the occasional turd-festooned and tire-scorched patch of building-shadowed parkland. In the early 1980's, Liverpool hit rock bottom, with drastic unemployment problems in the wake of Britain's recession and a move towards monetarist policies. Against this backdrop of urban decay, widespread unrest and frustration ensued, culminating in the now notorious Toxteth riots of 1982.

Since then, the city has undergone something of a transformation—although unemployment remains almost the highest in the country. It's been a lengthy process but, superficially, much of the darkness and depression of the early seventies has been replaced, renewed and re-enervated, washed clean by city planners and Government aid schemes.

But the city's rebirth is not good news to all of its sons.

Ramsey Campbell bemoans (tongue placed firmly in cheek) what "they" are doing to his city, in the introduction to his 1983 story "Watch the Birdie" which appeared in Karl Wagner's *Year's Best Horror Stories, Volume 13*. In essence, he complains, they're taking away his settings. But, he soldiers on regardless, with stories reflecting troubled times and troubled people. He says he wouldn't live anywhere else. "Except maybe the Mediterranean," he quips drily, around a mouthful of Webster's Special Bitter.

Campbell has interrupted a busy schedule to talk to *Midnight Graffiti* about his work...and to have some lunch! Indeed, after meeting him at the Liverpool Odeon movie house, where, with his wife Jenny, he was attending the press show for a new movie to be reviewed later in his regular slot on BBC's *Radio Merseyside*, we proceeded straight to the Baltic Fleet public house on the city's dock road for some much needed sustenance. "I'd conduct all my interviews in a pub if I had half a chance," he opines when I thank him for agreeing to the interview, and then quickly drains his glass.

So, has Liverpool's change been for the better or the worse? "Well, a bit of both really," he says. "I really do find that half of the things I've written about aren't there anymore. People ask to be taken to see the settings I've used in my stories, and when we get there they've more often than not been bulldozed or torn down, or they've simply vanished in some cases. The fact that we're actually sitting here in The Baltic Fleet is something of an achievement in itself, because I spent years bringing people here only to find that the

entire place was boarded up." The pub may well be open again, but, sadly, the graffiti which is featured in "Watch the Birdie" is no more, painted over by some unfeeling decorator who would probably have emulsioned Neanderthal man's seminal scribbles with the same empty-headed gusto.

"I quite like these big shopping precincts," Campbell observes with an all-encompassing wave of his arm, though the timbre of his voice suggests that this may well be a small falsehood. "But it's getting so that one can go into a shopping mall in almost any major city and forget which particular city is around outside it. It reminds me of Romero's *Zombie* films.

"But the ferries are still there, out on the river. They're not doing particularly well, though. I think they're rationalizing them," he says, emphasizing the word vitriolically. "All this creeping rationalization...rationality, you will gather, is something I don't particularly care for, for a variety of reasons."

Born in 1946, Ramsey Campbell's early experiences of the city were couched in adventure. His was not a particularly happy childhood: his father lived a life of complete seclusion, despite inhabiting the same house as Ramsey and his mother. In 1956 he bought his first science fiction magazine—a copy of *Astounding*—and started collecting them in earnest. Shortly after, he discovered *Weird Tales* and, in 1960, read *Cry Horror*, the British edition of H.P. Lovecraft's *The Lurking Fear*. His first story publication had already taken place, some two years earlier, with the appearance of "Midnight Appointment" in the *St. Edwards School Magazine*.

In these formative and impressionable years, Campbell complemented an increasingly steady reading diet of Lovecraft with frequent walks through the then still Blitz-devastated streets of Liverpool. "You'd walk through these streets at night in order to get to these mysterious cinemas where you'd never been. It was a considerable adventure for me," he says. "There was no doubt that a lot of my early stories came initially out of that sort of experience of the city at night and, in particular, the sort of quasi-derelict city which Liverpool then was. You won't see much of that anymore."

"Oh, I don't know," his wife adds with a forced sigh, "there's still the demolition sites: I mean, all they've done is replace the bomb sites with demolition sites."

Campbell smiles and nods enthusiastically. "Yes, all they do is plant saplings, basically. Where we're living now is where I used to go, across from Liverpool on the ferry. There was a continental cinema over there where you could go to see Ingmar Bergman films—they used to break in the middle for tea and biscuits." He frowns and takes a hefty swallow of beer. "Quite a curious way of seeing Bergman, actually. In fact, it was a slightly alien territory altogether."

It was this somewhat out-of-sync landscape which stimulated some of the darker areas of Campbell's consciousness and provided the inspiration for one of his most enduring short stories, "The Companion," considered by Stephen King to be "one of the three finest horror stories" he has ever read. "There used to be two fairgrounds over there, the old derelict one and the new enclosed one. They operated them both for a while.

"I remember going over there one day," he continues. "It was a Boxing Day (December 26), and I was at a particularly low ebb. I can't remember why I was at a low ebb, but I was. It was a ghastly Boxing Day, when I was living with my mother, and I went over to New Brighton in the rain and watched Billy Wilder's *The Apartment*. Believe me, there's nothing more depressing than Boxing Day spent in a seedy seaside resort in the rain, watching a comedy about someone trying to commit suicide."

Campbell's earliest memories of the cinema are of being frightened by it. He recalls seeing *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and feeling scared, and sometime later, a Danny Kaye film called *Knock On Wood*. "He's a ventriloquist who gets duped into carrying some microfilm in his dummy. Two different espionage groups are after this microfilm and there's a scene where one of each group break into Kaye's flat while he's out. One of them murders the other one and hangs the body on the back of his door and puts a hat over its face. Of course, the joke is how long is it going to take for Danny Kaye to realize that there's a body hanging on the back of his door. Everybody else in the cinema was rolling around in hysterics but it scared the living hell out of me. I suspect I was about seven or eight at the time. Anyway, so much did it affect me and stay with me, that I put a similar scene into "The Nameless." The only difference was that, in my story, there's no hook on the door. That's clearly some kind of development of the thing that has stuck in my memory all this time, sort of seeing one's emotional experiences dreamed up there on the screen in a much larger form."

Campbell turned his early imaginative fears into a penchant for horror movies: the old black and white flicks about alien creatures invading different parts of the U.S. figure largely in his memory, as do the early Hammer films. But it's the widely acknowledged classics which, perhaps, he remembers most fondly. "The cinemas in those days were just in a terminal state of decrepitude," he says sadly, chasing a reluctant piece of pastry around his plate with his fork. "A lot of them were running things that, you know, you just wouldn't see at the cinema these days. All the Lugosi films, and Karloff... they would just turn up as double bills for three days in obscure parts of Liverpool. I'd been reading *Famous Monsters of Filmland* ever since it began, and so I knew about these things. And here I was old enough to sneak in and see them! This was a tremendous adventure for about a year. I just did nothing but catch up on all the films I had been reading about and hadn't been able to see. *Night of the Demon* was my earliest. That, and *Psycho*, were my earliest experiences of horror movies."

In those early days, the young Campbell experienced this terror mainly alone, although his mother, too, had a love for Hammer films and films by Alfred Hitchcock. That year of intense horror-movie watching led to Campbell discovering Bergman and others, and he still recalls *Last Year At Marienbad* as being as disturbing as many horror films. "It was the way that the thing was put together," he says. "The way it refused to allow you any kind of ground, and

would threaten constantly to come at you from a different direction. I was about 16, I suppose, and I really think that it had a considerable influence on the way I went after having imitated Lovecraft."

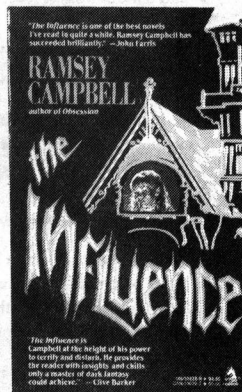
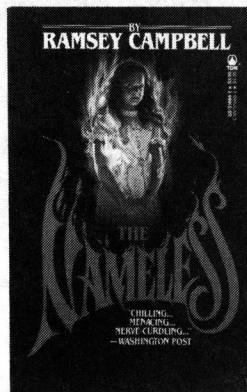
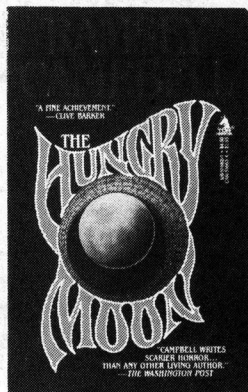
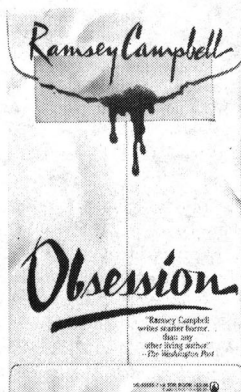
In 1961, when Campbell was still only 16, his Lovecraft-inspired "The Tower From Yuggoth" was published in *Goudy*, a fanzine. In 1962, "The Church In High Street" appeared in the Derleth-edited *Dark Mind, Dark Heart* for Arkham House. He was on his way. A letter of encouragement around this time, from a reader in Minneapolis, was to lead, eventually, to the appointment of it's writer—Kirby McCauley—as Campbell's agent. Meanwhile the relationship with August Derleth and Arkham House proved particularly fruitful, and the following year saw the publication of Campbell's first book of short stories, *The Inhabitant of the Lake (And Less Welcome Tenants)*. Just 4 years later, Campbell completed the stories for his second volume, *Demons By Daylight*, but it was not to see print until 1973, being delayed because of Derleth's death. Nevertheless, it proved to be a significant book for Campbell: "In many ways, *Demons By Daylight* was sort of me turning my back on Lovecraft."

Campbell's affection for the world of film-making was nurtured and polished until, beginning more than two decades ago, he took upon himself the role of film critic for the BBC's local radio station. It does, however, mean that he has to sit through "stuff" like *Lethal Weapon 2* and the current spate of baseball movies. He grimaces at the very thought, like a small boy swallowing the most dire of medicines. "But I have developed a way of getting my own back," he adds with obvious relish, "particularly on the really horrid videos."

"Basically, he just spends a lot of time being very sour about everything," Jenny interjects.

"When I'm reviewing them, I get my own back by simply describing precisely what I'm seeing," he says, gleefully. "I just quote the best lines without a comment. It's extremely effective, particularly on the excessively gory things. There's far too much of it about." But when I agree wholeheartedly, expounding some of my own feelings on the industries' predilection for showing oozing entrails as opposed to being genuinely scary his face clouds momentarily. "But, did you like *Helraiser*?" he asks me, nervously. When I launch into a tirade of lavish praise for that fine film, his features clear. "That's all right then," he says. "We can continue with the interview." I'm not at all sure that he wasn't entirely serious.

Talking of *Helraiser* leads me to ask if any of Campbell's work



is going to find its way onto the big screen. He shrugs. "I don't know," he answers honestly. "I mean, people occasionally option something—*Obsession* was optioned for example. But whether I personally would want to get involved is another thing entirely. It would be interesting to see other people seeing what I'm doing, but after observing Clive's travails with *Underworld*, where 6 lines of dialogue was all that was left from the original script, I would be a little dubious. On the other hand, it would be unreasonable of me to write a script and assume that they weren't going to make any changes because, clearly, it's the director's vision that should be up there on the screen. I suppose that, on balance, I'd rather write stuff I've got control over, and let somebody else develop it." He pauses reflectively, and then adds, "as for directing, well, Clive has a background in the theater: I'm not sure I'd know the first thing about going about it. If somebody offered me a great deal of money however..."

But, despite his reservations on the levels—perhaps "depths" would be more appropriate—at which some sections of filmdom operate, Campbell is vehemently opposed to censorship. "Categorization is fine," he says, "but you must have a category at which there is no further cutting. I mean, neither the British nor the American models really work all that well. In America, you've got extreme commercial pressures just to get the finished product released, whereas in Britain, there seems to be a sort of trade off between film and video. It's strange, too, that they're cutting more on video while they also seem to be letting more through for theatrical release." His face beaming mischievously, Campbell goes on to mention the uncut version of the Lovecraft—inspired *Re-Animator*, wherein the protagonist's dismembered head "goes down" on a hapless patient. "Even I would never have thought of that," he adds with a chuckle.

But while he admits to some things being outside his range of imagination, there were clearly sufficient early signs to interest the great August Derleth, who, under the legendary Arkham House imprint, published Campbell's first short story efforts. "Not only did he react favorably to my stories, giving lots of encouragement and editorial advice, but he also had to suffer me writing back to him asking for a list of all the books he was publishing over the following three years." Campbell is clearly dismayed and not a little embarrassed by the memory. "He gave an amazingly polite response. You have to realize here that I was a fan, of course, which is what got me into the business in the first place."

So now that the shoe is on the other foot, as it were, does the might and audacity of fandom assembled give Campbell cause for complaint? He shakes his head emphatically and splutters, "Absolutely not! I mean, when I was about 16 or 17, I went down to London: I had arranged with Mike Moorcock that he was going to sort out some accommodation for me. Anyway, I took the all-night bus—a horrible business which I don't recommend to anybody: those were the years before most of the motorways—and as soon as I got to the bus station, I rang Mike up, saying 'I'm here,' and there was just this muffled voice on the other end of the line. And I said, 'I didn't wake you up did I?' to which he replied, with extraordinary restraint, 'Well, yes, you did, actually.' This was about 4:30 in the morning, so I suppose it's not jolly surprising. I really was the world's most obnoxious swine, so I can't really protest about anybody else."

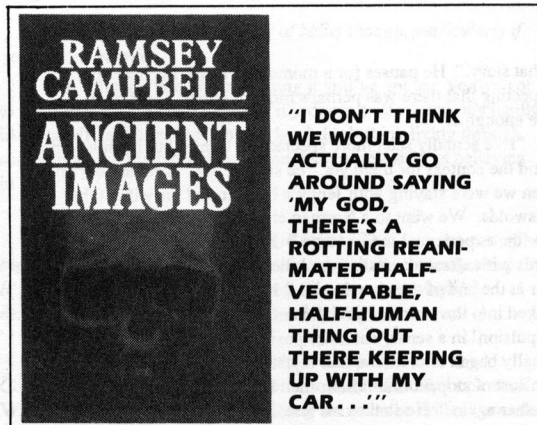
And it's very much a case of once a fan, always a fan, as Campbell bears out with the tale of his meeting with J.G. Ballard at a signing session held at London's Forbidden Planet shop. "Malcolm Edwards of Gollancz introduced me to Ballard," he explains, the recollection—or at least the retelling of it—clearly

making him cringe. "So I shook his hand and said 'Nice to meet you,' and we kind of stared at each other for about two minutes, because, having admired his work for so long, I was incapable of doing anything else except ranting on for the space of an hour or so about how much I admired his work. So I said nothing at all. So, presumably, yes, I am still a fan."

For Campbell, horror represents the least escapist form of fantasy. "That was what I was really trying to get at in *The Depths*. In fact, in an odd way, I often have difficulty in writing fiction until I know what the underlying theme is going to be. I need some kind of meaning, if you like. Some kind of moral or social observation that acts as an underpinning for the story. That's why, partly, I've had a go at writing novels like *The Influence*, which was a kind of domestic horror story. There are even moral themes in that I should think."

The Influence contained one of Campbell's most memorably terrifying scenes, when the young protagonist, completely alone on a deserted train as it pounds its way through the night-time countryside, discovers that something else is aboard, and making its way slowly through the carriages toward her. Yet she knew that she was alone: there could not be anyone else on the train. The resulting stark paranoia and its accompanying, essentially quite human trait of attempting to explain away sudden unpleasantnesses with contrived slices of reason, is a favorite device of Campbell's. His characters will see something, then take a second look, and then convince themselves that it isn't what they first thought it was. In many ways, it actually harkens back to Campbell's undisputed love of the old movies. I put this to him, citing as a prime example the girl in *Ancient Images*, whose rationalization that the fields through which she sped in her car could really contain so many identical scarecrows—some of which actually seemed to be keeping pace with her—strained dramatic license to the detriment of credibility. "But, in a sense, that's how we probably would react in real life," he says quickly, though nodding effusively. "I mean, I don't think we would actually go around saying 'My God, there's a rotting reanimated half-vegetable-half-human thing out there keeping up with my car!'"

I agree, but remark that the reader feels like screaming at the woman to get out of there, almost at that most juvenile level of audience participation which can generally be found in the perennial children's winter pantomimes. "Oh yes, absolutely," Campbell says, leaning forward. "And there is a pantomime in the middle of that book."



"All of what you say is true, of course. But, stylistically, it dates back to M.R. James. I remember in his *Whistle and I'll Come To You* there's a moment where the protagonist looks out of the window of his hotel room and sees a seagull's wing, a flash of white. In fact, maybe James simply did mean that as a seagull's wing, but I remember reading it and thinking...that's not a seagull's wing at all, but something very much more sinister. But there's nothing in the text, or, to be more correct, there's nothing in the use of language at that point which indicates any such thing. It's simply the accumulation of detail. That's something which I do tend to work a lot."

We move on to *Incarinate*, for many, Campbell's *piece de resistance* long work, and, specifically, the unsettling besheeted bed-ridden figure which puts in a few unnerving appearances. "It's more unnerving because it doesn't actually do anything!" he says with a clipped laugh. "A lot of the things in my books and stories don't actually do anything. It's just their existence that's the problem, really."

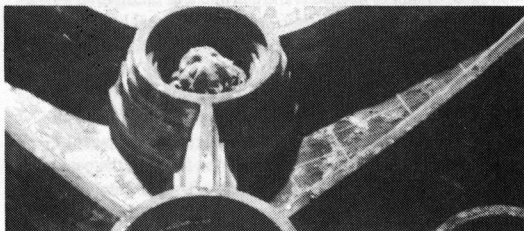
The beautifully realized space-bending concept of the house in *Incarinate* was quite hallucinogenic, and the short story "Stages," with its dope-smoking Tangerine Dream fan, seemed similarly drug related. Could it be that there was, perhaps, a degree of autobiographical detail here? Campbell smiles matter-of-factly, and nods. "Very much so, yes," he says. "Great fun. I mean, I've had my days with acid back in the 1970's...it's a bit too much for my taste now, I think," he adds quickly. "But most of 'Stages' was actually pure invention. I actually invented the imagery to crystallize it. I don't remember seeing anything specifically like what was

on coats and reluctantly make our way back out into the sunlight.

His car is a large Volvo estate, resplendent with sunroof. We set to embark on a mini-sightseeing tour of Campbell haunts from his various pieces of fiction.

Dressed in comfortable denims, a light blue roll-neck sweater, dependable-looking shoes, plus a generous many-pocketed short denim coat. Campbell is tall, economically but gustily spoken and boasting a mat of greying black hair. His cultured accent carries just a trace of the characteristic Merseyside drawl, most noticeably on words such as "right," which he uses often as a kind of monosyllabic all-question response. When I remark on his accent—or apparent lack of it—he retorts sagely, "Well, I was born here: what can I tell you." He shuffles behind the wheel and immediately begins rummaging around in the glove compartment until he finds what he's looking for: "Gloves! Who would have thought...gloves in a glove compartment!" He pulls them on slowly, feigning a *Hands of Orlac* style attack on his own face, and mutters, "Ah, the black gloves," in the kind of moan popularized by Charles Laughton in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. And then we're off.

The drive proves disappointingly uneventful—I suspect as much for Campbell as for his watchful passenger. Rows upon rows of terraced and semi-detached suburbia pass by the windows with increasing monotony as Campbell, the perfect tour conductor, remarks sadly that this is where such-and-such used to be, or this is where the park which was featured in *Mackintosh Willy* used to be. And so on. We pass by a seedy looking church on the way to the river, and Campbell remarks that he once received a fan letter from a Lutheran minister—"So, there you go," he observes drily. Then



"I'VE HAD MY DAYS WITH ACID BACK IN THE 1970s...IT'S A BIT TOO MUCH FOR MY TASTE NOW, I THINK."

in that story." He pauses for a moment to finish his beer and, suspecting that there was perhaps more to come, I kept quiet. Sure enough...

"I've actually seen more spectacular things, but I just haven't found the context for them yet," he says at last. "I remember once, when we were staying with Jenny's brother and his wife at the Cotswolds. We went to a Norman church—I was about two hours into 'the experience' at this stage." He emphasizes the appropriate words with affected relish. "And there was this pointed arch over the altar at the end of the church, and it had a little crack in it. As I walked into the church, I saw the entire crack—and it was like 'Repulsion' in a sense, but more positive than that—the entire arch actually began to crumble, and it just fell down before my eyes and then sort of stopped in mid-air, then kind of pushed itself back together again." He shakes his head, remembering. "Which was...well, moving." I make a mental note to watch out for the scene in a future Campbell tome as we finish what's left of our drinks, pull

we're at the river, traveling down beneath the water through a strangely, almost luminescent tile-festooned corridor, towards the other side, and Wallasey.

The Campbell house is a big, rambling, red-brick semi with an apparent surfeit of windows which momentarily puts one in mind of a small Gormenghast Castle.

Once inside, the house—bought by the Campbells in 1984—turns out to be more like one of those old rambling mansions which feature heavily in the American deep south. A light hall leads off into a variety of high-ceilinged rooms—18 in all—through stripped opine doorways. Beside a framed M.C. Escher print, the wide and expansive stairway leads up to another two floors amply lit by a generous skylight—not a cobweb or a bloodstain to be seen. Campbell shows me his study, liberally decorated—like the rest of the house—with J.K. Potter originals, World Fantasy Awards, Laurel and Hardy figurines and the obligatory bookcase or two filled with the numerous different editions of his books. One of the Potters

features Campbell's daughter, Tamsin, taking the part of the shadow-haunted Rowan from *The Influence*. His desk looks out across the houses onto the slow undulations of the Mersey.

Ramsey shows me outside. Climbing frames and a swing betray the presence of children and Campbell almost proudly points out the lazy-looking apple tree at the bottom of the garden: "They're eaters," he says. It is, in every way, a real garden, complete with a shed—which includes a resident wasps' nest—a creaking cylindrical clothes-drying monolith, and a seemingly disused greenhouse, the door to which blows to and fro in the gentle afternoon breeze. Healthily tan-looking and unobtrusively bespectacled, Campbell, hands in pockets, stands over by the back door surveying his 'estate' and reassessing it with his new visitor. I see him in a new light: the family man.

We go inside and, renewed by Jenny's coffee, begin the interview proper.

What was it that attracted you to writing horror rather than writing 'straight' fiction?

I think the basic thing is that my early memories of fiction are all terrifying, whether they be Hans Anderson stories or the classic English ghost stories of M.R. James. I think those were the things that gave me the keenest pleasure from a very early age and so it was inevitable that once I started writing myself, I was going to turn to the kind of thing I enjoyed reading. I began by writing a book called *Ghostly Tales*. You should find a suitably horrible experience! That's one I wrote when I was 11, but it was a complete book in the sense that I actually filled up an exercise book and I wrote "the end" at the end. And I sent this 'round to all the publishers. So there you are, at 11 I was already writing ghost stories. They were very bad. They were all stuck together from random bits of other things I'd read.

Clearly, I needed to find some sort of model, and this proved to be Lovecraft. I'd written that whole first book modeled on Lovecraft. And then I decided that I was going to do the sort of fiction which I felt wasn't being done in this field. I mean, I actually felt there were all sorts of things being done in contemporary fiction that weren't being done in this field and I thought it was time somebody tried to do it. Hence, *Demons By Daylight*. Essentially, I think I was already in the initial stages of committing myself to horror fiction, but it wasn't a matter of just trying to replicate the sort of things I enjoyed anymore, it was actually trying to take it into areas that I thought weren't being explored. Whether I was right or not, I don't know.

Is the turn-on knowing that you're scaring people? Clearly you're not doing it just for the money?

No, absolutely not. I wouldn't be writing for some of the fan mags—as I now do—if that were the case.

So what is the turn on?

To do better than I did last time. It's just to do things I haven't done before and trying not to repeat myself, trying to identify the things that I depend on as a writer. And see what happens if I do without them. And also, just basically, to tell all the stories that I've got building up which I haven't actually told. Ideas are things I'm not short of, you know. I've got more ideas than I think I'm ever going to be able to write. It's simply the pressure of those stories that keeps me going.

But, although you haven't actually repeated yourself, you have expanded on an idea—take Incarnate and The Influence for example.

Yes, that's perfectly true. I think the more you try not to be

yourself, the more you end up being yourself. I'm sure you would find other things. *Midnight Sun* is the novel I'm writing now, I'm about halfway through it and I actually thought I was taking new direction to some extent. Anyway, I had to proof read the latest edition of *The Parasite*. It's been a few years since I looked at that book and I was surprised at how many of the things in *Midnight Sun* were at least embryonic in *The Parasite*. I hope I've improved on them, obviously, or I probably won't be writing another book.

When a book is submitted to two different editors—say one in the States and one in the UK—do you get differing reactions? I'm thinking of the extra paragraph which Jonathan Carroll's US editor requested for Bones of the Moon.

Well, it all comes down to the fact that it's my name on the cover, not the editor's name. I've never found many contradictions between different editors. I've not really come across the sense that they're in total disagreement.

If editorial suggestions make sense, I may very well go along with them. I certainly think they have some effect. If I don't think so, then I won't. It's as simple as that, really. You've got, ultimately, your own instinct. You've got to trust yourself.

Because you know your audience better than anybody else?

Well, no. I know my fiction better than anybody else. Maybe I don't even know that! That's probably not true, actually! But I know what I think I'm doing. It may not be the same thing as what I actually am doing and quite often isn't! This is one reason why a good editor who is on your wavelength can be extremely useful, precisely because they see things which you missed. Not merely simple continuity errors but actual lapses of whatever it may be, a perception, or some kind of missed opportunity in terms of the material. It can be a variety of things. I mean, I like working with editors.

You're down as saying about how you're not a believer—I don't know whether you said atheist or agnostic.

Well, agnostic with tendencies to atheist.

Isn't that difficult, writing about what is essentially the supernatural?

Well, no, because I think it's imaginative. It unlocks the imagination. I don't have to believe in it in a literal sense.

There must be some elements of belief though, particularly if you can get scared.

Well I think while you're writing it you've got to. You've got to enter into the situation. Clearly if it doesn't affect you, it's hardly likely to affect the reader. So yes, but I don't think living through something imaginatively is the same thing necessarily as believing in it.

That's almost a contradiction in terms. That you can sort of not believe but yet you can write something which is genuinely scary. It's unsettling and I think that's probably a more powerful description of your work than scary. Anybody can scare.

Right. I remember way back there was a review of *Dark Companions* in *Locus* by a reviewer who didn't like the book at all. What he said, in terms that were clearly meant to be critical, was that this book was "very different from a good scare"—it just made him feel very uncomfortable. I must admit that I found it quite flattering.

"I WOULD SUGGEST THAT CLIVE IS MORE AMERICAN IN SOME WAYS AS A WRITER THAN BRITISH, WHICH IS NOT NECESSARILY A CRITICISM. IT'S JUST AN OBSERVATION..."

Much of the unsettling feeling may be caused by your long descriptive passages—and the fact that you don't rush into opportunities to put in dialogue.

Yes, I suppose so. If I feel that I'm depending on it, I try and do away with it. That is to say, if I think that I'm depending more on action and setting rather than dialogue, then I try to do away with it. I may have a go at writing a book which is pure dialogue.

Certainly Ancient Images and The Influence have dialogue—but they also do have huge blocks of descriptive text. And that is the thing that emphasizes this unsettling feeling because dialogue immediately dilutes a mood.

Yes, that's true. In a way it does. Although you can actually use it, if you're crafty enough, as a sort of oblique way of presenting that material, too, which I quite like. That's something I've been conscious of for a long time. In fact, Lovecraft is especially heavy on setting and atmosphere which to me works extremely well. I decided most of the way through writing *The Inhabitant of the Lake* that okay, I'll have a go now at doing a story which has got no description of that sort. Everything is done through dialogue. It's a story called *The Will of Stanley Brook*, not a very good story, but it was that attempt quite early on to do without what I thought I was relying on. I tend to have a go at this sort of thing, not necessarily that particular area, but just that sort of stylistic experiment to find out what happens if you tell a story in the second person, or if you tell it in the present tense.

You've done a few in the second person—your homages to EC comics?

Ah yes, EC comics. Except that you also had the pictures so there was a sense of which character in front of you was being addressed by the caption. So what I did was take away the visuals. Although things have come full circle so some of those stories are now being adapted as comics and Steve Niles has got one coming up—*Heading Home*—which is actually in the ultimate Johnny Craig style. Well, not the ultimate because Johnny Craig did the ultimate Johnny Craig. But something as a very quintessential Johnny Craig subject, that sort of strange view point.

Barker says in one of his introductions what a genial fellow you are—and indeed you are—but he includes people like Stephen King and I suspect probably there's an element of himself in there too. Are you all so genial and friendly because you're able to exorcize your dark thoughts onto paper?

To an extent I'm putting it out and it's a separate object. So I suppose that's perfectly true. I mean—this isn't your question, but

it's related—one perennial question is doesn't it ever disturb me to write this sort of thing all the time? And of course the answer is no, this sort of thing is in there anyway. It's the act of writing that perhaps may offload a bit of it. It's one of those ironies, I suppose. It's more often than not the comedians that end up cutting their wrists and sticking their head in the oven. Horror writers tend to live to a ripe old age and end up quite genial.

Although Robert Howard didn't, did he?

Howard certainly didn't. Well, Howard was perhaps not so much a horror writer. It was probably a classic case of—and the Howard fans are going to come and dump on me for this—but it seems to me that to some extent Howard's sword and sorcery is a kind of adolescent fantasy. I think if you're having adolescent fantasies and that sort of thing at the age of thirty, I think you are having certain problems. This is only my belief. Lovecraft didn't kill himself though. Lovecraft actually was the great frugal life style person. He did himself in by simply not eating.

But he had a troubled existence if one believes all one reads about him.

Yes, I suppose one balances on a tightrope. I think it's a question of how long you can balance without making quite as many falls as old Lovecraft did.

Do you still think Lovecraft's fiction holds up well?

Yes I do actually. I think you get different sorts of pleasure from re-reading him. I do, anyway. It's no longer as frightening as it was. I suppose the classic case for me is *The Outsider*, not his best story but a very interesting story. The first time I read that, it worked very well as a sort of Poe-esque horror story. I mean it was powerful, disturbing stuff. Now on re-reading it, you know what it's all about and it's one of the very few stories where Lovecraft does go at it at length with that kind of 'I cannot even hint what it was like' sort of paragraph where he actually doesn't describe anything. But when you realize that what he's actually describing is a reflection of the first person narrator, then I think it takes on a different level altogether. One wouldn't go so far as to say that he was writing autobiographically. But I think there's a sense of that monstrous figure being to some extent how he saw himself. Makes the whole story a lot more moving than frightening. So you've got all sorts of levels in his best work which I still find very rewarding.

What are the differences between American and English horror fiction?

I'm not sure. I suppose American tends to be, in theory, brighter in the sense of 'more brightly lit.' There are obvious exception on both sides. Charlie Grant is a very shadowy writer... a writer of shadows and suggestions, much in the Val Lewton mode, say as a writer of Lewton's monster films.

Such as The Cat People?

Yes, indeed. *The Leopard Man* and so on. *The Night of the Demon* is actually a Lewtonesque film from a director who worked with him. But I suppose there is a sense in which American horror fiction tends to be more garish. British tends to be darker and more suggestive. Now obviously, when you come across somebody like Clive, he's something quite different again. I would suggest that Clive is more American in some ways as a writer than British, which is not necessarily a criticism. It's just an observation.

He's probably a natural marriage of the two. I find his darkness is just so total and absolute.

Right, but that's a darkness of view point rather than of visualization, if you like. Clive is a quintessential painter turned

writer. But you see, I would then have to go and confuse the issue completely by suggesting that there are some writers who have a foot on both sides if you like. It seems to be that Lovecraft, in some ways, marries the American tradition of Poe with the British tradition of people like Blackwood and Machen, while Fritz Leiber marries the American tradition of Lovecraft with the British tradition of M.R. James. I do the same with Fritz Leiber and Lovecraft on the one hand and M.R. James and Aickman on this side of the water, so the distinctions are much more complicated than that. There's a kind of identifiably American horror fiction. To be contemporary, I think, there is a tendency whereby the British writers tend to ape the Americans and I think there always has been, simply because that's commercially the most viable kind of product. You see a lot of American horror fiction on the shelves and some British writers are going to try and do that kind of thing. I think Charlie Grant and Alan Ryan too, to some extent, have some decidedly English qualities to their work. Not entirely, but those elements are included.

Mind you, of course, the great contemporary American exception to this who you might regard as reads like a British writer in some ways in the terms that you're proposing is Thomas Ligotti. His short story "Alice's Last Adventure," in *Prime Evil*, is extraordinary. It's like nobody else in my opinion. Well, there's little overtones you might recognize but he's more like himself than he is like anybody else. It's very oblique and strange, real horror fiction.

On the American/English thing, does the size of the country play a part in the small town episodic works? Being an island race—and a small one—the British can use the whole country.

I think that probably is true. The British tend to like larger canvases, probably because the country itself is small enough that you can actually set up the entire country as your area for whatever's going to happen. It goes back to *The War of the Worlds*, it goes back to *The Day of the Triffids*, it goes back to Ballard, obviously, and Jim Herbert, with a novel like *The Fog*, which has decidedly apocalyptic tendencies. I mean I haven't actually done in the entire country yet, although I'm still working toward that.

The guy that's going to save the day in an American book will be a known and probably popular figure within his scheme of things. But you're people aren't. Is that a reflection of being an island race and therefore more insular?

Possibly, yes, I think that may well have something to do with it. Also, I've never particularly felt the need to set up characters as being renowned.

What about differences between American fans and English fans?

There aren't any, really. I mean they're all extremely genial. The Americans have always been extremely friendly and inviting. Whenever I go to America I tend to find it extremely difficult to pay for my own dinner, never mind anybody else's because, generally speaking, I've always been made immensely welcome. Ever since the first World Fantasy Convention in Providence—which is really where I tried out reading to an audience for the first time—I've always been made welcome. I think it's only reasonable to say that when *The Doll Who Ate His Mother* came out in '76 in America it got dire reviews and virtually no sales. And for a first novel, I had real hopes for this. It was pretty daunting. And it pretty well was only the World Fantasy Convention in New York, which was immediately after the book was out, that sort of gave me an uplift. That in itself kept me going.

That element of reading your own work, is that still enjoyable?

Oh very much so, yes. I always like to do that. Read it and talk about it. Particularly read it, because clearly the act of writing is a solitary occupation and actually being able to go and look at how people react to it is, I suppose, the next best thing to being filmed. You've got at least an audience in front of you that you can see react.

That's one difference between the Americans and the British. When I'm reading, British audiences are a lot less overtly reactive. Americans will make their pleasure a lot more apparent—or their disfavor...they'll make their feelings a lot more obvious.

I remember reading *Down There* at Jack Sullivan's in New York and they were sort of chortling away happily whenever the more excessive imagery came up, or the monsters came along. I was a bit taken aback by this to begin with. I was beginning to think, well maybe I got this completely wrong. That is one of the relatively few stories of mine where you've got a sort of level of fun horror really, so it was interesting. I hadn't really appreciated that it was working on that level until I did it in front of an audience.

Do you look back with any affection on areas and times at home with your folks or are those happy times thin on the ground?

Well, they weren't folks, because my father was completely, well...not present. He was present, but he wasn't visible, you know, he was outside the door and so on. Oh yes, I mean, obviously I had quite a lot of good times with my mother. We didn't have television but there were a lot of radio programs. And going to the movies and Christmas. Of course part of the thing I suppose is that one doesn't really recognize—certainly I didn't—that there was anything particularly odd about having this sort of childhood. It was the one I had, so that was it. That was how life was and it was only later on that it became apparent that there was anything odd about it.

What about friends? Did you have many at that time?

At school yes, quite a few. Although my mother tended to be pretty dubious about anybody actually coming to the house so they tended to be only during school hours and stuff like that, or I would occasionally go and visit them. Some of whom read the same stuff as me, Lovecraft fans. There were a few of those at school.

Was that when you got involved with writing?

I went from school to the Civil Service when I was 16. It was part of the Derleth influence. He said very early on that it wasn't a good idea to try to make your living as a writer because he did and he felt under too much pressure doing it. Obviously he did write too much, so his view was to get yourself a steady, not too demanding job and then you can work in your spare time. So the Civil Service sounded pretty steady and undemanding.

After four years of that, I went to work at the libraries which was somewhat more useful, partly because I was working with books and people, whereas in the Civil Service you tend to be working over a phone rather than meeting people face to face. But also it gave me mornings off, days off in the week when I could write. Although that was only useful up to a point because it wasn't possible for me to establish a routine, as I've got now, but I did get a lot of writing done back then. This was in the days when I was writing most of *Demons By Daylight* when I was working in the libraries. Then in '73 I decided, partly because T.E.D. Klein had done a very long essay about *Demons By Daylight* which I found intensely encouraging and partly because Jenny was teaching, to try and make it full time which I therefore did. We'd bought a house and had a reasonable sort of stability. I floundered about for a couple of years without too much success.

Did you find meeting Jenny a help for the trauma of your home life?

Well, to an extent, yes. By that point I was so driven in on myself I found it virtually impossible to talk about what was going on until my mother died, which was why the new introduction in *The Face That Must Die* was virtually the act of talking about a thing for the first time. But more important was that Jenny got me out in many ways.

Is she a stern critic?

Yes, to some extent. I mean, she always reads the novel as it's being written, chapter by chapter essentially. So she gets to look at it and spots things which I might not and so on. So, it is something of a collaborative act, yes.

Are you still enjoying it?

Writing? Well, yes. Although it shifts. It tends to be the act of re-writing which is the main pleasure these days, more than the act of doing the first draft. The first draft tends to be a matter of struggling to get the material out there in front, so I can see what I've got and then re-writing it tends to be the act of the shaping of it and throwing away great chunks of it, which gives me some pleasure actually, to look at a page and say I don't need this.

Going back to that story The Depths. You say the author always composed the first paragraph before he sat down to write, a trick that always helped him to write more fluently. Is that a Campbell trick?

Oh yes, I thought I'd give you that if you want to use it. Yes, that's one of them, and the other is writing every day. While I'm writing a story I start more or less the same time which is about 7 a.m. Which is my most productive time, from there to mid-morning.

Ancient Images was fun to read. Was it fun to write?

Well, it was fun to re-write it. It was a real swine to write the first draft. It was interesting because a lot of people remarked on it as being a sort of relaxed book. Believe me, it was anything but relaxed in the first draft.

What about Midnight Sun?

Well, that's an attempt to be visionary. It is an attempt to do a

sort of visionary horror novel of the sort of things that brought me into the field in the first place, the best of Lovecraft, the best of Blackwood and so on. There's always that sense of awe as well as horror that particularly appealed to me. So I wanted to see if I could do a novel that would communicate some of that.

Of your contemporaries now, whose work do you admire?

The thing that bothers me is I'm inevitably going to leave somebody out, aren't I? This is the horror of it.

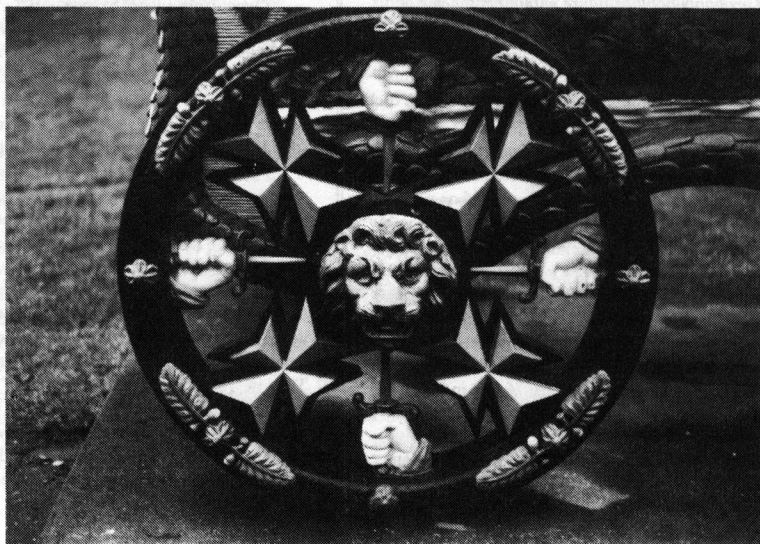
Well let's restrict it to say two or three. And then you're going to leave loads out.

Well, then I'm going to leave too many out. Christ! Well, let's see, at random, Denis Etchison I think, is a superb contemporary, particularly in terms of his short stories. But I think *Darkside* is a very underrated novel, actually I think Denis himself tends to underrate it. He thinks of himself as being more of a short story writer which maybe he is, but it's a very considerable piece of work. Thomas Ligotti, Clive Barker, Peter Straub...T.E.D. Klein's work is superb—subtle, extremely well-constructed. I mean, that's something that a horror story can achieve, extreme effects in terms of its structure and I think that's one case of it. And somebody else who probably needs a bit of a push, because he's extremely good and a lot of people look slightly blank when I mention, is K.W. Jeter. He's done four horror novels, you know. Those I think are really quite remarkable.

Dr. Adder is God knows bleak enough but it's lightweight work compared with his horror fiction. I gather he now feels that he's tending towards horror fiction more, and certainly novels.

Choosing between having to write short stories or novels yourself, which do you find the most enjoyable?

Probably novels, simply because they tend to take on their own impetus and take you off to places you didn't know you were going, but so do short stories, to some extent. Obviously short stories are as much about leaving material out as putting it in! But I enjoy doing both actually.



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Now for something completely different, we present...

BRAD LIBS

by Steven R. Boyett

Ever wonder how the Great Ones did it? How Fitzgerald thought to make Daisy's favorite color white? How Orwell decided to name his totalitarian head of state "Big Brother?" How Poe made every single word count toward the effect he wanted to achieve?

Well, now it can be told! As further evidence that nothing is sacred, *Midnight Graffiti* introduces **Brad Libs**. (At least this one's called **Brad Libs**. You'll see why.)

The idea is similar to the "Mad Libs" game you might have played in school: take a "skeleton" form of a narrative, and replace key words with blank lines. Then ask for a list of words (usually identified as parts of speech, but not necessarily) from a person or group. Write down their suggestions, then read the narrative—using their words in the blanks. And remember to use *past-tense* verbs.

Simple, huh? And effective as Brillo toilet paper.

In this first installment, we've patterned the narrative after a style you might recognize. Remember: read someone the numbered list of needed words, write down their suggestions, then read them back as part of the narrative. And watch them howl.

The number on the blank line in the narrative corresponds to the number on your list; we figure if Mattel can make fifteen bucks a pop for Pictionary, anyone can handle this.

Next Issue: "I Have No _____, and I Must _____."

-
- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Adjective: | 21. Verb: |
| 2. Verb: | 22. Adverb: |
| 3. Adjective: | 23. Plural noun: |
| 4. Form of recreation: | 24. Adjective: |
| 5. Food: | 25. Body parts: |
| 6. Color: | 26. Emotion: |
| 7. Kind of drink: | 27. Natural phenomenon: |
| 8. Containers: | 28. Celebrity: |
| 9. A structure: | 29. Adjective: |
| 10. Adjective: | 30. Animal: |
| 11. Animal: | 31. Body part: |
| 12. Verb: | 32. Sound: |
| 13. Holiday: | 33. Aroma: |
| 14. A number: | 34. Article of clothing: |
| 15. Adjective: | 35. Adjective: |
| 16. Adjective: | 36. Sound: |
| 17. Name a place: | 37. Sport: |
| 18. Liquid: | 38. Food: |
| 19. Corporation: | 39. Verb: |
| 20. Length of time: | |

SOMETHING ____ (1) ____ THAT WAY ____ (2) ____

Young Bill Whitebread and his ____ (3) ____ friend Jim would not soon forget that fine summer day. It was the day Mr. Deadly's Travelling ____ (4) ____ Troupe and All-Nite Diet ____ (5) ____ Heaven came to ____ (6) ____ town, Illinois.

Bill Whitebread and Jim were sipping ice-cold ____ (7) ____ from tall ____ (8) ____ there on the ancient front porch of the little ____ (9) ____ that was Bill's home. Beside them lay the most ____ (10) ____ ____ (11) ____ any boy could ever want, looking for all the world as if it had ____ (12) ____ into the boards from the heat.

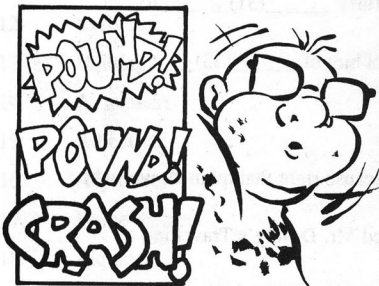
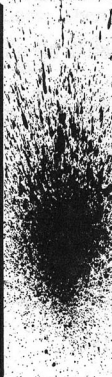
Well, sir, it was ____ (13) ____, and Bill Whitebread was ____ (14) ____ years old, and his best friend Jim was ____ (15) ____, and nothing could be more perfect than being alive and ____ (16) ____ in ____ (17) ____, USA. No one made a more perfect ice-cold ____ (18) ____ than ____ (19) ____, and summer was going to last ____ (20) ____.

The heat ____ (21) ____ and the wind blew ____ (22) ____ with a sound that ____ (23) ____ make when they get old and ____ (24) ____ . Bill hugged his scabbed ____ (25) ____ and looked at Jim with the kind of ____ (26) ____ that only a ten-year-old can express.

"Something's coming," said Bill. "Gee, whiz, didn't you feel that ____ (27) ____?" He shook his head. "Gosh, I sure did. Something's coming and its not ____ (28) ____!"

The ____ (29) ____ ____ (30) ____ beside them raised its furry ____ (31) ____ to ____ (32) ____ mournfully. Jim could feel it, all right. There was even a hint of ____ (33) ____ in the wind against his ____ (34) ____.

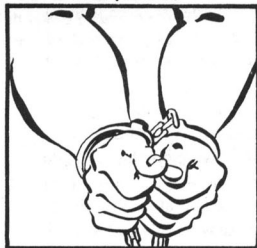
And right that moment was when their summer changed forever, because right that moment was when they heard the ____ (35) ____ ____ (36) ____ of the train that carried Mr. Deadly's Travelling ____ (37) ____ Troupe and All Nite Diet ____ (38) ____ Heaven as it ____ (39) ____ into the station.



for what it's worth

STORY + ART BY KEEGAN

IT'S BEEN ALMOST FIVE YEARS NOW SINCE CHILD-KILLER SHERMAN BLOTT WAS ARRESTED.



AS ALWAYS IN THESE CASES, THE FEDERAL JUDICIAL SYSTEM WAS FIRST TO TAKE THE SPOTLIGHT.



ALL OF AMERICA CHEERED WHEN THE VERDICT WAS HANDED DOWN



... AND WATCHED IN FASCINATION AS ALL THREE NETWORKS CARRIED THE EXECUTION - LIVE!



ONLY THE SUPER-BOWL GOT HIGER RATINGS THAT YEAR.



MAGAZINES AND BOOKS PUBLISHED STORIES AND PHOTOS OF THE BLOTT MURDERS.



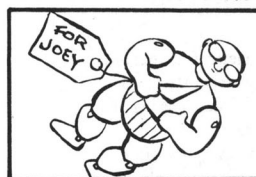
AND ULTIMATELY SEVERAL MAJOR MOTION PICTURES WERE MADE... MOST NOTABLY - 'THE NUT.'



STARRING THAT HOT NEW HUNK, TROY MANSFIELD AS BLOTT.



DUE TO THE SUCCESS OF LAST YEARS 'BLOTT' SATURDAY MORNING CARTOONS, THE NEW LINE OF BLOTT TOYS + ACTION FIGURES ARE EXPECTED TO BE A BIG SELLER THIS X-MAS.



AND FOR THE THIRD WEEK IN A ROW - THE NUMBER ONE SONG IN THE NATION IS THE 'BLOTT-TROT!'



ALTHOUGH CERTAIN FRINGE GROUPS WILL CALL ALL THIS SOMEHOW... ...'EXPLOITATIVE';



WE HERE AT BLOTT INC., DISAGREE 'BLOTT MANIA' MAKES AMERICA STRONG CREATING JOBS AND INDUSTRY.



IN THE END IT'S JUST GOOD CLEAN AMERICAN FUN, AND AN HONEST WAY TO MAKE A PROFIT.



... BESIDES, WHO IS IT HURTING?



Continued from page 23

who answered my request with letters that said they tended to stay away from fans, stay away from conventions, and so they didn't have any gruesome anecdotes to relate. There were about half a dozen—Marvin Kaye, Algis Budrys, Dean Ing, John Varley, Jack Williamson, David Bischoff—who said they'd had nothing but pleasant relations with their fans through many happy years of association, and they were sorry but they simply had nothing to pass along. Those letters, however, were written in June of 1984, and I've had four of that group of six admit that they had, in fact, suffered a number of wretched experiences—which they recounted with detail and anger—and they simply didn't want to cause any trouble.

But how about Joanna Russ? If there has been a woman writer more passionate and outspoken about what concerns her in art and in society, who has been more forthcoming about putting those concerns in her work, I don't know who it might be. Unlike many of the writers I contacted, who were "prudent" about saying anything for fear one of you little psychotic darlings might seek retribution, Joanna was candid; and she wrote:

Yeah. The worst.

Well, besides the folks who send novel manuscripts with instructions to tell them "where to send it," (I got three last week) without postage—

I guess the worst was several years ago in Boulder, when I got a letter from what appeared to be a junior high school student, asking me to answer three pages of questions about my "philosophy of life" since her teacher had told the class to do a research paper on a living writer. She also asked for one (1) copy of everything I had written.

I wrote gently back, explaining as tactfully as I could, that no living writer had time to answer three pages of questions about anything, and that I barely had enough copies of my work for myself. I suggested that she buy some of them herself, since I had to pay for them, too, and that she ask her teacher how to do library research, since I suspected that was the sort of thing her teacher had had in mind originally. I then wished her good luck in her career and ended the letter.

Several weeks later I got a letter from her older sister, who threatened to expose me in *Ms.* and a few other magazines, since my cruel answer had blighted her sister's life and career. Sister (she said) had planned to become...a writer, but after my callous and vicious treatment, said sister only lay on her little bed and cried all day. I had utterly ruined her life. (I am not making this up.)

Or maybe it was the consciousness-raising group that threw me out on the grounds that I was too articulate.

Or the folks who ask for a signed photograph (\$9 to me) sans remuneration and also sans stamps.

The funniest was a fellow who wrote from Walla Walla that he had read *The Female Man* and just loved my mind. He also loved my photograph on the back and assured me that he was a fun-loving soul who wanted to correspond with me about my philosophy of life (what *does* that phrase mean?). When I wrote back that I had no time for handsome men of 5'11" with fun-loving souls, or anybody else, I got a second letter which dwelt on my

physical charms and sort of lost sight of the book, which I don't think he read (just between you and me and the lamppost).

And the women who write me, complaining about what I let be done (me!?) to covers of paperback books of mine, and refuse to believe that I had nothing to do with it—

Or the friends and colleagues who say, "Why don't you just live off your writing?" and refuse to believe that I have never gotten more than a \$3500 advance for a novel, save once—

My favorite horror story, after the sisters business, was an open-mike women's coffeehouse where I read one Saturday night. Two solemn and impressed young women were talking afterward, and I heard one say (of me), "She's so *creative*." A friend found me bashing my head against a wall in sheer frustrated rage. After a bloody quarter of a century of enslavement to this particular obsession, after work, work, work, endless work, to be told, yes, you are so "creative." Pork chops.

Good luck with your speech. It ought to make wonderfully ghostly reading.

Oh, it does make ghostly reading, Joanna.

But you think *you've* got problems, what with naive readers blaming you for what publishers put on the covers of your books? Well, how about when they *pretend* to be naive, merely to cause you grief? What do I mean? Well, here's a classic, fortuitously recent, example of just how malicious fans can be.

In the *Letters* section of *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* for December 1989, there appears a communique from one Paul Osborn of Bremerton, Washington. (At least, the letter is *signed* as being from someone named Paul Osborn, and the postmark—I'm told—was Bremerton, Washington. But not all is what it appears to be, in the world of science fiction's feral aficionados; as we shall shortly see.)

After dealing with other matters in the previous March 1989 cover-dated issue, the alleged Mr. Osborn writes as follows:

"I liked the Ellison story very much, but why was it listed as a novelette when it was shorter than two of the short stories in the issue?"

Now that's a perfectly reasonable question to ask, and as anyone familiar with Occam's Razor would reply, "It was probably an editorial glitch, a production error that no one caught." Which is *exactly* what it was.

The story in question, "The Few, the Proud," is a mere 3600 words. It runs seven and a third pages. It is obviously not a novelette. (The universally-accepted designations for story-length are as follows: short story, length under 7500 words; novelette, 7500 to 17,500; novella, 17,500 to 40,000; novel, 40,000 and up.) My preceding appearance in IASFM, in the previous year's mid-December issue, *had* been a novelette: "The Function of Dream Sleep" at 9900 words. So it's conceivable that one of the editorial assistants got them switched around in memory. Whatever.

The point is, even to the slowest intellect going, this is a simple, human error that took place prior to publication; and a transposition so unimportant (appearing as it does only on the table of contents) that it didn't amount to a mote of dust in the course of literary history.

And had the alleged Mr. Osborn stopped there, having asked a reasonable question, it would have been the kind of letter one would expect to receive from a rational reader. But he didn't. Here's what follows, in the same paragraph:

"I suppose a cynic would say that Mr. Ellison, The Guy With Lord Knows How Many Hugo and Nebula Awards (But Always Ready For MORE MORE MORE!!!) is trying to put a fast one over on Duh Hicks from Duh West by calling a short story a novelette. Since there are always fewer novelettes published in a year than there are short stories (in 1988 *Asimov's* published thirty novelettes versus fifty-three short stories), this stratagem gives 'The Few, the Proud' a decided edge. As I said, this is the response of a cynic, and I've given up cynicism for Lent. But by the time the annual index rolls around (and with it, the Readers Award poll—another chance for MORE MORE MORE!!! awards) Lent will be over. I'm looking forward to it."

Heaven knows there is no shortage of paranoia in the world; but even in a Universe of Conspiracy Theories that load of ignorant drivel is laughable. As if I, in Los Angeles, managed somehow to gull the editor—who paid me by the word and knew very well how long the piece was—the managing editor, the editorial assistants, and the contracts manager, all of them three thousand miles away in New York, into letting me suborn them into mislabeling a short story as a novelette for the demented purpose of affording the story a chance to win an award, the designations for which are set by parties unknown to me, *who count the wordage!*

And how did I manage to do this?

Do I have unspeakable secrets that can be used to blackmail these individuals? Did I pay out vast amounts of money to insure a better shot at winning awards that are basically useless to me after thirty-five years at the writing profession? Is there anyone in his or her right mind that could credit any of what the alleged Mr. Osborn suggests as anything more than lunacy?

Even the most naive reader, unfamiliar with the more esoteric aspects of magazine publication, would perceive that this was a straightforward production error of the most common, most inconsequential sort. And one would dismiss the alleged Mr. Osborn's babbling as the ruminations of someone being intentionally silly.

But let's look at what he actually wrote.

As one who *lives* in Duh West, the paralogical reference to Hicks from Duh West makes no sense at all.

But consider the suggestion that lies passim the convoluted assumptions of the alleged Mr. Osborn's proposal: Ellison has won all these awards, but he's greedy, never has enough awards. But those awards weren't won for the quality of the work, they were somehow managed, coerced, manipulated, all the way back to the first one in 1965, and for the next twenty-five years. By incredibly clever means, Ellison has managed to put it over on the hundreds and hundreds of individuals responsible for awarding the Hugos, Nebulas, Edgars, Bram Stoker, P.E.N., Writers Guild, British Fantasy and World Fantasy Awards this Machiavellian no-talent has accumulated.

Not to mention somehow managing to hypnotize the readers of, say, *Locus*, who have voted for Ellison work over the years, in the number of thousands.

When the letter appeared in *Asimov's*, the magazine should have allowed me the courtesy of replying on the same page to the alleged Mr. Osborn's fever-dream. But not even the managing editor, Sheila Williams, took the letter very seriously. It was clear the author of that delusion was so sophomoric and so off-base, that there wasn't much point in replying. Nonetheless, Ms. Williams wrote a response:

When the Fourth Annual Readers' Award poll does appear, readers will be asked to look at the stories carefully and to only rank them in the category under which they are listed in the Index.

Which is beside the point.

It doesn't address what Mr. Osborn (alleged) was *really* up to. Because, if it were simply an overly punctilious reader being foolish enough to comment on a glitch as obvious as this even to a neophyte, then why the need for all that glop about MORE MORE MORE!!! (and each time the phrase appears, he puts three exclamation marks)? We are drawn to dismiss the whole thing as, well, ignorant drivel; and I would have done so, too, except years of dealing with this kind of mentality makes my antenna quiver.

And so I got the address of the correspondent from *Asimov's* (there had been no direction by the letter-writer that the address was to have been withheld), and I called information in Bremerton, Washington. And not only is there no Paul Osborn at the address on the letter, there is no "Paul Osborn" listed in Bremerton at all. And a simple check of public records in Bremerton advises that the parties listed as living at the address the alleged Mr. Osborn gave as his own, do not seem to go by the name Osborn.

So who is this letter-writer, who cobbles up gratuitously insulting codswallop? From the evidence of the letter, it is a regular reader of science fiction... what we call a fan. And it is one who thinks himself (or herself) devilishly clever, to go into left field to spread just another tidy slather of ugly supposition on a loaf already redolent with myth and bullshit. What kind of mentality is so meanspirited?

How many other writers have suffered this kind of odious letterhacking opprobrium through the years? And how many work-hours have been lost in trying to rectify the lousy impressions made by these people? Enough hours to write enough books to fill a large showcase. Books no one will ever read.

What toll does it take? Here's a small part of a four-page, single-spaced letter in response to my original query. It is from David Gerrold:

"The thing is, Harlan—I made a mistake. I thought that fans were important. If I'd never been introduced to fandom, I'd have saved five years of mistakes. Indeed, I credit my relationship with the more hostile elements of the fannish community with being partially responsible for a five year slump in my writing." David then goes on to relate anecdote after anecdote—one deranged woman who convinced a group of fans at a convention that she was carrying David's baby—a fan who sent him a greeting card that was personally inscribed, *Merry Christmas to Everybody. Except you.*—a fan who solicited contributions supposedly intended for the benefit of another fan who had been robbed... who didn't even exist—and he ends his letter as follows:

Curiously, there was a time when I thought the core of fandom was basically good people; it was only the fringies who were dangerous. ... I'm not willing to believe that any more. I'm not willing to be as accessible to fandom as I used to be. To do that would be to subject the writer inside to the kind of shitstorms that produced the slump in the first place. ... Since I left the fans behind, I have become the writer I want to be.

Not just to writers comes this unwanted attention. Ask any one of a dozen artists whose names have appeared on Hugo ballots in the past ten years how they respond to their paintings being stolen from the art show exhibition rooms, no matter how tough and wary the Security Guards; ask them how swell they feel when the fat fan scrutinizes the minimum bid on a painting and turns to the creator to snarl, "Who the hell d'ya think you are, Frank Frazetta?"; ask them

public. I'm worried about the quiet guy with a hair up his ass and a pistol

how their hearts sank when they got back the unsold artwork after the convention and found one of the oils had been slashed, how they felt that there were footprints on the black-and-white sketches.

But don't ask Tim Kirk about conventions, because his face is a mask of sorrow. He hasn't been to a convention in more than nine years and, if he's lucky, he won't have to attend another one. He's more than disenchanted. He's forlorn about what fandom appears to be in his eyes these days. He won't use the word pathetic, he prefers bathetic. But he knows that whatever pinnacles of artistic achievement he has scaled, or yet will scale, it has been in spite of fans and their "support." Because all they ever required of him was that he draw cute and harmless five-finger exercises. (By the thousands, for fanzines, who never paid him a dime.) Tim doesn't berate fans, or put them down, or rail against them. He doesn't say what I'm saying here in public. He knows better, as do so many other artists and writers—who seem to fear this loving cadre of vampire fans—not to stir the pot.

storm, you draw off a lot of craziness that's drifting around looking for a home. Whackadoos recognize themselves in your work, and their

But if you catch him late in the evening, when he's other than his usual quiet, charming self, he'll make it clear that the worst thing fans did to him was deny him the challenge of being as complete an artist as he wanted to be. Perhaps it's not their fault—they like what they like, and they want more and more of it, without change, without growth, without experimentation—but if an artist has a responsibility to his his craft, then it doesn't seem uncommon to expect the audience that also demands the artist's attention to show some sort of responsibility to the artist.

From Gregory Benford:

The oddest incident I recall is a fellow who sent along the predictable idea for a novel, with the usual deal: you write it, split the money with me. When I sent it back, unread, he replied with a warning—not that I shouldn't use the idea myself in fiction, but rather, a demand that he'd better not see me publishing research on this idea in the scientific literature!

He honestly thought his notion was Deep Stuff, and I, the sinister scientist, would ache to enhance my skinny publication list with a milestone paper on the wonderful whatsit.

Ah well.

looney-tune. Mine tend to be cripples looking for help. I suppose that can be just as exhausting as the vicious ones, but at least I

Ah well, indeed. The heartfelt sigh, the resigned shake of the head, and the dismaying certainty that the varieties of these individual lunacies is uncountable. If they don't get us with the compendium of horrors already explicated, they do it like this...

From Spider Robinson:

Total stranger calls up from "somewhere in California" at 2 AM. Says he's been thinking hard about suicide, and wants to know, is there really a Callahan's Place, and if so how do I get there, I have to know, tonight. Five minutes after the conversation ended, of course, I figured out just how I should have played it: told him yes, The Place is real, given him a set of bogus directions to

anywhere on Long Island, and hoped that on his way across the continent he ran into something that cheered him up. But I am not a trained crisis-call jockey or suicide counselor; what I *did* on the spur of the moment was what any jerk would have done. You make your own Callahan's Place wherever you go, always darkest before the dawn, a year from now you'll look back on this and laugh, why don't you tell me a little about what's bugging you and maybe we can find a way out together...

He hung up abruptly.

My firm belief is that he either died or tried to, very hard, within the ensuing fifteen minutes. I'll never know. I don't even have a first name for him. I went through changes the next few weeks. What I came away with was *anger*. Because I once entertained that guy for an idle hour, he repaid me

by dropping his entire karma, too heavy for him to heft, onto my lap, while making sure I'd have no place to put it.

Big surprise, Spider. That's standard operating procedure for this kind of emotional vampire. I wish I had a quarter for every "suicide" who has called me...and always at an indecent, inconvenient hour. And they never tell you who they are, they only want to whimper and moan about their unfortunate state of existence. The first hundred or so times it happened to me, I got all puffed up with human compassion and a sense of responsibility, and tried to talk them down.

Perhaps it helped, maybe it didn't. Who's ever to know? Because these wee hours parasites haven't the common decency ever to let you know, later, that you were of any value. They just flap in, unload their shit, make you feel awful, and then cut off. These days I have a very different manner with such intruders on my privacy.

But that was only the beginning of Spider's letter. He had a second story about another looneytune who appeared at his door. And when he offered *this* charming (and absolutely emblematic) delineation of the Fan Mentality at full flower, the stone fan being itself *in excelsis*:

Jeanne and I are at a con; some fans announce

they're taking us to dinner. Great, we're broke, and we're starving. So we drive, and we drive, and we drive. An hour, and Jeanne, as even-tempered a woman as ever lived, is threatening mutiny if we don't arrive soon. I should have guessed, from the way the driver kept giggling. An hour and a quarter after we had eyes to eat, the three-car caravan of fans pulls up in front of a roadside beanery called, you guessed it, Callahan's. The food was *awful*, the prices were horrendous, the service slovenly, and when the check came we learned for the first time that no one had figured on paying for our dinner. I mean, we're all fans together, right?

We did *not* pay for our dinner—we *couldn't*!

that anything can smarten the little darlings up. I don't know what we can say to the ones who hate us -- but to the ones who hurt us

We were broke and living off editorial charity for the weekend. But it was an unpleasant moment, complicated by the infuriating awareness that they had done all this to show us how much they loved us...

And he went on to deliver up a few more pain in the ass stories, ending his letter like this:

Hope all this is of help to you. Frankly, I don't hold out much hope that *anything* can smarten the little darlings up.

The list of authors and artists who have been stiffed with bounced checks for their services at fan-engineered conventions and media "spectaculars" is as endless, as well-tenanted as is the list of writers and artists who have had fans mooch meals, lodging and loans from them. Whether such productions have been conferences cobbled together by hubris-surfeited fans at colleges they attended (who rigged the gig just so they could meet "their favorite author"), or at hotels in large cities, whether as *Star Trek* conclaves or as comic book/movie-tv/science fiction gatherings. Writers as prominent as Sturgeon, Herbert, Asimov, Clarke, Niven, Simak, Bova, Moorcock and Shekley (to name just the few whose unprofitable experiences come quickly to mind) have found themselves lured at one time or another to some speaking engagement or convention that was nothing more than a demented wish-fulfillment in the litter-filled head of an adolescent fan, have found themselves having lost actual speaking gigs or trips because they thought they were committed for a job that never materialized, have found themselves at one time or another holding bad paper laid on them by a sweet-faced fan.

Joe Haldeman wrote:

One recurrent problem is that I write hard-science sf but am no scientist, and so occasionally screw up. There are legions of weirdos out there who read with a calculator in one scabrous paw. ... There have been a couple of potentially dangerous crazies. I got a scrawled note after *The Forever War* came out, congratulating me for "giving it to the Jews." All I can figure out is that one of the first people to die in the book is named Rabi, a Muslim name. But that guy probably sees Hitler's face in his Rice Krispies. ... One strange time a drunkish fan followed me around a convention rather late at night, trying to talk me into playing poker. I finally acquiesced, and three or four of us went up to his room, where he produced fancy chips and cards. At that time I showed him that I only had two dollars' cash on me, two antes. He was outraged and actually pulled a knife. I took it away from him easily enough... but it was one of those experiences that's more scary in retrospect than it is when it happens.

I mean, Charlie Manson was a science fiction

fan. I'm not so worried about the crazy letters and the occasional fan who starts sputtering at you in public. I'm worried about the quiet guy with a hair up his ass and a pistol in his pocket. Face it, Harlan; we get up on enough stages and sooner or later that guy is going to be in the audience. Let's hope he can't shoot straight.

He was in one of my audiences, Joe. He shot straight enough. Remind me to tell you that story some time.

That's one of the stories I *can* tell. There are many more anecdotes and horrors I've been asked *not* to pass along. There are stories I've been told "off the record," in strictest confidence, *sotto voce* and *sub rosa*, stories whose tellers could not stop themselves from imparting the dire news, but who, as they completed their tale of woe, suddenly realized this would see print. And they asked that their names be withheld. These are stories I cannot verify... from sources who insist on remaining unnamed...

Such as the very famous older writer, a golden age star name, who took a fan in to stay at his home, who only asked the fan to babysit when the writer and his wife had to go out, who didn't discover till weeks after the fan had left, that his "guest" had sodomized the writer's eleven-year-old granddaughter.

Such as the fantasy author who had written a strongly sexual novel, who was spat upon at a convention.

Such as the elderly writer who was forced to move from her apartment to escape the attentions of three fans who would not stop calling her, writing her, and coming to her house unannounced.

And more, and more, and more. But this becomes only the heaping on of redundancies. To what end? To the end of buttressing the reality of what writers suffer with many of their "loving fans" so solidly that not even the smallest rathole of rationalization—such as the "Well, Ellison is such a visible target, he deserves what he gets" *non sequitur*—is left to the guilt-ridden apologists who will bristle and rage at this essay.

After I had delivered this material at Westercon 37 in Portland, in 1984, I received a great many letters from pros and fans, horrified by the extent of this problem.

How about this, from Simon Hawke:

"Not long ago, my agent was trying to sell something of mine to an editor who shall go nameless. (And I will not divulge the name, don't ask.) Keep in mind, this is an editor I've never met or spoken to, but one who knows that Simon Hawke used to write under another name. (I am a very different person now in many ways. Older, wiser, calmer and more philosophical about life's various disappointments.) This editor took one look at the proposal, at my name on it, and—I have it on very good authority from someone who was in the office—rejected it without even bothering to read it. Apparently, this editor was once on a train, en route to a convention in Boston, and recalled a group of female fans, sitting at the other end of the

inadvertently, because they love us, I would say as follows: I know you want to do something nice for me -- but it's very hard to shop for someone you've never met, so why not play it safe and send cash?

car and talking loudly enough that she could hear them, discussing my 'sexual excesses,' rather like a group of high school girls comparing notes, apparently in so detailed and graphic a manner that she was so put off, she remembered it *years later* and it influenced her opinion of me. I was not someone she wanted to do business with. And the reason I know this is that she mentioned the incident in the office, where my acquaintance overheard.

"Now, at the risk of seeming overly self-effacing, while I have, in the past, occasionally gone to bed with someone I met at a convention, I am not Warren Beatty, nor am I De Sade, and I am not exactly John Holmes. In short, I am an average lover at best, I like to think considerate, affectionate, and giving, but by no stretch of the imagination am I a sexual athlete. Not to put too fine a point on it, I don't know who those women were, and while it's certainly possible I may have met one or more of them, perhaps even been intimate with one of them, though I cringe at the thought, I certainly did not do anything so out of the ordinary that it would excite any comment. Certainly nothing that would disgust anyone. And yet, though this incident does not begin to approach the sort of awful things you spoke of, it tarnished my reputation in that editor's eyes and it cost me a sale.

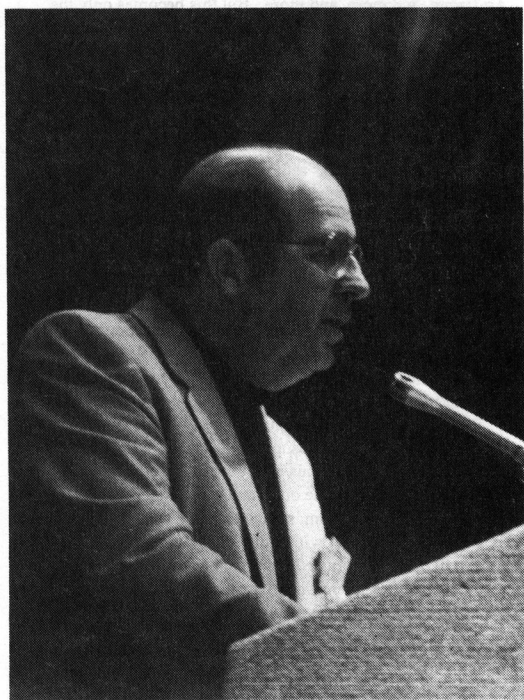
"Like many people, I used to think that you

attracted that sort of thing, unintentionally, by virtue of your highly visible profile and your aggressive, up-close-and-personal demeanor. I was wrong, as you so demonstrably proved by citing those who gave your letter a serious response. I had dropped out of sight, not going to cons or even speaking to editors, letting my agent handle all my business, anxious to put to rest, once and for all, the sort of gossip that had been floating over my head like a Sword of Damocles."

Mildred Downey Broxon wrote, in part, "That was a zinger of a speech at Westercon, and was the sole topic of conversation for many hours afterward, at least among the shaken and drained group in which I found myself.

"Your inclusion of 'testimonials' from other sufferers added versatility. It could, after all, be argued that your high visibility and assertive personality make you a natural target; but the evidence of other, widely-assorted victims was damning."

She said something even more interesting, and I'll get to that in a moment; but the authentication of what I've set down here, by the testimonial of the editor, parallels my actually displaying the letters at that Guest of Honor banquet. *This* time I didn't want the alleged Mr. Osborns of fandom to have a free shot at invalidating the message, muddying the water, diverting the focus...by calumny heaped on the messenger. Even if I cop to all the ugliness rumor and gossip lay at my door, even if I am as beastly as the fan mill suggests, how do the apologists explain all the rest of this litany?



ever done to me was send me form letters.... (Where did I get this vicious streak anyhow?)

Actually the worst was inviting me to be guest of honor at Icon in Iowa City. Rusty Hevelin (you probably know him--he looks and acts rather like Santa Claus) was fan guest of honor, and we were told we would give our speeches Friday afternoon.

Then Friday evening.

Then Saturday morning.

Then Saturday afternoon.

Then Saturday evening before the play. At no time were explanations of any of these postponements made.

I arrived at the play at about eight p.m., once more keyed up and ready to speak. First Rusty, then me. Right.

The cochair got on stage and announced that the guest of honor speeches would be given after the play, and I walked out.

About fifteen minutes later, Rusty found me and asked if I were going to speak after the play. I told him no--he could if he wished, but I would not. He explained that he intended to refuse and he'd wanted to suggest we act in concert. Our little meeting ended with our agreeing to strike the convention, which we did. To the best of my knowledge, it was the only time the fan and pro guests of honor (all the guests of honor that convention had) have staged a concerted labor action.

In fairness to SFLIS (it stands for the Science Fiction League of Iowa Students, and it's pronounced just like you think) I should add that I've been told that was the only really bad

GENE WOLFE, AT THE PODIUM FOR THE 1983 WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION, STAGED A WALKOUT AT A CONVENTION WHERE HE WAS GUEST OF HONOR, IN RESPONSE TO THE INCONSIDERATE TREATMENT HE RECEIVED--AT THE HANDS OF THE HOSTS.

As Malzberg said, the ninety-five per cent of you out there who are decent, sane, rational and courteous, those of you who are horrified at these revelations, will not know what to make of it all, because you don't act that way and you won't be able to fathom how others *can* act that way and think they're cute or anything less than loathsome. But the five per cent—a few of whom will no doubt appear in the letters column in a forthcoming issue to explain just why writers *do* deserve to be treated like shit, how we would be nowhere if it weren't for their valiant support of our careers by expenditure of their hard-earned pennies, how we have no right complaining and should be slavishly grateful for even vicious notice—that five per cent will continue in its british ways.

And after I delivered the material you've just read (which has been augmented by additional contributions from writers whose replies reached me after the Westercon, or who were solicited recently for a few updatings), here's how I ended my Guest of Honor speech:

(I said:) I've saved the best for last. Of all the things that have been done to me—and I have only scratched the surface here—and of all the things that have been done to other writers and artists, the prizewinning monstrosity, the anecdote that I think will put the last nail in the testament, comes from Alan Dean Foster.

I've saved it for last, because not even the most vicious detractor can find a bad word to say about Alan Dean Foster. He is as decent and courteous a man as one can hope to meet.

You ain't gonna believe *this* one.

Dear Harlan,

In re yours of the 5th. I have only one incident that might suit your purposes and I still haven't quite figured it out. I was heading back to my hotel room in the company of one of the con staff, after delivering the guest of honor speech at the past Okon, when someone yelled, "Alan Foster?" and I turned around and they hit me in the face with a paper cup full of warm vomit.

To this day what puzzles me is not the attack itself, which one comes to expect after a while, but the type of mind that not only could conceive of such a thing but actually find amusement in the preservation of its own vomit for the purposes of using it to assault another person. Someone had to throw up carefully into a cup and then carry it around with them while in the process of searching me out. To me, that's infinitely sicker than actually throwing the stuff.

Oh, gentle reader, you should have seen that banquet hall as I read from Alan's letter. The room was packed—if I recall correctly, something in the range of fifteen or sixteen hundred attendees at that Westercon—and delivering this talk took an hour and a half. As the time went by, and name after name came before them, as incident of awfulness followed incident upon anecdote, the room fell silent...the timorous, nervous laughter that had accompanied the telling of the first few stories, even that had ceased. At one table a woman was crying, her head laid down across her arms on the tabletop. At another table a man kept striking the padded seat of his chair, over and over, hardly seeming to know he was doing it. A woman was in the rear, moaning stop it, stop it, please stop it. A man standing against a wall had his eyes closed, swaying, rocking, back and forth. And from everywhere in that large ballroom, when I read Alan's letter, came the gasps of disbelief. At last, at final measure, *now* they couldn't deny the underlying message of the speech. All had been

preamble. Now they were drained, horrified to their shoetops, stony-eyed and pale, a great room filled with decent human beings who had to admit, at last, that their ranks contained a few of those who are unforgivable.

I had just turned fifty years old. Little more than a month earlier. And one of the fan dealers had taken note of that fact, and had produced an item to sell at this Westercon whereat I was Guest of Honor. And so this is how I finished my lecture:

"And where does it all come to mean something, to have a purpose, this dreadful litany of rudeness and impositions? What is the point? Well, it comes to a fan/dealer having the notion that printing up T-shirts that say, oh so cleverly,

50 SHORT YEARS OF HARLAN ELLISON, to be sold at a convention where this Harlan Ellison is the Guest of Honor, without even suggesting that the man whose name he's selling for five dollars a shot might be entitled to a royalty, much less be entitled to a moment's thought that the T-shirt might be insulting, is acceptable behavior.

"But no one makes those considerations, and dozens of such T-shirts are sold, and worn, as I can see from here that many of you have decked yourselves out in precisely that item of finery, and you come up to me, and you stand right in front of this alleged 'Guest of Honor' and you ask for an autograph, or you ask a question, or you make a comment, wearing clothing that mocks my height (a fact of nature over which I have no control, as opposed to your bad manners, which are entirely of your own making), and not one of you thinks the subject of the T-shirt might be hurt by such an insensitive act. One *must* assume none of you gave it a consideration, because the alternative is the contemplation of someone who throws warm vomit.

"And the subject of the T-shirt's logo only smiles as he signs your autograph, appearing properly slavishly grateful for your attention, and the fifty-year-old man says nothing.

"But like George Alec Effinger and Stephen King and Barry Malzberg and David Gerrold and Tim Kirk and many, many others who asked that their names not be mentioned...the short fifty-year-old man will resist more and more ever going among such people.

"Because they are not kind. And one need not put up with unkindness from those who pretend to be all of the same family of noble dreamers, not when there are so many total strangers in the world who will be beastly without reason.

"Children of our dreams, so many of you have said. Oh, how I was moved by what you wrote; oh, how you turned my life around; oh, how much this or that story meant to me when I was lonely and desperate. Children of our dreams.

"Xenogenesis.

"The children do not resemble the parents.

"And many of you wonder why some of those literary parents think positively of the concept that birth control might be made retroactive."

That was the end of it, or at least it should have been. But reality continues to challenge our best fantasies for the title of Most Unbelievable.

In the weeks that followed that speech, as I said, I received a lot of mail about the presentation. All of it was of this sort, represented by an extract from a letter by a young man named Anthony Pryor, then living in Portland:

Your speech at the banquet moved me greatly. I knew that some insane fans occasionally did unpleasant things to authors; but *this*... unthinkable! ... And so, to show you that your

brick or a knife or something equally lethal you walk around half expecting, but warm puke?

anger, and the words with which you expressed that anger, did not fall on deaf ears, I want you to know that I, as well as many friends to whom I have spoken, will endeavor—if we are aware of it and have the means of dealing with it—to prevent such things as you discussed in your speech from happening. We may never get the chance. The psychotics will continue to insult, injure and anger authors despite our feeble efforts to stop them, but if we can prevent such things from happening just once, it will have been worthwhile.

Which would lead one to believe that, yes, if one makes a case as strong as this, and delivers it with passion and conviction, that it will touch the soul of even the basest listener. Right. And pigs'll fly.

Here is a verbatim extract from the Westerncon 37 daily update circulated at that event. It is dated Monday, July 2nd. It was distributed throughout the convention the morning after my presentation.

RUMOR CONTROL: At roughly 4:15 a.m. several fire alarms were activated in the hotel and some floors were evacuated temporarily. To the best of our knowledge, this is what happened:

A smoke detector was pulled out of the ceiling in the hallway on the 12th floor. This caused an alarm to go off.

A fire alarm was pulled on floor 10.

Activation of the fire alarms causes certain safety mechanisms to automatically engage in the hotel. Fire doors closed. An emergency ventilation system switched on.

One blower stuck. Salon F began to fill with smoke from a smoldering fanbelt on the stuck blower.

Although there was smoke, apparently there was no fire.

We don't know who broke the smoke detector or who pulled the alarm.

All parties were closed down. We appreciate everyone's calmness and cooperation.

UPDATE 7:30 AM: At a meeting with Marriott management the significance of false alarms was stressed. The possibility of injury or death is great in any emergency evacuation.

BECAUSE OF LAST NIGHT'S FALSE ALARM, WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ALLOW ANY ROOM PARTIES TONIGHT. IF WE CAN LOCATE THE INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ALARM, WE MAY (REPEAT: MAY) BE ABLE TO RENEGOTIATE THIS WITH THE HOTEL.

If we can't have room parties, we will have a large party in Salon E. This will mean **HOTEL LIQUOR ONLY** in this space.

Hospitality Suite will be open in the Presidential Suite until 6 pm, non-alcohol. At 6 pm Hospitality will move to Ballroom level to accommodate (sic) the general dance and party Monday evening. This is in conformance with the "NO PARTIES" agreement we negotiated with the hotel.

The Convention Committee sincerely regrets this major inconvenience. These pranks are a danger to everyone.

And in her letter received by me the week after the convention, Mildred Downey Broxon went on to say, "Scuttlebutt has it that you were feeling as if the idiot who set off the fire alarm might have been influenced by your speech. I tend to doubt that. Such a person probably didn't even *listen* to your speech and, if he heard it, failed to understand what you were saying. It is highly likely that one of these subhumans was to blame.

"However, the incident following so closely on your speech may have caused those few who thought the matter exaggerated to take

notice. Nothing like being rousted out at 4 AM, after all, to make one think. Long and bitterly."

And so, nature imitates nature, sans the art.

There could have been more, much more, to this essay. I have at hand a long series of lamentations by Joe Straczynski on the *new* venue for fan abuse...Computer Bulletin Board Systems; and a late reply from Jean M. Auel detailing a demand for money "anywhere from \$20 to \$8000" by a fan; and a ghastly incident that happened to Joe L. Hensley...

But you get the idea.

And those of you in the sane, courteous ninety-five per cent... well, perhaps this concentrated jolt of nastiness will alert you to the other five per cent who roam and foam among us. The alleged Paul Osborns of the world. Those who come slouching to the party given by the noble dreamers with that little paper cup hidden behind their back.

Warm vomit. Xenogenesis. Have a nice day.

Harlan Ellison is the author of over 45 books collecting his short stories and essays. He has won more awards than any other living writer in the field, most recently for his collection, *Angry Candy*. He stays home a lot.

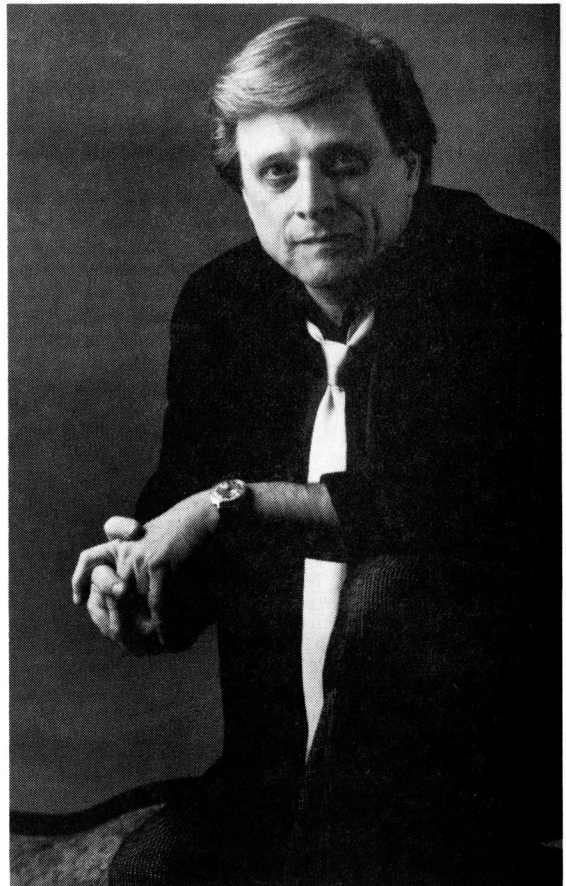


Photo by Christine Valada ©1989 by M.C. Valada

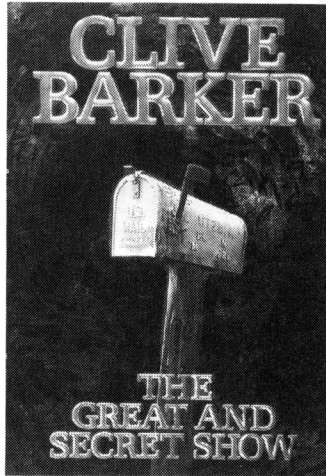
Hope all this is of help to you. Frankly, I don't hold out much hope

recommendations



Every reader loves to find a good new writer, but it's never an easy quest. There's so much new material coming out that reading the cover blurbs alone could be a daunting task. But there is hope for horror readers in the form of a seemingly never-ending stream of high-quality, hardcover anthologies from reputable big and small press publishers. The past three months have seen the release of *Masques III*, *Night Visions 7*, *Stalkers* and *Razored Saddles*. In and of themselves they're all great buys, with new material for every existing taste and some that have yet to be defined. But reading between the books, there's another message—that a few new names are ready to join the big boys of horror. For example, Richard Laymon graces the pages *Night Visions 7*, *Stalkers* and *Razored Saddles*. These stories can give readers just the right angle on *Resurrection Dreams*, a brilliant new novel that mates an existentially sparse style to a lurid zombie movie content. Rex Miller, the man behind the sloppy but inventive *Slob*, has stories in *Masques III* and *Stalkers*. Both utilize characters from *Slob*, and both show a talent swelling out of all proportion. They'll also prepare you for the feast of fun in *Frenzy*, the newest entry in the *Eichord Sextet*. Veteran Al Sarrantonio, who is represented by a chillingly realistic tale in *Stalkers* and an SF tinged story in *Razored Saddles*, has just released *Moonbane*, a humorous and horrifying novel with a B sci-fi movie feel. These are not the only authors to stand out in these anthologies—but they're a good example of how the alert reader can use these collections as a sieve to sort out writers they like, and track down an endless supply of good, frightening books.

—Rick Kleffel



THE GREAT AND SECRET SHOW

by Clive Barker
ISBN 0-00-223453-X
Collins Hardcover (British),
approximately \$25.00 - \$50.00

Clive “the future of horror” Barker, the genre’s first genuine wunderkind, hasn’t really made his mark on the American reading masses—the legions of fans who send Stephen King’s books to the top of the bestseller lists.

Like *Weaveworld*, *The Great and Secret Show* mixes fantasy and horror but it displays, with surprising power, a kinder, gentler Clive Barker, a writer who attempts and succeeds at the difficult feat of making his good guys as interesting as his bad guys.

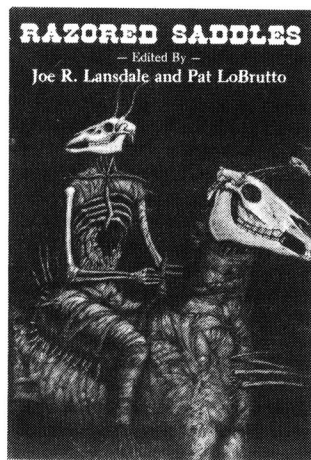
Barker’s horrors have always had an SF feel to them, as evidenced in this novel by an evolutionary accelerating agent—the “nuncio” (messenger)—that helps elevate the novel’s first set of antagonists, Fletcher (the good) and The Jaff (the evil) beyond humanity and into contact with “quiddity,” the dream sea shared by



humankind. The only others to be aware of this source of power are those in “the shoal,” a secret church, hidden throughout history. Barker’s a master at convincingly creating this dream conspiracy, and admirably achieves the segue from the science fiction aspects of the nuncio to the supernatural aspects of the shoal. His antagonists must carry out their battle on Earth, however, using human pawns. Unfortunately, the children they procreate for this purpose fall in love, and screw up their papas’ master plan. Since this is the first novel in a series, and a seven hundred page novel at that, things get pretty complicated pretty fast. Still, don’t expect a King-like page-turner. Barker writes in a haunting, poetic style, much closer to Peter Straub than Stephen King.

The real achievement of this novel is Barker’s new softer touch, his creation of heroes every bit as interesting as the monsters. Both are extracted from the psyches of those who populate the town of Palomo Grove, the evil terata in a process that will have readers sweating bullets. But “good monsters” are perhaps the most memorable since those in Koontz’s *Watchers*. Be forewarned, the now trademarked sex and violence are still present, but in lesser quantity, and Barker’s forces of evil are as pestilently evil as ever. Don’t think however, that this book is any less powerful than its predecessors—in fact, the changes make it more so. Thoroughly enjoyable by itself, readers will find that this book is a superb set-up for things to come. Now that the groundwork is laid out, it looks as if Barker intends to have some serious fun. As will all of his fans.

—Rick Kleffel



RAZORED SADDLES

edited by Joe R. Lansdale and Pat LoBrutto
ISBN 0-913165-49-2
Dark Harvest
Trade Hardcover Edition, \$19.95

STALKERS

edited by Ed Gorman and Martin H. Greenburg
ISBN 0-913165-47-6
Dark Harvest
Trade Hardcover Edition, \$19.95

Dark Harvest has finally taken the reins—literally—of the small press horror publishing world with the release of its two latest anthologies. *Razored Saddles* is an anthology of “western style” stories that absolutely defies categorization, but contains one helluva lot of good writing, while *Stalkers* sidesteps the usual horror clichés in presenting 18 tales that run light

on plodding monsters and heavy on psychological suspense. Together they represent a decidedly radical departure from the average horror anthology, a departure that most genre readers will welcome with open arms.

Stalkers is certainly the more “traditional” of the two collections. The editors restrain their comments to a terse but funny intro and a brief comment regarding each writer’s contribution. The sole exception is Dean Koontz, who is fortunately allowed to write an introduction to his story “Trapped.” It shows this writer can write some really funny prose. It’s a shame he doesn’t use it more in his fiction, but his story, though one of the longest in the book, will be read the quickest by most readers. It’s Koontz at his page-turning best, with a good dose of the warm, human characters for which he’s so well known.

The other “novella” length piece in *Stalkers* is F. Paul Wilson’s “A Day in the Life,” which follows an “equalizer”-style character (who complains about the goody-two shoes image the program sheds on him) as he takes care of a few “problems.” It’s great length and form for Wilson to work in, and he packs in a multitude of unexpected action and plot twists. Rex Miller’s powerfully written “Miss December (An Eichord Vignette),” despite the title, certainly qualifies as one of the best short stories in this book. Al Sarrantonio’s “Children of Cain” is so incredibly horrifying—not gory, just disturbing—and powerful, it makes you wonder why nobody has written about the clever idea before. And Richard Laymon’s prose effectively gives “The Hunt,” the stark, moonlit feel of a chase in the forest.

What sets *Stalkers* apart from the crowd is the emphasis on realistic horrors as opposed to supernatural horrors. This isn’t to say that the collection is without a supernatural content—but it’s interesting to see the pendulum swing from vampires and werewolves to psychos and serial killers. With more and more top name writers releasing novels about psychos, (King’s *Misery*, Straub’s *Koko*, Harris’ *The Silence of the Lambs* and Miller’s *Eichord* novels), it’s good to see an anthology with short fiction covering some of the same ground. It’s also a reminder that reality is far more frightening than fantasy.

The reality of the old west, however, manages to take a real beating in Joe R. Lansdale’s *Razored Saddles*. His

introduction is worth the price of admission alone—it’s a hilarious look at the fussy politics of writing in a genre as only Joe Lansdale could write it. But there’s gold in them thar stories, that’s for sure—and more variety than any reader would have believed possible. Horror fans may find it a bit confusing at first, but it’s the best breath of fresh air the genre has had in a long time.

As Lansdale notes, the stories often only start with a western setting or idea, and the faster they run, the farther they leave the west behind. Robert R. McCammon’s tale “Black Boots,” is the fantastically inventive story of a psycho killer in the wild west. Surreal and surprising, it’s yet another affirmation of McCammon’s writing skills, and a welcome bit out of the mainstream he usually inhabits. SF writer Lewis Shiner does what every writer hopes to do in “Gold”—he makes the reader really care about something he/she may have absolutely no interest in whatsoever, and spins a yarn about pirate gold and Houston in the 1800’s. Scott Cupp’s “Thirteen Days of Glory” is sure to raise some Texas tempers to a boil in its totally heretical retelling of the Alamo, and Neal Barret offers one of the most compelling characterizations to come down the pike in a long while in “Tony Red Dog,” the story of the only Amerindian hit man in the mafia. Horror fans who get tired of ceaseless slaughter will find in this anthology the perfect antidote—equal measures of laughter, outrage, tears and terror.

And, even more so than *Stalkers*, it succeeds at widening the range of emotions, plots, ideas, and forms covered by the banner of horror fiction. *Razored Saddles* includes a number of stories that can’t even by any stretch of the imagination be called horror, but that doesn’t mean that horror fans won’t find them enjoyable. It’s like a day off in the old west. Ride a pony, get thrown on your butt, drink a lot of beer. Have a gun shoved in your face.

Taken together, these two books bode well for the genre. They’re not ready to sink in a mire of gore, but then, they won’t look away from it either. They take some chances, but even the misses are interesting, and can point out some new directions for horror readers. Most importantly, when they hit, they’re right on target.

—Rick Kleffel

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MOONBANE

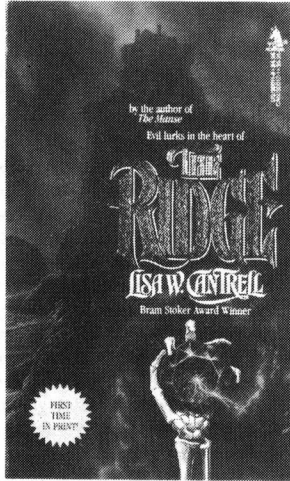
by Al Sarrantonio
Bantam Spectra
\$3.95, paperback

What could be more frightening than the end of the world? Why, the end of the world by *werewolves*, of course. In *Moonbane*, Al Sarrantonio paints a pretty picture of this ugly situation and puts a new SF spin on an old supernatural monster. What results is a thriller with a film noir feeling set in an eerie desert landscape dotted by sculpted skeletons and loose-limbed, hot-headed werewolves.

His protagonist, Jason Blake, is a poet and amateur astronomer who witnesses, in swift succession, a cataclysmic *War of the Worlds*-style meteor shower, his wife's death at the claws of a ferocious monster, and his son's transformation into something no less deadly than what killed his wife. He's understandably upset about all this, but there's not a lot of time for sensitivity. The narrative is propelled by the nightmare logic of Sarrantonio's clever scenario, and there's an edge of humor in the prose and plotting, but it never takes over and bursts into full scale parody. The SF explanation that drives the story is clever, but it doesn't get in the way of the action, and the narrator's penchant for poetry gives the prose a clean, clear quality that isn't precious or pretentious.

In Sarrantonio's world, there's virtually no time to get to know the characters, but the evocative details he supplies bring Blake and those he meets to life from being mere cardboard cutouts. Like the best of the B-movies, there's a core of sentiment that ties together the plot twists, and both successfully catch the reader by surprise. A nice touch is the fact that the werewolves have a civilization of their own, and a good reason for acting like vicious, bloodthirsty killers. They're mad, and you would be too, if you were one of them. What could be more frightening than the end of the world by werewolves? Why, that depends on your point of view...

—Rick Kleffel



THE RIDGE

by Lisa W. Cantrell
Tor
\$4.95, paperback

Traditional "Gothic Horror" has really taken a beating lately at the hands of horror fans themselves—and not without good reason. Dominated by uninventive, formulaic bestsellers, it hasn't been breaking any new ground except in the pocketbooks of its ever-shrinking fandom. Lisa W. Cantrell's *The Ridge* is good news for those fans—and the rest of the horror world. The winner of the Bram Stoker award for Outstanding First Novel *The Manse* here offers a hybrid of crime thriller and shadowy terror that pumps some much-needed new blood in an old genre.

Playing against the traditional gothic stereotype (or perhaps creating a new one), Cantrell's main character is Nick Vears, a government-sanctioned hit man. When his ex-wife and her new family are blown to bits in a room of their stone house at the edge of a stormy sea, only his daughter survives, untouched on a circle of clean carpet in the center of the carnage. Nick must avoid the retaliation of a Mafia strongarm while he tries to pry open the secrets of *The Ridge* before he can fall under suspicion for the deaths. Thankfully, the writer doesn't take all of this too seriously, but instead lets the character take a high-tech path into this murky gothic labyrinth. At the center,

there are sacred stones, a rock(!) band, an Ancient (capital "A," please) cult, and powers that can peel your flesh.

Perhaps the only problem with this novel lies in the fact that a woman horror writer (certainly a minority in the genre) has created, as her main female characters, a catatonic child and the leggy, easily terrorized Danielle. Though they're clearly minor players in this soap, it would have been nice to see Cantrell cast them a bit more against type. Still, each retains a clear identity, the story makes perfect sense, and before you can finish smiling, you may have finished the book. While clearly not a novel for all horror fans, *The Ridge* will satisfy the thirst of some, an ancient thirst, waiting seductively on the edge of a dark road for a handsome—or beautiful—stranger.

NIGHT VISIONS 7

edited by Stanley Wiater
Dark Harvest
Trade Hardcover Edition, \$19.95

Most anthologies don't give you more than a single example of a writer's work. Fortunately, this isn't true for Dark Harvest's *Night Visions* series. In *Night Visions 7*, the three writers showcased at length are self-professed "splatterfart" Richard Laymon, Chet Williamson, noted for his vivid characterizations, and mainstream master Gary Brandner. Editor Stanley Wiater, noted for his interviews in Britain's *Fear* magazine, bravely alters the editor's traditional role and format. Instead of the usual "horror is a good thing" introduction, he gives the reader a brief interview with each writer following his work. This strategy makes this the most unique of the *Night Visions* books, but in some cases, readers might prefer to read the interview before the stories.

One of those cases is Richard Laymon's work. It's easy to mistake his stripped-down, nearly existential style for pure exploitation, but close reading and the interview make it clear this is not the case. His best story here is "Bad News," in which a man finds a very bad surprise wrapped up in his paper. In it, a common American ritual (getting and reading the morning paper) is swiftly and surely

developed into an Apocalyptic vision. But readers won't have time to get bogged down in "meaning of life" speculation. It's only in afterthought that you realize what Laymon's working towards, and his gripping style ensures that there will be some afterthought.

Chet Williamson, on the other hand, writes atmospheric, character and voice oriented stories. "The Confessions of St James" finds Williamson in absolutely top form as he takes the voice of Brandon St. James, a parish priest in a small town takes a communion of human flesh. It sounds like the stuff of the National Enquirer, but Pastor St James' voice is as steady, stately and compelling as any to grace the horror field in quite some time. When this priest is confronted by a truly evil teenager, his already confused morality eventually brings him to a believable but horrifying confrontation. It might sound hokey from a distance, but be assured that Williamson's treatment is top-notch, making this an emotionally authentic novella of horror.

And finally, Gary Brandner takes us back into the mainstream with the *Twilight Zone*-like "Damntown." He takes a marriage in trouble, gets the emotions exactly right, brings things to an uncomfortably tense pitch, then sends the family back to Quin Kirby's father's "home town." Brander keeps the plot purring, the characters bickering and eventually traps them in an ugly archetypal, situation. He works well within the novella length, and succeeds in creating a story that mixes scares and sentiments in perfect proportions.

As usual, *Night Visions 7* is lavishly illustrated and nicely designed in a sort of "hardcover EC comics" style. From its violent beginning to the bloody end, this is the kind of enjoyable, quality writing readers have come to expect from the *Night Visions* series.

FRENZY

by Rex Miller
Onyx
\$3.95, paperback

One of the more interesting debut novels last year was Rex Miller's *Slob*, whose prose and plot were every bit as overheated as the cover blurbs. This year,

readers can pick up *Frenzy*, the second in Miller's *Eichord Sextet*, and witness the progress of a writer who's becoming better with every book. For *Frenzy* is better than *Slob*—every bit as hotheaded and overblown, but with more controlled prose, and an intriguing new twist on the psyche of a serial killer.

In *Frenzy*, the reader is introduced to the hypnotic, disturbed thoughts of mafia hit man and wimpy husband, Frank Spain. When his wife leaves him, he starts to unravel; when his daughter runs away, he starts to break down; when his daughter is killed in a snuff flick, he flies apart like a fragmentation grenade. This process is expertly rendered by Miller's bigger-than-life prose. He creates a "hybrid killer"—"You got your psychopath, your assassin or hit man, who will have an organized mind, and a psychotic, who is disorganized in his kill pattern." It's to Miller's credit that the reader sympathizes with Frank Spain. It certainly doesn't hurt that most of the victims (porn brokers and eventually, members of Frank's own "family") pretty much *deserve* to die in the grisly, horrible fashions that Miller can so easily conjure. The faint-of-heart had best be forewarned that Miller's imagination is pretty perverse—he can effortlessly invent that which most of us will try to forget.

But beyond the splatter, beyond the excesses, the real joy of *Frenzy* is its hearty confirmation that Miller really *wants* to do something different. His plots aren't standard bestseller issue, and his prose has an adolescent exuberance that's surprisingly charming. Don't think for a moment, however, that this isn't page-turning, gripping reading. If the book doesn't keep you awake with nightmares, it will keep you awake as you try to finish it. The best news, though, is that Miller's a new horror writer who's emphatically *trying* to take chances, and while some of his potshots miss, when he's on target, he hits you in a place you didn't know existed.

—Rick Kleffel

MASQUES III

edited by JN Williamson
ISBN 0-312-2948-9
St. Martin's Press
\$17.95 Hardcover

One of the most welcome

developments in hardcover horror is the abundance of anthologies featuring all-new work by both known and unknown writers. Last year, JN Williamson followed up his much respected *Masques* anthology with *Masques II*, and this year he presents *Masques III*, which may be the best of the bunch. It's somewhat sad to see the series leave the small press of Maclay and Associates, but the fact is, this volume is bigger and better than its predecessors. Bigger because there are more stories, better, because there are more new writers introduced, and some interesting distinctions made between the types of stories showcased.

The difference here is that Williamson has gone to some trouble to divide the stories into four distinct categories—"Stories for All Seasons" ("classic horror"), "The New Horror" ("Splatterpunk"), "Concerns of the Mind and Spirit" ("quiet horror") and "Creatures of Terror" ("monster stories"). This might have backfired, but it doesn't. Williamson makes some interesting points in each section heading, using the sub-genre distinctions to give readers a sense of the different directions in which the writers and the genre horror are heading. Moreover, the stories in each section often overlap sub-genre boundaries, showing just how fragile these distinctions can be. Each story is prefaced by a brief biography/appreciation of the writer, including a list of the writer's other publications. This is especially helpful to readers who like a given writer and want to find more of his work.

But, as in any anthology, it's the stories that make the book worthwhile. Of particular note here are Rex Miller's surprisingly—happy?—"The Luckiest Man in the World," which features the return of *Slob*'s serial killer, Chaingang, and Dan Simmons' "Shave and A Haircut, Two Bites." Small press habitue Gary A Braunbeck offers "All But the Ties Eternal," a (literally) heart-rending story of the aftermath of a parental suicide. Also notable is Williamson's decision to include poetry, the most powerful of these being the contributions of Alan Rodgers and Bruce Boston. But these are just the stories that appealed to me on the first reading. Academically speaking, *Masques III* is an excellent overview of horror in 1989, but more than that, it's a book you can read and re-read.

—Rick Kleffel

RESURRECTION DREAMS

by Richard Laymon
ISBN 0-491-03398-2
WH Allen

Hardcover (British) approximately
\$30.00

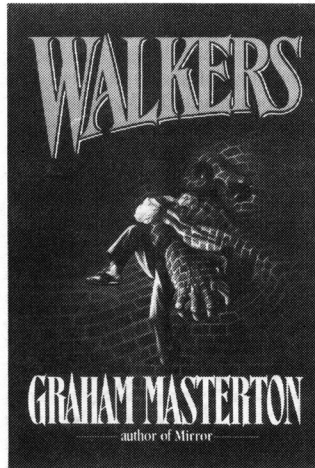
Richard Laymon is a reluctant splatterpunk. In any event *Resurrection Dreams*, is a brilliant novel independent of any labeling that could be applied. Sure, there's a good deal of sex, a lot of blood, and more than a few laughs for the sick-at-heart. But don't let the outside fool you; *Resurrection Dreams* is a prime example of stylistic economy that's both extremely readable and nothing less than unique. Laymon combines a splatter-style movie plot with an existential distillation of bestseller prose, and manages, against all odds to create an artistic, accessible novel.

Plot is an integral part of the "storyteller/bestseller" style, and *Resurrection Dreams* has a real neck-snapper, one that is distorted beyond all reason in the back cover copy of the American paperback version. To set the record straight then: it seems that Melvin, the class geek, got himself in a bit deep eight years ago, when, for his senior science project, he tried to resurrect the body of a decapitated cheerleader with a car battery. Even Vicki, his only friend, had to cut loose after that stunt. When she returns to town, now a doctor, she knows she'll have to see Melvin, who has been let out of the local sanitarium. Little does she know, however, that he's having some small amount of success with his resurrections of late; still, she can guess that he has some unsavory plans for her body. Laymon's simple, straight line plot structuring reads like Dean Koontz on speed. It's hard to believe that you can read a three hundred page novel in a day. But you have to. Between the literally deadpan humor and high-voltage tension, Laymon finds a true heart, and creates characters that the reader wants to protect from the mayhem he so surely sets stumbling towards them. That in itself would be a major accomplishment.

What sets Laymon apart from the crowd is that he does all this with a unique prose style that he's developed over a

series of novels. Last year's *Flesh* is also written in the same style, a Camus-meets-Romero sparseness that keeps the reader riveted. Despite the short-short paragraphs and the terse descriptions, the reader never loses a sense of place and time. The action scenes are as well choreographed as a Peckinpah movie, and play out at the same sickly, slow-mo pace as a nightmare—you just can't read fast enough. You may finish this novel as fast as the average short story, but not without realizing that it's a great book.

—Rick Kleffel



WALKERS

by Graham Masterton
ISBN 0-312-93201-4
Tor
\$18.95, hardcover

Before his stint as editor of the *Scare Care* anthology, British writer Graham Masterton was known primarily as a novelist. Those who liked last year's *Mirror* will love *Walkers*, as will most other horror fans. This novel truly has it all—clear characters, graphic horror, a

tense plot that doesn't feel manipulative, a gloomy, spooky atmosphere, and above all an imaginative idea that is cleverly developed with lots of surprises. That isn't to say *Walkers* aspires to be or is "great art"—but if great entertainment is what you're looking for, *Walkers* is a novel that will fill your needs and then some.

The gloomy atmosphere is effectively established from the first paragraph of page one, when Jack Reed, owner of a small chain of muffler shops, runs over a small child on a desolate road. Or is it a child? Perhaps it's an animal, or a newspaper. When he follows it, he finds an abandoned insane asylum, and before you can say "It's a trap," his son has been pulled into the walls of the asylum by one Quintus Miller. Miller, it seems was an inmate who studied the books of sorcery kept in the asylum library, and found an escape that allowed him to walk through the walls. But he was trapped by a priest within the walls of the asylum, and now he wants Jack to help him complete escape—or else.

What Masterton does most effectively in this novel is create a surreal supernatural situation that allows Miller and one hundred and twenty other homicidally insane inmates to threaten anyone, anywhere, any time. What's more, he develops the premise methodically then excitingly carries it to the logical extreme—and far beyond the reader's expectations. Between the scares, there's some depressing characterization of the tension that exists between Jack, his wife and his son. It's not a good marriage to start with, and Quintus Miller's efforts to escape make a bad situation worse.

In a time when mainstream horror might seem to be stagnating, Masterton has written an entirely accessible novel that is also exciting and inventive. This is the kind of book most readers will see as a movie—albeit a movie that would be very, very expensive to make. The visual descriptions are startling and surreal, but easy to imagine. And, like the best movies, it's over far too soon. If you've never read Graham Masterton, *Walkers* is a great reason to start.

—Rick Kleffel

B O NARCOPOLIS & OTHER P O E M S

edited by Peggy Nadramia
Hell's Kitchen Productions, Inc.
P.O. Box 370
Times Square Station
New York, N.Y. 10108

The landscape of what is termed horror poetry maps its way through any and every genre of literature. It has no walls. This art form stalks ordinary or extraordinary images with pushes and twists that can terrorize, chill or question an audience. In *Narcopolis & Other Poems*, an anthology of horror verse by twenty-three authors, such a variety of topics and ideas is represented that even the most discriminating reader will find something to like.

The title poem "Narcopolis," by Wayne Allen Sallee (that name itself sounds like a poem,) also the longest poem in the book, takes the reader on a horrific tour of a large metropolis where death, disease, poverty, suffering, and unhappiness have poisoned the life-force there. Though not my favorite poem in the book, I like its message which is an uncomfortable truth: the need for escapism has run wild until the city becomes not a place of growth and dreams, but rather a graveyard filled with people who only want to get out, to die...

Two poems by G. Sutton Breidling leave the page blistered. Beautiful words such as:

With the unutterable grief
of a thousand cities
Burning my heart into red
acidic gutters

lead to:

Your body split like
rotten fruit
My hand in your stomach
Your brains filling my
mouth

from the poem "Suite for the Tomb of Her Tongue."

"Deadman" by E. Ormsby has a last line that demands a pause in reading; a disturbing silence. It's what poetry should be about.

Steve Sneyd's "There Is A Happy Land" speaks of a kind of fantasy and fear we all have and will probably face.

"Sometimes a sort of love arises/
between two sleepers on neighboring/
slabs" is truly horrific.

Some poems tell a narrative story, such as "All Night Gas Station," by Donald McLeod, where a gas station attendant meets the Grim Reaper. The lonely lines: "Torn sheet of tin/ slapping over a shack/ bats slicing the yellow moon" set the scene.

Another great personification of Death comes out in "Death Came Down Upon Her" by J. Peter Orr.

Only in a horror anthology would you find a poem called "Mucustodians." Written by Keith Allen Daniels, this poem is about mucus that kills. Sounds like a monster we know as the virus HIV, or any virus for that matter.

"These Dark Futures We Now Inhabit" by Robert Frazier offers, in one section, the point of view of an embryo who sees what her mother, who works in a MASH unit, sees, and how the embryo comes to believe birth is some kind of death. By showing war from different and unique points of view, this poem is one of the strangest I've ever read.

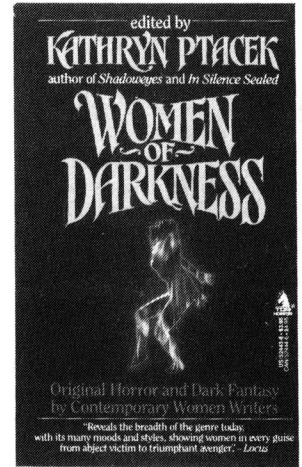
A few of the poems in this book are abstract or experimental. Thus, *Narcopolis* is not always an easy-read. Some poems are difficult. Some appear to make no sense. But the many outstanding poems make *Narcopolis* worth exploring.

Some other poets represented in this anthology are: Bruce Boston, Denise Dumars, t. Winter-Damon, Lisa Lepovetsky, David C. Kopaska-Merkel. Read it.

—Wendy L. Rathbone



K S



WOMEN OF DARKNESS

Original Horror and Dark Fantasy
by Contemporary Women Writers
edited by Kathryn Ptacek

I like nothing better than to sit down with a book of short stories by all different authors and let each in her own way give a glimpse of a portion of the world that lives within that artist's imagination. *Women of Darkness* contains twenty such glimpses by new and established writers, the first of which is the excellent "Baby" by Kit Reed. This one is one of my favorites in the book not because the story is highly original, or because the ending is a complete surprise, but because it is told so well, and because the characters seem real. The key to good horror is whether or not the reader cares about the people and what is happening to them. This story develops a character that is sympathetic, without resorting to cliches.

Another of my favorites is "Little Maid Lost" by Rivka Jacobs. This is a real story! The characterization is complete, the actions are unpredictable yet satisfying, and the shocking thing that happens in the story, (a matter that involves child molestation,) becomes that much more horrific, since it is seen from the point of view of a twelve year old child who is unaware there is anything wrong. This is a true

“seduction of the innocents” tale, and one that will leave the reader winded and in shock at the end.

Lisa Tuttle’s “The Spirit Cabinet,” got me. I didn’t see the end coming until I read it. Though another reader of more astute precognitive powers than I might have predicted the outcome, I still think the story is powerfully effective and the writing superb.

As usual, Tanith Lee’s incredible prose style leads to a deliciously perverse and dark story called “The Devil’s Rose.” This is another one that you can’t see coming until the end, unless, of course, you are knowledgeable of the metaphors she uses in the beginning to hint at what is going to happen.

An excellent story about the disintegration of the soul and personality is “Aspen Graffiti” by Melanie Tem. Ever wonder why people suddenly grow disinterested with family, job or friends that they’ve seemed content with all along? This story gives one idea as to the cause. Again, the excellent writing helps it get its point across in a chilling, unique way.

Some of the less straight forward, more bizarre stories in this anthology are “In The Shadows of My Fear,” by Joan Vander Puitten, “Hooked On Buzzer,” by Elizabeth Massie, and “Mother Calls But I Do Not Answer,” by Rachel Cosgrove Payes. They are all written from the point of view of a person who is quite obviously mentally ill, thus the prose is part of the characterization, and the scenes are dreamlike, often confusing. Yet the stories are strong on their own, often terrifying.

Three more stories that deserve mention are “Sister,” by Wennicke Eide Cox, “The Unloved,” by Melissa Mia Hall, and most certainly “Cannibal Cats Come Out Tonight,” by Mancy Holder. The first, “Sister,” tells of a relationship between a young girl and her dead sister who saves her from the same fate that befell her. Told from the point of view of a nine year old, the helplessness this girl faces around adults that will not or cannot protect her is tragic.

“The Unloved” tells a unique, poetically written story about twins and love and mental illness. This one has a disappointing ending, but done in the true spirit of absolute horror.

If you can stomach it, “Cannibal Cats Come Out Tonight” will probably be one of the most memorable stories you’ll ever read. It’s about—you

guessed it—cannibalism. It’s sick but amazing. The relationship between the two main characters, Dwight and Angelo, is touching, sweet, the way best friends should be. And the secret they share binds them forever until one decides it’s not exactly what he wants. Don’t eat before you read this story.

The rest of the stories in this anthology are interesting, imaginative, but not as memorable as the ones mentioned above. If I had time and room enough, I’d go into them all, but now I can only say: if you enjoy horror, if you enjoy classic short stories written with style and inspiration, you will enjoy this collection. Pick it up next time you’re in a bookstore. You’ll be glad you did.

—Wendy L. Rathbone

THE BAD PLACE

by Dean R. Koontz

You can’t ignore the page-turning plot and you can’t escape the terrorizing tension, but it’s the characters that make *The Bad Place* Dean Koontz’s best book yet. His last two books have been national bestsellers, but neither has quite reached the heady heights of his previous novel, *Watchers*. His newest book is scarier than anything else he’s written, but more importantly, the characters are as clear and as enjoyable as those in *Watchers*. That novel gave us *The Outsider*, certainly one of the most memorable monsters since Victor Frankenstein turned on the juice. In *The Bad Place*, all of the characters—both good and very, very bad—are as memorable as *The Outsider*. They’re integrated into a story of expertly described non-stop action. *The Bad Place* creates suspense that readers will experience as a physical sensation of fear.

Perhaps one of the reasons this novel is so good, especially for Koontz fans, is that he leaves behind some of the fixtures of his earlier novels. The lonely Vietnam veterans and lovely orphans he so convincingly created are gone. They’ve been replaced by Bobby and Julie Dakota, the proprietors of Dakota and Dakota Investigations. Their business is not standard PI fodder. They specialize in corporate security consulting for the big businesses of Orange County. Their

marital and work relationship is one of the books high points. Koontz has an extremely funny sense of humor, but none of his previous novels have left him much room to use it. Bobby and Julie’s banter give him ample opportunity. Playing against stereotype, Bobby’s the intuitive, relaxed, easygoing member of the team, while Julie is smarter, safer, and occasionally sadistic. Not that the folks they have to deal with don’t deserve more than a little sadism, especially when they take on Frank Pollard as their client.

Frank’s problem is amnesia. He keeps waking up in places he’s never been, covered in blood, carrying money, accompanied by a huge, strange insect neither he nor anyone else he knows has ever seen before. His request is simple. He wants Bobby and Julie to find out where he goes when he sleeps, and who is the person he refers to as “Mr. Blue,” the man who is following him. Here, as with the Dakotas, Koontz is at his finest. “Mr. Blue” is the finest, most frightening villain Koontz has ever created. He’s built up, layer by layer, until, at the end of the novel, he becomes a perfection of all that is evil to rival Hannibal Lecter, the recurring psychotic killer of Thomas Harris’ “Red Dragon” and “Silence of the Lambs.” His relationship with Frank Pollard, and the twin sisters Violet and Verbina are skillfully unravelled over the course of the book.

But this is a thriller, not just a novel of characters, with airtight plotting and Koontz’s by-now trademark action scenes. Here too, we have him at his best. When he carefully incorporates supernatural or science-fictional elements into his books, he takes your breath away and makes you believe. Fortunately for the Dakotas, this is not all one-sided. Koontz leavens his dark, terrifying world with glimpses of light and the laughter he elicits from the relationship between them. he even turns what could be a real show-stopping pitfall (Julie’s brother Thomas, who has Downs Syndrome and is kept in a convalescent home) into an unexpected strength. In fact, this novel is really about the Dakotas’ dream to be able to retire early, buy a house on the beach, and have Thomas move in with them. It’s about why the characters, the readers, and the author have to keep their eyes on those hopeful, happy dreams—because just as there are dreams, there will surely be nightmares.

"By FIRE, By GUN, By KNIFE, By ROPE..."



ALL THE WAY DOWN INSIDE THE SKULL OF DEATH:

BY T. AND DIANE WINTER-DAMON

“I WAS DEATH ON WOMEN,” HE SAID. “I WAS doing a good job of it. I’ve got 360 people, I’ve got thirty-six states, in three different countries. My victims never knew what was going to happen to them. I’ve had shootings, knifings, strangulations, beatings, and I’ve participated in actual crucifixions of humans. All across the country, there’s people just like me, who set out to destroy human life.”

Lines from the newest Schow or Skipp and Spector novel...? *Get real, Dude!* Real. Real... Albeit a reality of waking nightmares, a reality where DEATH is a game played out for the *lustmord*, the sheer sadistic joy of murder, a rip-rush keening through the bones, pushing the blood-red line beyond the white phosphorus electric banshee angst of Satanic Speedmetal...

Henry Lee laid down those lines. Henry Lee Lucas, in his disarmingly relaxed and almost-gentle manner, as he confessed to the press (but later recanted) his infamous career as the stonecold killer of men, women and children.

Thomas Harris has fictionalized them brilliantly in *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of Lambs*—Hannibal “the Cannibal” Lecter, “the Tooth Fairy,” Francis Dolarhyde, and James Gumb, “Buffalo Bill.” Rex Miller’s blockbuster *Slob* created a serial-slaying man-monster of mythic proportions—Daniel Edward Flowers Bunkowski, “Chaingang.”

Monsters on a grand scale. Human monsters. Terrifying and fascinating monsters that keep the reader awake until the morning hours. Too disturbed to sleep. Too obsessed by their twisted exploits to put down the book. Page-turners and Bestsellers. But real. Very real. Based not on the tired archetypes of the subconscious—the werewolf, vampire and ghoul, ad nauseam—but on monsters real as the freeways and interstate they travel in their craving to extinguish human lives.

If memory serves me correctly, 1,000 deaths in 1983 alone is the claim of the normally conservative FBI estimates. And “recreational killers” or “serial murderers” are the catch-all buzz-terms used to categorize and quantify them.

Historically, it has been the minions of oppressive establishment, or, sometimes, the decadent elite of the aristocracy who have gleefully set aside the restraints of moral precept and dedicated themselves to the wholesale taking of human life and the infliction of pain upon their victims. Vlad the Impaler. Elizabeth of Bathory. Gilles de Rais. The Inquisition. Nazi Germany. The Khmer Rouge of Cambodia. El Salvador. Torture and death at trainload rates.

1,500 deaths per year may not equal the genocidal scale of slaughter committed in the name of religious or political necessity. But this is *America*, and we’re talking almost five deaths each day, if you believe these “official” estimates. Enuf t’ scare th’ Hell out of ya, ain’t it? Consider this: in Tofflerian terms, the agrarian First

Wave spawned but a handful of known practitioners of the true “serial killer lifestyle;” the Second Wave’s entire Machine Age produced perhaps several score; during the past twenty years, the era of the emerging Third Wave, over 120 have been captured or identified by their *modus operandi* or their “signatures.” This wave of violence seems to be increasing at a near-exponential rate, and this is based on the *known* cases only. The one who’ve been incautious enough to get caught. Do you *know* how many unexplained “disappearances” occur each year in America. Yeah. Think about *that*, and perhaps give some consideration to this short list of recommended readings, beginning with a few titles to give the interested a bit of historic perspective, as well as an excellent comparison of modern cases (*Hunting Humans*), before proceeding into greater detail with the “careers” of some of the most fascinating modern multiple slayers:

FLESH AND BLOOD; A HISTORY OF THE CANNIBAL COMPLEX, by Reay Tannahill. The author of the bestselling *Sex in History* and *Food in History* blends psychosexual deviance and the gustatory in this lively exploration of a “last taboo” that has seen much genre exposure in the metaphorical flesh-eating zombies, with increasing explicitness since Romero’s classic *Night of the Living Dead*. Ritual cannibalism, particularly as an adjunct of magic, is pervasive, historically, on a global scale. It is this aspect that the book covers, but it yields fascinating insights which may help in understanding the anthropological context of modern *documented* cases. Hunger seldom was a motivation; most often, the specific portions of the flesh eaten—brain, heart, genitals, in particular—were believed to magically transfer the attributed properties of the life-essence of the deceased to the ingestor. Experts are only *beginning* to admit the probable frequency of the practice in cases of ritualistic multiple murder: often, the decomposed state of recovered bodies makes it difficult to determine exactly *which* portions of the corpse were ravaged by predatory animals, and which portions may have served the slayer as “long pig.” If the subject intrigues you, I would recommend this one highly, as one of the very few mass-market books available on the subject. Another plus are the segments on the infamous Gilles de Rais and Elizabeth of Bathory. (Stein and Day, 1975. ISBN 0-8128-8113-3. 347 pages. Paperback, \$3.50)

THE REAL BLUEBEARD, by Jean Benedetti. Baron Gilles de Rais, Marshall of France (1404-1440), trusted follower of Joan of Ark, is no doubt the most infamous child-murder of all time. In a decadent age, he was the supreme decadent, indulging and ultimately impoverishing himself in the pursuit of self-gratification in its every diversity. Naive peasants and lesser gentry were only too eager to see their children’s fortunes assured by entrusting them to the care

and tutelage of this grand nobleman. And, who were they, to question the mysterious vanishings of pauper children whose lives, in the social milieu, held less value than those of a rich man's dogs? Had he not squandered away his wealth, no doubt his power and influence would have protected him from his eventual prosecution. He was accused and sentenced to death for his alleged interest in alchemy and Satanism, hoping to gain knowledge, power and riches by invoking the Devil. It is believed that he abducted, tortured and murdered more than 140 children—both male and female—in sadistic pedophilic acts which included rape, sodomy and masturbating upon their dying bodies. The book only hints at the true horror of his crimes but is interesting in its presentation and analysis of social factors and historical events. (Day Books, 1971. ISBN 0-8128-7025-5. 207 pages. Paperback, \$2.50. Previously published in hardbound by Stein and Day under the title *Gilles de Rais*.)

THE WORLD'S MOST INFAMOUS MURDERS; "A DETAILED AND DISTURBING ANTHOLOGY OF DEPRAVITY AND MURDER," by Roger Boar and Nigel Blundell. A killer lineup:

seventy-seven truly demented slayers. Not all fit the "serial" criteria, but the forty-one featured in the thirty-five separate chapters (includes four duos and a foursome) are a well diversified and fascinating cross-section of 19th and 20th Century notables. A bit of space wasted perhaps on the "big names" better documented elsewhere: "Son of Sam" Berkowitz, Bonnie and Clyde, Lizzie Borden, Ted Bundy, Albert "The Boston Strangler" DeSalvo, John Wayne Gacy, Jack the Ripper, Charlie Manson and Wayne Williams. The strength of the collection lies in its details of the lesser knowns.

Seven serial poisoners are represented: Mary Ann Cotton, Neill Cream, Dr. Hawley Crippen, Johann Hoch, William "The Prince of Poisoners" Palmer, Dr. Marcel Petiot (a Frenchman who set up a "death factory" in his basement, claiming sixty-three victims via lethal injection, then cremating their bodies in his specially installed furnace—luring them on the pretext of smuggling them safely away from the Nazis), and Lydia Sherman, believed to have rat-poisoned a total of forty-two.

Ian Brady and Myra Hindley were convicted of The Moors Murders, the torture-mutilation deaths of a ten-year-old girl and a twelve-year-old boy. Brady and Hindley photographed and tape-recorded their crimes for their future gratification.

Raymond Fernandez and Martha Beck were "The Lonely Hearts Killers:" a Latin lover "monster" and his 280-pound "overweight ogress" ex-nurse, who helped her accomplice seduce and swindle his 100-plus victims, a number of whom he married, then disposed of. They were convicted of three murders and suspected of seventeen more.

Hanover's forty-year-old Fritz Haarmann and his twenty-year-old partner, Hans Grans were convicted in the deaths of twenty-seven boys aged twelve to eighteen; though Fritz admitted the total might be as many as forty. He bit them through the neck to kill them, then butchered their remains.

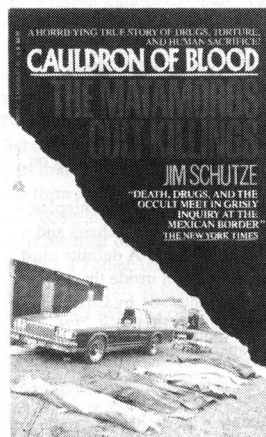
Peter Kurten, "The Vampire of Dusseldorf," slew men, women, children and animals to satiate his perverted cravings. At nine, he was taught to torture animals by the local dog-catcher. His father raped his mother and thirteen-year-old sister while he was forced to watch (and participate in the latter). At sixteen he lived a *menage a trois*-existence with a masochist and her young daughter, Peter's age. From there on out, his life grew more and more bizarre—a sex-maniac, rapist, vampire, sadist and arsonist who was charged in at least sixty-eight crimes, including the strangling, stabbing and clubbing to death of at least nine people. But many of his known victims survived the slashings and blood-drinking.

Pedro Lopez, "The Monster of the Andes," admitted to raping and strangling to death over 300 young girls in Colombia, Peru and Ecuador.

Also featured are Thomas Bram, John Christie, John Haigh (who bludgeoned, butchered and dissolved his victims in sulfuric acid), James Hanratty, Neville Heath, Bela Kiss, Henri Desire Landru, Peter Manuel, Charles Peace, Jesse Pomeroy, Peter "The Yorkshire Ripper" Sutcliffe, Graham Young, George Smith and four "suicide murderers."

In addition, thirty-five vignettes cover the gamut of the grotesque, from Genghis Khan and Elizabeth of Bathory to Albert Fish (the cannibal-killer of at least six children), Bruno Ludke and Carl Panzram. (Berkeley, 1988. ISBN 0-425-10887-2. 214 pages. B & W photos. Paperback, \$3.50.)

HUNTING HUMANS; "INSIDE THE MINDS OF MASS MURDERERS," by Elliott Leyton. Don't let the misuse of "mass" in place of "multiple" in the subtitle put you off—it's another case demonstrating the inexactitudes of book marketing hype. Mr. Leyton is an anthropologist by profession and his insights into the motivations and mental processes of the selected slayers demonstrates a fine attunement to and expertise on the subject. Details of their crimes are comprehensive, and the killers are clearly segregated in to two sections: "The Modern Serial Slayer," which includes material on Henry Lee Lucas, Edmund Emil Kemper III, Ted Bundy, Albert DeSalvo and David Berkowitz and "The Modern Mass Murderer," which details the killing sprees of Charles Starkweather and Mark Essex. A third section, "An Overview," strives to present an historical sociology of the multiple murderer. (Pocket Books, 1988. ISBN 0-671-65961-8. 354 pages. Paperback, \$4.50. Previously published as *Compulsive Killers*.)



CAULDRON OF BLOOD; THE MATAMOROS KILLINGS, by Jim Schultze. This one covers the hottest true crime story since Son of Sam and Ted Bundy. I understand there are at least six or seven more books on the subject being rushed into print. As far as I know, this is the first to hit the racks. They're going to have a tough time beating this one—it's a real page-turner! I cranked back with it the night I bought it, and couldn't put it down until I'd burned through to the back cover. In case you just woke up from a cryogenic deepfreeze: last March, young Mark Kilroy, a pre-med student at the University of Texas, disappeared in Matamoros, Mexico; following an urgent plea for help broadcast on *America's Most Wanted*, on

April 11 the Federales invaded Rancho Santa Elena and discovered a *nganga*, a cauldron filled with brains and other human body parts, along with ten graves holding the tortured and mutilated bodies of twelve persons, including Kilroy. The scenario was ready-made for media hype: Devil-worshipping drug dealers who flayed, dismembered, gouged out the brains and ripped out the hearts of their still-living victims in ritual orgies of sacrifice designed to conjure up Hell-bought power and immunity from the authorities; a cheerleading honor student whose secret role was being the high priestess of the killer cult; a handsome, bi-sexual, Cuban sorcerer; Santeria, Palo Mayombe, Abakua.

The author seems to have an excellent knowledge of the details of Mexican political corruption and the drug trade. He's a bit weaker in his second-hand recountings of ritual magic, but the book is well-written, fast-paced and makes excellent use of narrative jumpcuts to heighten the suspense. It may be in part his positive obsession with "the Great Night" and his familiarity with the workings of Mexican justice, but something in the energy and story-telling skill prompted me to wonder if "Jim Schultze" might not be a pseudonym for King of the Hardboileds, James Ellroy...? (Avon, 1989. ISBN 0-380-75997-7. 248 pages. B & W photos. Paperback, \$4.95.)

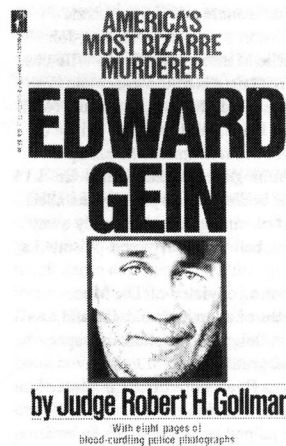
DEVIANT, by Harold Schechter. Secondhand rehash of Ed Gein headlines. Save your money and buy *Edward Gein* by Judge Gollmar. (Pocket Books, 1989. ISBN 0-671-64482-3. 274 pages. B & W photos. Paperback, \$3.95)

EDWARD GEIN; "AMERICA'S MOST BIZARRE MURDERER," by Judge Robert H. Gollmar. This is the book if you're into finding out the straight skinny on the real-life sex maniac whom *Psycho* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* were loosely based upon. In Judge Gollmar's own words: "America's most bizarre murderer, grave robber, maker of exotic household items, wearing apparel and possessor of undoubtedly the finest private collection of female heads, vaginas, vulvas and unquestionably the most notorious character ever to stand before me in court." What more could a genial but reclusive handyman and part time babysitter ask for...? He had everything that Leatherface or Buffalo Bill could ever ask for: human skulls on his bedposts; a woman's heart simmering on the stove, her decapitated body hanging upside-down in his woodshed, slit and gutted, dressed out like a deer; a belt of nipples; real "face" masks; skullcap bowls; knives, lampshades, chairs and a wastebasket fashioned from human skin and bones. A definite must if you're interested in a bulls-eye view deep down inside the psychopathological mind. (Pinnacle, copyright 1981 by Charles Hallberg & Co.; 3rd printing, 1989. ISBN 1-55817-187-8. 226 pages. B & W photos and drawings. Paperback, \$3.95.)

THE I-5 KILLER, by Ann Rule. Randall Woodfield was an all-American boy. Star athlete, with a shot at the pros when the Green Bay Packers drafted him. A ladies man. A potential *Playgirl* centerfold. But he had a bit of a problem: his compulsions drove him to hold women and children at gunpoint, forcing them to strip and fondle themselves, and to masturbate or perform oral sex; some he killed, occasionally sodomizing them in a frenzy of necrophilic lust. He terrorized the I-5 freeway, through Washington, Oregon and California. Ms. Rule does her usual excellent job of ferreting out the pertinent details and presents them in a narrative filled with well-fleshed characters, capturing the human tragedy in its fullest sense. (Signet, 1984, 1988. ISBN 0-451-16043-6. 240 pages. B & W photos. Paperback, \$4.50.)

LUST KILLER, by Ann Rule. Jerry Brudos, a hulking, freckle-faced electrician, kidnapped young women, dragging them home to torture and murder at leisure while his wife wondered what kind of hobbies kept him so busy in his garage-workshop. He was a fetishist, who obsessively hoarded women's shoes, bras and panties, and whose photo collection of his victims helped to convict him. He dressed them and undressed them as if they were dolls. The smirking sadist used a leather postal strap to strangle them as he raped them—a necrophile who delighted in cutting off breasts to cast in plastic molds and make lead paperweights. You've heard of people with strange hobbies, right...? Bizarre... (Signet, 1983, 1988. ISBN 0-451-15477-0. 238 pages. B & W photos. Paperback, \$3.95)

THE PIANO TEACHER; "THE TRUE STORY OF A PSYCHOTIC KILLER," by Robert K. Tanenbaum and Peter S. Greenberg. The story of Charles Yukl. One strangulation. Convicted. Eight years later, released due to legal errors. Another strangulation. I can't remember how they filled 301 pages—? The writing is dull. The story would have made a passable vignette in *The World's Most Infamous Murders*. Save your money for the next Big Mac Attack... (Signet, 1987. ISBN 0-451-15468-1. 301 pages. Paperback, \$4.50.)



THE STRANGER BESIDE ME, by Ann Rule. Talk about bizarre quirks of Karma or whatever... Ms. Rule, an ex-policewoman, in 1968 became Northwest correspondent for *True Detective Magazine*, a perfect fusion of her interests in writing, law and abnormal psychology. In 1971, in her words, "a plumpish mother of four, almost forty, nearing divorce." Again, spurred by the latter two interests, she served on the crisis lines at Seattle's Crisis Clinics—her late night Tuesday shift introduced her to a "handsome, brilliant young psychology student" with whom she became life-long friends. Despite his later notoriety. Ted Bundy.

This has got to be *the* definitive book on the Young Republican "genius" who could have forged a prosperous and prestigious career as a psychologist of lawyer but, instead, scammed and slaughtered girls who fit a common "image:" young and attractive, with long brown hair parted down the center. Cruising in his metallic VW Bug, he selected a likely public locale, then lured his prospective victim with a plea for help from this well-spoken, seemingly vulnerable

"Mr. Right" projecting his role of crippled innocent, with his leg or arm wrapped in a cast, or with his arm slung like a bird with a broken wing. But this was no wounded dove. This was a predator who raped, sexually abused, strangled and bludgeoned his Good Samaritan saviors, then tossed their bodies in remote dump sites. Arrested twice, he escaped and each time his rage burned more intensely, increasing the savagery of his assaults, until he ran amok in a sorority house, killing two and wounding others. His final known victim was a policeman's fourteen-year-old daughter. Bundy is believed responsible for thirty-five murders across the country. Ms. Rule avoids the subject, but some experts suggest his crimes may have included ritual, cannibalistic elements. (Signet, 1980, 1988. ISBN 0-451-15872-5. 442 pages. B & W photos. Paperback, \$4.95.)

TED BUNDY; "CONVERSATIONS WITH A KILLER," by Stephen G. Michaud and Hugh Aynesworth. Exactly what the subtitle says. The book consists primarily of death row interviews with the articulate and manipulative slayer. Speaking always of his accused crimes in the context of a hypothetical third-person frame of reference serves as self-absolution for him, blaming the lust for violence on increasing obsession with pornography. His account is self-serving and suspect, and his Judas-goat attempt to pander to a "feminist" cause is a final twist of morbid irony. (Signet, 1989. ISBN 0-451-16355-9. 306 pages. Paperback, \$4.95.)

TWO IF A KIND; THE HILLSIDE STRANGLERS, by Darcy O'Brien. Cousins Angelo Buono and Kennie Bianchi tired of simply "breaking in" and "turning out" all the looselegged jailbait locals. Teenage "straight" sex and sodomy began to bore them. So they acted out their fantasies—kidnapping and brutally violating pretty young women, then experimenting with a variety of torture techniques and murder methods. They dumped them along the embankments of L.A.'s freeways. The writing is crisp, kinetically charged and uncompromising. One of the best-told accounts of serial violence I've come across to-date. This one takes you *all the way inside and down...* I'd give it a rating of 6 on a scale of 1 to 5. (Signet, 1987. ISBN 0-451-14643-3. 423 pages. B & W photos. Paperback, \$4.50.)

THE WANT-AD KILLER, by Ann Rule. Harvey Louis Carignan was a towering, lowering hulk of man whose perpetual hate-filled stare telegraphed T.R.O.U.B.L.E. His anger was hair-triggered and devastating as a claymore. He fought his 1949 Alaska death-sentence-by-hanging conviction for the apparent attempted rape and definite beating death of a 57-year-old woman (the flesh and bone of her face had been crushed to pulp by the unleashed fury of his bare fists...) all the way to the Supreme Court, leading to a reversal of the original decree. He was released after serving a mere nine of his amended seventeen-year stretch in the slammer. A sixteen-year-old was his next victim—her head smashed by a hammer. He was suspected in numerous West Coast sex killings along freeways. Moved on to Minnesota. Kidnapped and orally-raped a thirteen-year-old hitchhiking runaway, then violated her with the wooden handle of his obviously-Freudian claw hammer...

Ms. Rule does her usual bang-up job of detailing the brutal crimes and brilliant maneuverings of this little-known sadistic psychopath. (Signet, 1983, 1988. ISBN 0-451-15551-3. 229 pages. B & W photos. Paperback, \$3.95.)

THE ULTIMATE EVIL, by Maury Terry. Tense, well-written web-of-conspiracy theory that links David Berkowitz to a cult of Devil-worshipping killers he believes are a splinter group of the Process

Church of the Final Judgement—known as "The Children"—whose members jointly carried out the crimes for which "Son of Sam" was convicted. The narrative is a veritable maelstrom of spinning strands of evidence and conjecture that will reduce all but the staunchest readers to an overwhelming sense of vertigo—as Mr. Terry's theory spans from Westchester, New York to Minot, North Dakota, then on to California and back to Florida. In the *process*, he finds connections between Berkowitz and crew, Charlie Manson, the victim-portion of the Tate-La Bianca Murders, and a mysterious "hitman" for the cult—a man known only as "Manson II." One helluva read. But I wouldn't expect to see any additional arrests soon... (Bantam, 1989. ISBN 0-553-27601-8. 640 pages. B & W photos. Paperback, \$5.95. Published in hardbound by Doubleday, 1987.)

THE ZODIAC KILLER, by Jerry Weissman. I'm including this one purely as a novelty. It's purported to be "a novel based on the still-unsolved San Francisco murders of 1968-69," as the back cover jacket states. Gee, and I've got a *signed* copy! This appears to be a truly bizarre and futile attempt to insult the once publicity-hungry Zodiac Killer into betraying himself in outraged response to the pathetic, bumbling clown-caricature Mr. Weissman so baldly tries to paint... (Pinnacle, 1979. ISBN 0-523-40259-4. 240 pages. Includes a few randomly scrawled Zodiac symbols for illustration. Paperback, \$2.25.)

ZODIAC, by Robert Graysmith. To my mind, the most fascinating of modern serial slayers. In case the twenty-odd years since his San Francisco-area reign of violence has wiped your memory disks, Zodiac had only nine *known* victims, three of whom survived. However, he claimed 37-plus kills in his taunting letters sent to area newspapers, ridiculing police and citizenry alike as he not only bragged of his exploits but laid clue upon clue upon clue under the collective noses of the populace, sometimes in the form of complex multi-layered ciphers that baffled the experts of the NSA, CIA and Naval Intelligence. (Ironically, a 41-year-old North Salinas High School history and economics teacher and his wife cracked the three-part multiple-substitution cipher.) Other messages were mailed in the form of notated road map and altered greeting cards, converted into complex rebuses that defied interpretation. Graysmith was a staff member of the *San Francisco Chronicle*—the first paper to receive a Zodiac letter—and consequently was directly involved in the case from its onset. His compiling of details in the case is superb, his writing crisp, his sense of pacing flawless. It is bound to keep you enthralled through its denouement. Zodiac, unlike most of his counterparts, was never apprehended. Hands down the finest true-crime account I've ever read: seven stars... (Berkeley, 1987. ISBN 0-425-09808-7. 337 pages. Profuse illustrations and copies of the original Zodiac messages. Paperback, \$3.95. Published in hardbound by St. Martin's, 1986.)

This list barely scratches the surface of the available literature, but, hopefully, should give some idea of the range of subject matter, competence and approaches you're likely to encounter.

* The title for this article is a quote by Zodiac, in his altered Halloween card taunt received by the *San Francisco Chronicle's* ace investigative reporter Paul Avery on October 28, 1970. This is a portion of an "acrostic"-style layout which included the additional words "PARADICE" (a deliberately misspelled clue, to be certain...) and "SLAVES" intersecting at the "A."

THE CLOWN AT MIDNIGHT

GUEST ESSAY BY

DAVID
GERROLD

CHILDREN OF SNOW AND ICE

According to the December 11, 1989 issue of *Newsweek*, there are 200,000 cocaine babies in America.

The number is incomprehensible. How do you visualize 200,000 babies addicted to cocaine?

Try it this way. Try to think of the Washington, D.C. mall—you know that beautiful wide open space between the White House and the Washington Monument, with the Lincoln Memorial and the reflecting pool at the far end—try to imagine the mall, filled with little pink and black and brown and yellow babies. Only these aren't adorable little blobs of humanity with big smiles on one end and no sense of responsibility on the other; no, these are sick, wasted, squalling, anemic, lethargic, dying, damaged, crippled, disabled, discarded, unloved, uncherished little gray goblins, the flotsam and jetsam of an epidemic of frenzy and despair. Think of it as a picture on the news tonight, a great panoramic shot of the Washington Mall, filled with the wretched refuse of a truly American disaster.

These desperate children entered the world already addicted. On the first day of life outside the womb, they needed a fix. Think of it as an extra little gift from Mommy, something to help them deal with the terrible burdens of life—another anvil to carry while you jog. The terrible truth is that some mommies think only of the next cigarette, the next drink, or the next quick fix. The children are accidents, unlucky victims of mommy's own despair.

Here's the real atrocity: cocaine babies don't bond.

Do you understand the horror of that?

It means that they don't *connect* with their mothers. Ever. It is the ultimate loneliness—thrust out alone into the world, crippled, debilitated and unable to respond to your own mother's touch.

Maybe it's a physical rejection, an effect of the addiction; Maybe it's an emotional response. But considering what mommy has already done to baby, it could just as well be personal. If anybody has a right to hold a grudge against life, these babies do.

Now extrapolate: Not bonding, means not connecting. Not connecting means *not knowing how to connect*. Babies that don't bond may *never* learn how to connect with other people. Babies that don't bond tend to become sociopaths.

My dictionary says that a sociopath is "a manifestly antisocial psychopath." Cute phrase that.

Let me translate it into English. Manifest, "readily perceived by the eye or understanding", as in: unmistakable, or obvious, or conspicuous. Antisocial, "antagonistic or hostile toward others", as in: criminal, disruptive, violent. Psychopath, "mentally ill or unstable; amoral or antisocial behavior", as in: Charles Manson, David Berkowitz, John Hinckley, Mark David Chapman, Richard Ramirez, James O. Huberty. You might not recognize all these names immediately; but you remember their crimes and their victims: Sharon Tate and her baby and six other people and unknowable others, the "Son of Sam" couples, Ronald Reagan and James Brady, John Lennon, the "Night Stalker" victims, 22 patrons of a McDonald's restaurant in San Diego. How many more should I list? The list could be extended to include the almost-daily litany of horror that pours out of the newspapers and the vidiot box.

And it's not just the cocaine babies. It's all the others too. Something *else* is happening. The *Los Angeles Times* has reported that kindergarten and grade school teachers are noticing a weird phenomenon: a decrease in children's ability to play or cooperate with each other, and a corresponding increase in selfishness and aggressive behavior. Where previously a teacher might have one or two selfish children in a class of thirty or forty, now there are five or six or ten of them. Where is this coming from? Is this the final legacy of the Ronald Reagan "Where's mine?" era? Or is it the effect of too much time spent sitting alone with no one else to play with except the Nintendo

set? Or maybe it's the result of aggressive parental pressure on the child to succeed? Or maybe there's another reason why supposedly healthy white suburban babies are not bonding with their parents, and later on with their schoolmates. Whatever it is, it's real and it's measurable. More and more, we're disconnecting from each other—our children are showing the most visible symptoms. What kind of adults are these unbonded and uncooperative children likely to grow into?

Right now, best estimates have it that one out every ten thousand people in this country has the potential for serious antisocial behavior. That's 30,000 sociopaths in a society of 300,000,000. Wait fifteen or twenty years. Add poverty, despair, illiteracy, hopelessness, ignorance, drugs, and urban decay. Stir well. Now imagine 200,000 sociopaths, or more; all those cocaine babies grown up. And all those selfish, insulated brats too. And don't forget the ice babies either. (You haven't heard of ice yet? You will. It's the smokable form of methamphetamine. It's even more addictive and destructive than cocaine; it's also easier to make and cheaper to distribute. It's the number one drug problem in Hawaii. It just hit California. Within two years—who knows? But you can be sure of one thing. It'll bring its own special forms of pain and violence.)

By the first decade of the next century, we could be seeing a ratio of 1 sociopath for every 1500 people. *The potential for violence in our society could be multiplied seven-fold*. What do you think this country will be like with 200,000 uncontrollable sociopaths running loose?

Nothing will be safe. Not the streets, not the restaurants, not the schools or the movie theaters or the sports arenas. Not the office, not the factory, not the mall. Nothing. Anything that attracts a crowd will be a target of opportunity—a political rally or demonstration will be an invitation for a riot or a target shoot.

Now would be a good time to invest in companies that build concrete walls. We're going to need a lot of them. Those of us who can afford it are going to end up living in fortress communities. Already we're seeing whole neighborhoods hiding behind safety barricades.

But wait. I haven't really scared you yet, have I? Do you *truly* know what a sociopath is? Do you know how to recognize one? Forget about Charles Manson and Ollie North and Richard

Nixon. Forget about the winos shambling down the street with their lives in shopping carts, or the wild-eyed ladies carrying on loud, scatological harangues against invisible tormenters. These are the harmless ones; you can see those loonies coming from half a block away. And forget about the mean-looking twitch you saw on the *Sunday Night Movie*; that's just another Hollywood illusion.

No, let's talk about the sociopaths you're actually going to run into. You've probably met most of these already:

Remember that man you worked for, the one who was so charming, the one who made all the inspiring speeches—but who turned out instead to be a bully, a liar, a hypocrite, and a thief? Publicly, everybody thought he was a terrific guy, only you got to see him at his worst. He was a sociopath. He didn't know how to connect with people; he only knew how to manipulate. So he manipulated his personal presentation so everybody thought he was wonderful, then in the privacy of his own office, he screwed his friends. That's a smart sociopath, one who won't be caught—but in his petty little attacks, his greed, and his selfishness, he'll end up punishing every person who tries to get near him, attracted by the charm of his act.

Or how about that lawyer, you know the one—the lying slime-ball who used the judiciary process to obstruct justice. You know your claim was valid. They owed you the money, but after three and a half years of maneuvering and manipulating and legal chicanery, you were so desperate to get free of this damn tar baby that you settled the claim for 40 cents on the dollar and still considered it a victory. (After all, you didn't lose your house.) Then you found that they intended to endlessly nitpick the language of the settlement agreement to see how much of your so-called victory they could gnaw away, dragging the process out for an additional nine months, during which time they continued to collect the interest on the money that they had agreed to pay you. That lawyer—he's a sociopath. You know it. Don't even try to argue that he was only doing his job, representing his employer's interests. He was *enjoying* sticking it to you. How many lawyers do you think are sociopaths? The law is a great way to do violent things to innocent people—and not get caught. Or, let me rephrase it: how many lawyers do you know who are really good at *connecting* with other people?

Remember that guy on the freeway?

He cut you off, so you honked your horn at him—and for the next seven miles, you found yourself locked in a duel of half-wits with this red-necked road-Rambo. Remember him—and all the others? How often do you see that kind of behavior on the highways? Every day, right? We're talking about situational-sociopaths armed with 4000 pound battering rams, traveling at 70 miles per hour, looking for a target for their vengeful anger. The next round of freeway shootings will probably be done with assault rifles.

Or how about that weird-looking kid at your high school. The oily one who always wore a coat and tie every day and carried a brief case and slicked his hair back with bear grease and who nobody, absolutely nobody, ever talked to because, after all, let's face it, he really wasn't from this planet—and later on, when you heard that he hadn't come back to school after summer vacation because he'd taken a gun and blown his brains out, you didn't really mourn or even think, "Gee, that's too bad," because you figured he was probably better off dead than trying to cope with a world where he didn't fit. Yeah, he was a sociopath too. Now if he'd been just a little bit angrier, he'd have probably picked a different target for the bullet.

Oh, yes, let's not forget the vacant-eyed woman who picks you out at a convention or party and attaches herself to you, following you around from place to place—you can't shake her off—all the time, chattering amiably about this and that and the other thing, none of which you have any interest in at all, and you desperately wish she would just please leave you alone and go very far away, only she isn't taking your gentle hints. No, she just keeps on coming on at you, and you are too well-mannered to haul off and scream, "Who the fuck cares about the Roman Reformation anyway?!!" It's only a goddamned TV series. Even the guys who write that shit don't know what they're talking about half the time." Yes, she's a sociopath too—and don't be so sure that she's a harmless one either. She's so involved in her fantasy worlds of elves and hobbits and homoerotic relationships between Kirk and Spock, that she's lost all contact with the real world. She doesn't know how to *connect* anymore—if she ever did. Arouse her ire, and you'll discover what truly inspired pettiness a small mind is capable of: anonymous hate mail, unwanted subscriptions, dead rats in your mail box, your phone ringing at all hours of the day and night, but there's

never anyone on the other end of the line...

Then there's the desperate lover—he/she/it is a variation on the type described immediately above, only this one has discovered you as a sex object. You think that's funny? Remember Robert Bardo, the guy who stalked Rebecca Shaeffer, the actress, and killed her? Remember John Hinckley—he had a crush on Jodie Foster, so he shot Ronald Reagan. And don't think it's only men who act this crazy. How about the woman who hounded David Letterman until they put her away, or the one who sent jealous death threats to Michael J. Fox's new wife? And don't think it's only famous people these loonies go after—you only hear about the famous ones; you don't hear about all the ones living out their own private versions of *Fatal Attraction*.

And don't make the mistake of thinking that sociopathology is a function of ignorance or illiteracy either. Log onto CompuServe or Genie or another bulletin board system. You'll find some of the smartest people in America using bulletin board systems. You'll also find there's almost always a flame-war going on in one forum or another; somebody has popped up out of nowhere and started blasting away at anybody and everybody in a series of wild and abusive messages, occasionally incoherent, but just as often erudite. That's electronic sociopathology—again the failure of one human being to appropriately connect with any other.

You want to notice something about the examples I listed above—they all require *your* participation in the process. The danger that a sociopath represents to you is not simply the possibility of sudden violence, but more likely the prospect that in your day-to-day contacts with these people, they will drag your behavior down to their levels, that they will cause you to act like a sociopath too. The danger is that we will lose our humanity too.

The children of snow and ice are coming. The despair, the anger, the wretchedness is going to grow with them. They're going to carry it like a scar on their souls. The inability to connect, the selfishness, the greed, the lust for instant gratification—put all that into a hungry frustrated grown-up and watch what happens when you tell it, "No, you can't."

Take today's newspaper and multiply by seven.

We have to ask the question: what are we doing to ourselves and our world that is turning our children into monsters? What

can we do to save these babies?

Well, first off, in keeping with the great tradition of the selfish 80's, we can deny that there's a problem—this is the legacy of Ronald Reagan. Let's smile, tell some jokes, and wait for the unpleasant person who raised the issue to just go away. Watch. It'll sound like this: "Not all of the cocaine babies are going to make it to adulthood. And probably not all of those who do are doomed to be monsters. It's an alarmist prediction. The reality will be a lot less serious. We'll handle it through a thousand little points of kinder, gentler volunteerism. Don't worry. Be happy."

Uh huh.

We'll handle this problem like we handled all the others; we'll postpone any serious action on it and pass it on to the

next generation. (You heard the speech at your high school graduation, remember? "Try not to fuck it up as badly as we did, okay?") Who gets punished by this despicable buck-passing? First the babies, by our lack of caring—then the rest of us, by theirs...

Or, consider this possible future:

The same week that *Newsweek* published its horrifying statistics, the *Los Angeles Times* had a story about a promising new treatment for cocaine addiction. There's a drug that blocks the body's pleasure centers so that the need for cocaine is obviated. Apparently, it works; but there's an interesting side-

effect. When the pleasure centers are blocked, the individual loses *all* capacity to enjoy life—everything turns into a gray blur. There's no joy anymore. Not from a hot fudge sundae, not from a sunset, not even from a hug; the addict is turned into a zombie.

You know, that's probably the best answer. It's a drug problem anyway; it needs a drug solution. Let's dose the little bastards into insensibility. 200,000 zombies are preferable to 200,000 sociopaths any day.

Or are they?

What do people become when they *can't* care?

David Gerrold is the author of several novels, short stories and essays. This is his first appearance in *Midnight Graffiti*.

Letters

Dear Midnight Graffiti:

Issue #2 is beautiful, and I'd like to congratulate you, Jessie Horsting, and the rest of your staff and writers for launching the best new dark fantasy magazine to appear in the 80's. The look, style, and content of the book combine well to create a fresh approach to covering the genre. *Midnight Graffiti* treats horror seriously without sacrificing wit and maintains a sense of humor without sacrificing maturity and intelligence.

One of the things that impressed me about *Midnight Graffiti* #2 was its coverage of horror in comics, an area which other genre magazines treat rather poorly, if at all. I am a great fan of horror comics and believe that they seldom get the coverage they deserve, which causes many to die unnaturally quick deaths. I hope your comics reviews will be a regular feature.

Yours Truly,
Jack Skrip

All except this issue. Thanks for your kind thoughts.

—Ed.

Dear Midnight Graffiti:

Thanks for the sleepless nights. I picked up a hard-to-find copy of your

magazine last week, due mostly to the hilarious picture of Stephen King on the cover. I must say that I enjoyed the entire magazine cover to cover. *Midnight Graffiti* is, however, difficult to locate. Only the sci-fi book shop in downtown Toronto has it (as far as I know). If you would please send me some information concerning Canadian subscriptions I would greatly appreciate it. Again, an *outstanding* magazine.

Sincerely,
Mike Hanson
Canada

I you send us money—we'll send your magazine anywhere. Or ask your local bookstore to pester their distributor—and buy several copies when they come in.

—Ed.

Dear Midnight Graffiti,

As you may know, I've been put in charge of our nation's Space Program.

Please take the time to fill out the enclosed questionnaire, paying careful attention to the questions regarding how much space you now occupy and how much space you think you'll need in the future.

Warmest regards,
Dan Quayle
Vice President

Dear Midnight Graffiti:

Sign of the beast???

Not the symbol you have pictured. (What to do with this new generation? TSK!)

That symbol is the hallowed symbol of the 70's and 80's, worshipped by yuppies and wanna-bes everywhere: THE SIGN OF THE MERCEDES. You're not really the first to have made this mistake—but really!!!

April

Dear April,

You're right, that was a Mercedes emblem and not, as you graciously pointed out, a peace symbol.

I am deeply ashamed—me, who voted for McGovern and knows all the words to "Eve of Destruction!" Worse yet, I have no one to blame. Sure, when things are going great, the best-shots at Midnight Graffiti are your best friends. But let one little post-card (like yours for instance) come in and those duplicitous thugs in the editorial office start asking unkind questions like, "You proofed it, didn't you?"

But, never mind. You were absolutely correct in bringing my sloppiness to everyone's attention and I promise to never again castrate a peace symbol.

—Russ Buchanan

I thought he meant "piece" sign...

—Ed.

MICHAEL J. AUTREY, BOOKSELLER

13624 Franklin Street, #5
Whittier, California 90602
(213) 945-6719

Dear Stephen King Fans:

By now, most of you are aware of Doubleday's plans to re-issue "The Stand", but for those of you who aren't, the following may prove of interest.

On April 25th (my birthday), Doubleday will publish the unexpurgated version of Stephen King's "The Stand." This version has a new beginning and a new end..it has been updated for the nineties, and is approximately 500 pages longer than the original. The book will include 12 black and white illustrations by renowned artist Bernie Wrightson ("Cycle of the Werewolf"). The first printing of the trade edition is 400,000 copies.

There was some concern that the British edition would precede the American; however, I have it on good authority that the British edition, originally scheduled for the end of March, has now been pushed back to May 9th, so that the American edition is, without question, the true first; price \$24.95.

As for the signed, limited edition (see the reverse side of this letter for a picture--sorry, all I could get was a Xerox, which doesn't reproduce very well). It is truly spectacular. An absolutely stunning book. My congratulations to Peter Schneider and Doubleday for this masterpiece. They have truly done justice to the book, which many believe is King's best. I cannot think of any way to improve on what they've done. I wish you all could see the color Xerox--I was totally flabbergasted when I saw it.

Perhaps it will help if I describe the book to you: It is full grain leather. The book is stamped in gold, King's name and the book title are stamped in red. The spine has four raised hubs. A better grade of paper is used in this edition. The end papers are red silk moire. The corners of the pages are rounded. The book has been printed in two colors: Black (for text) and red (for ornamental designs).

The book is encased in a varnished, wooden box stained in ebony (black), with a brass plate on top of the box. The top of the box lifts up and the book is laid inside, extracted by a silk pull-ribbon. The interior of the box is lined with red silk. The book itself has a glassine wrapper. The design motif is supposed to suggest the "family bible", since King had indicated in his preface to this edition that the book is a "long tale of dark Christianity." To protect the book during shipping, a double, reinforced, customized box has been designed.

The good news is: I have lots of copies of the trade edition for sale and can pretty much guarantee first printings. Now, for the bad news: I have copies of "The Stand" Limited available (call for current prices). However, they are coming to me from secondary sources and are expensive. I have not been successful in obtaining copies directly from Doubleday, as each sales rep was allotted only 33 copies to distribute amongst all of their accounts. If you find a good source for these, please let me know. Also, if you have copies for sale, I would appreciate knowing that as well. It may still be possible to find copies at retail if you shop around--if you can't, then please call me--the book is worth paying a premium for.

Please understand the uniqueness of this situation. This may well be the nicest King Limited ever done. It is also the first King Limited to be done by a major publishing house. Consequently, the old rules don't apply anymore. I haven't had any better luck finding these at retail than you have.

If you are willing to accept the fact that the demand for these incredible books far exceeds supply, and you are willing to pay a premium for a chance to own one, then I can help you obtain a truly special book. I've already heard of dealers quoting prices much higher than mine. This book is definitely going to continue to rise in value as time goes on.

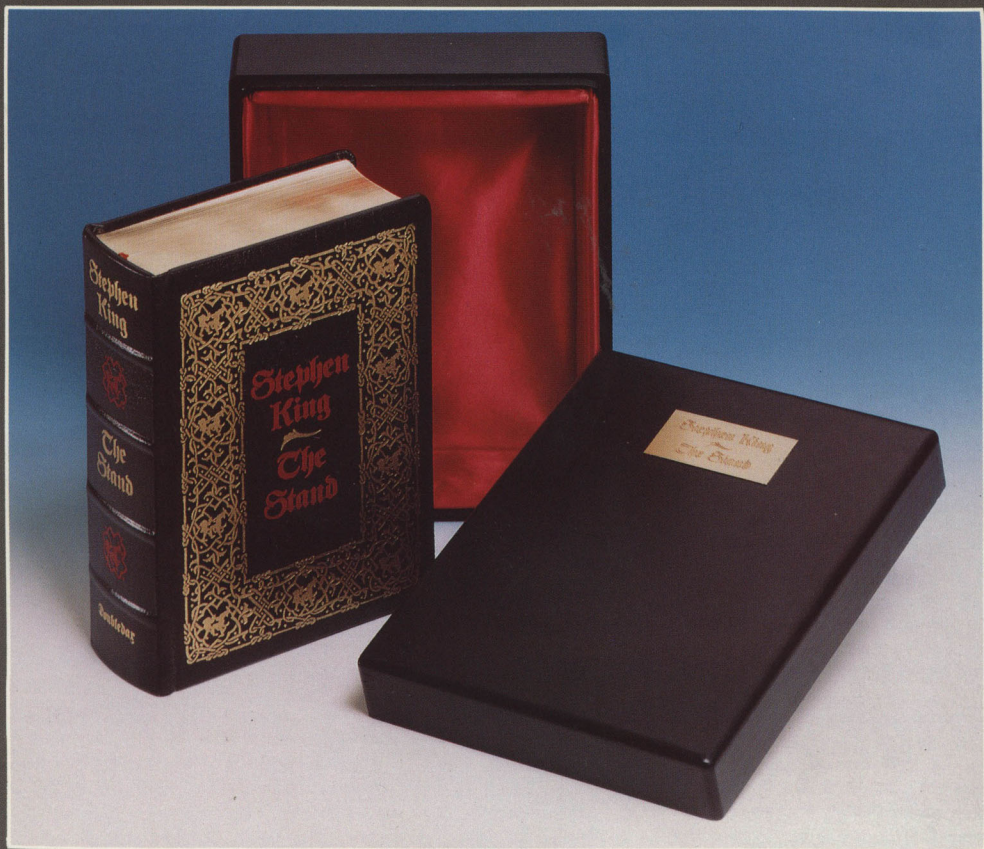
I only have a few of these available, so don't hesitate to call me as soon as you get this letter.

As a side note, I would like to mention that Doubleday will be simultaneously re-issuing their other King titles: "Carrie", "Salem's Lot", "Night Shift" and "The Shining." These will be redesigned as 6" x 9" books with reset type and much sturdier bindings. "Carrie" will be \$18.95, "Night Shift" will be \$19.95, "Salem's Lot" and "The Shining" will each be \$21.95. I will have all of these available, along with "The Stand."

Sincerely,


Michael J. Autrey

P.S.: Stay tuned for more exciting Stephen King news--coming soon!



THE STAND