

SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY

THIS ISSUE:
ROBERT HEINLEIN
DOUGLAS FULTHORPE
SYDNEY J. BOUNDS



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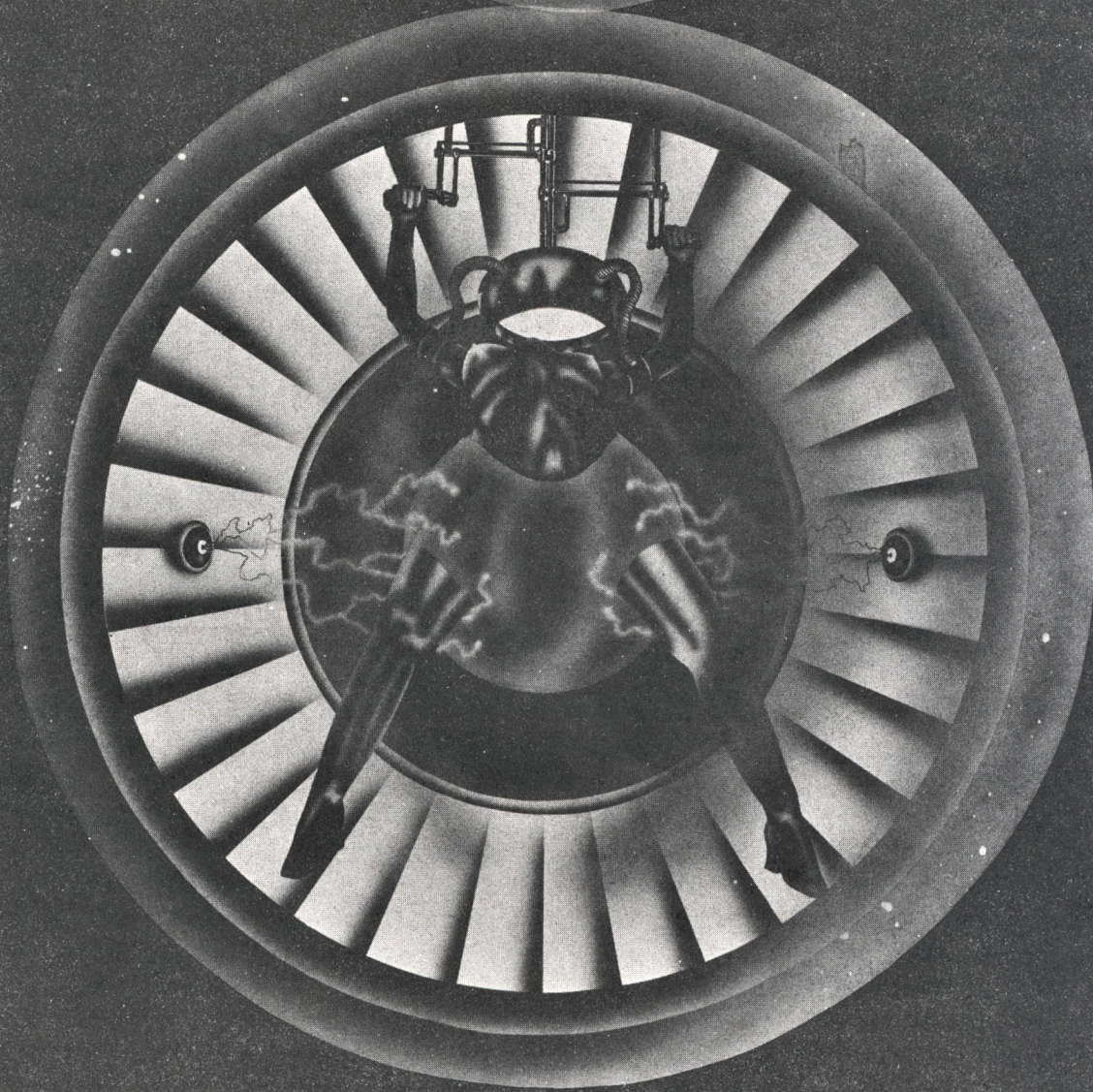
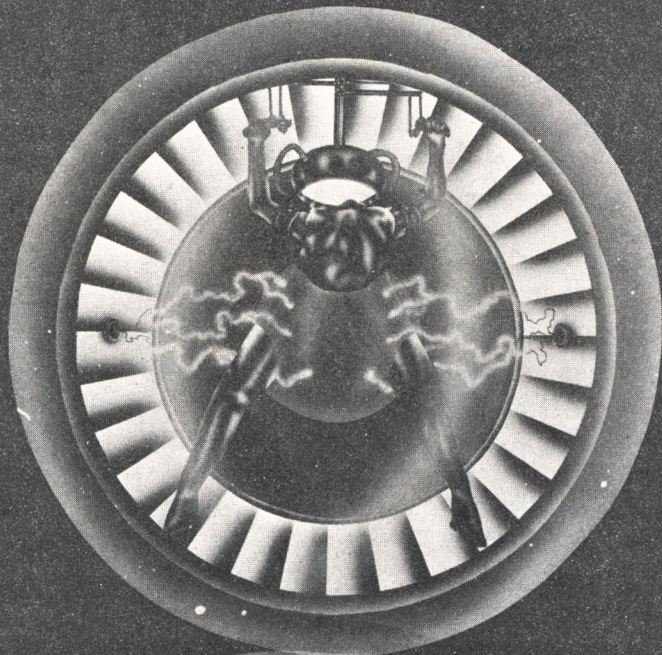
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Introduction

Welcome to the third edition of **Science Fiction Monthly**. In this issue we are carrying two complete short stories never before published, *Starport* by Sydney J Bounds, well known in the American fanzine world and *The Mist at the Bottom of the Valley* by Douglas Fulthorpe, a member of the Science Fiction Writers of America. Mike Ashley has written an invaluable survey of the first ten years of science fiction magazines and Penny Grant is continuing to keep us informed about happenings in SF today. We have also an extract from a New English Library hardcover book due out this

month entitled *Time Enough for Love* by Robert Heinlein, whose *Stranger in a Strange Land* is soon to be filmed by David Bowie. In addition we are presenting a profile of an up-and-coming young science fiction artist and offering you a chance to emulate him by channelling your science fiction imagination into our latest venture - an art competition which we hope will prove that our readers are just as enthusiastic in their fandom as those early pioneers whose responses to competitions such as *What I Have Done to Advance Science Fiction* were truly overwhelming.



TIME—TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE—TIME ENO

An extract from the book of the same name by Robert Heinlein (New English Library)

The planet Secundus has been colonized from Earth almost entirely by members of the Howard Families, all of them possessed of the secret of what is pretty well eternal life through the processes of revivication and rejuvenation. Lazarus Long, one of the earliest Howards, and now over 2000 years old, commits suicide because he is tired of his too-long existence.

His descendants on Secundus revive him and try to give him a renewed interest in life. After all, as the oldest living Howard, and the ancestor of over half of all the Families, he is a walking repository of history and experience from just before the First World War to the present time when space travel, planet colonization and miraculous medical techniques are the norm.

Then I had what seemed a brilliant idea. 'Lazarus, as we all know, the same physical types show up time and again in the Families. I'll ask Archives for a list of Evelyn Foote's female descendants living on Secundus. It is highly probable that one of them will seem like her identical

twin — even to the happy smile and the sweet disposition. Then — if you consent to full rejuvenation — I'm sure she would be willing as Ishtar to dissolve any present contractual —'

Lazarus chopped me off. 'I said something *new*, Ira. There's no going back, ever. Sure, you might find

Lazarus agrees to a type of Arabian Nights contract — a 1001 days for them to make his life worth living, while he tells them stories and reminiscences of his long life — amounting to a philosophy of the nature and practice of LOVE in all its aspects.

Part of the purpose of this book is to show that different loving relationships can make a life-span of over 2000 years both desirable and beneficial. Lazarus grudgingly agrees to complete the process of rejuvenation started without his consent on Secundus, without believing that life can hold anything more of value for him — and finds, to his surprise, that the idea of a computer being able to appreciate love is an exciting and intriguing possibility.

such a girl, one who would match my memory of Evelyn to ten significant figures. But it would lack an important factor. My youth.'

'But if you finish rejuvenation —'

'Oh, hush up! You can give me new kidneys and a new liver and a new heart. You can wash the brown



MIKE LITTLE

UGH—LOVE—TME—LOVE—

stains of age out of my brain and add tissue from my clone to make up for what I've lost — you can give me a whole new clone body. But it won't make me that young fellow who took innocent pleasure in beer and pinochle and a pretty plump wife. All I have in common with him is continuity of memory — and not much of that. Forget it.

I said quietly, 'Ancestor, whether you wish to be married to Evelyn Foote again or not, you and I know — for I've been through it, too, twice — we both know that the full routine restores youthful zest in life as well as restoring the body as a machine.'

Lazarus Long looked gloomy. 'Yeah, sure. It cures everything but boredom. Damn it, boy, you had no right to interfere with my karma.'

He sighed. 'But I can't hang in limbo either. So tell 'em to get on with it. The works.'

I was taken by surprise. 'May I record that, sir?' 'You heard me say it. But that doesn't get *you* off the hook. You still have to show up and listen to my maunderings until I'm so rejuvenated that I'm cured of such childish behaviour — and you still have to go on with that research. To find something *new*, I mean.'

'Agreed on both points, sir; you had my promise. Now one moment while I tell my computer —'

'She's already heard me. Hasn't she?' Lazarus added, 'Doesn't she have a name? Haven't you given her one?'

'Oh, certainly. I could not deal with her all these

years without animism, fallacy though it is —

'Not a fallacy, Ira, machines are human because they are made in our image. They share both our virtues and our faults — magnified.'

'I've never tried to rationalize it, Lazarus, but Minerva — that's her formal name; she's Little Nag in private because one of her duties is to remind me of obligations I would rather forget. Minerva does feel human to me — she's closer to me than any of my wives have been. No, she has not registered your decision; she's simply placed it in her temporaries. Minerva!'

'Si, Ira.'

'Speak English, please. Retrieve the Senior's decision to undergo full antigeria, file it in your permanents, transmit it to Archives and to the Howard Rejuvenation Clinic for action.'

'Completed, Mr. Weatheral. Congratulations. And felicitation to you, Senior. "May you live as long as you wish and love as long as you live."'

Lazarus looked suddenly interested — which did not surprise me because Minerva surprises *me* quite frequently even after a century of being 'married' to her in all but fact. 'Why, thank you, Minerva. But you startled me, girl. Nobody talks about love any more; that's a major thing wrong with this century. How did you happen to offer me that ancient sentiment?'

'It seemed appropriate, Senior. Was I mistaken?'

'Oh, not at all. And call me Lazarus. But tell me,

what do *you* know of love? What *is* love?'

'In Classic English, Lazarus, your second question can be answered in many ways; in Lingua Galacta it cannot be answered explicitly at all. Shall we discard all definitions in which the verb "to like" is as appropriate as the verb "to love"?''

'Eh? Certainly. We aren't talking about "I love apple pie" — or even "I love music." Whatever it is we are talking about it's "love" the way you used it in the old-style well-wishing.'

'Agreed, Lazarus. Then what remains must be divided into two categories, "Eros" and "Agape," and each defined separately. I cannot know what "Eros" is through direct knowledge, as I lack both body and biochemistry to experience it. I can offer nothing but intensional definitions in terms of other words, or extensional definitions expressed in incomplete statistics. But in both cases I would not be able to verify such definitions since I have no sex.'

'(The hell she doesn't, I muttered into my scarf. 'She's as female as a cat in heat.' But technically she was correct, and I've often felt that it was a shame that Minerva could not experience the pleasures of sex, as she was much more fitted to appreciate them than some human females — all glands and no empathy. But I had never said this to anyone. Animism — of a particularly futile sort. A wish to 'marry' a machine. As ridiculous as a little boy who digs a hole in the garden, then bawls because he can't take it into the house. Lazarus was right; I am *not* smart enough to run a planet. But who is?)

Lazarus said with deep interest, 'Let's table "Eros" for a moment Minerva, the way you phrased that seemed to include the presumption that you *could* experience "Agape." Or "can." Or "have." Or perhaps "do".'

'It is possible that I was presumptuous in my phrasing, Lazarus.'

Lazarus snorted, then chopped it off and spoke in such a fashion as to cause me to think that the old man was not quite sane — save that I am not sane myself, when the wind sets from that quarter. Or perhaps his long years had made him almost telepathic — even with machines.

'Forgive me, Minerva,' he said gently. 'I was not laughing at you but at the play on words with which you answered me. I withdraw my question; it is never proper to quiz a lady about her love life — and while you may not be a woman dear, you are certainly a lady.'

Then he turned to me and what he said next confirmed that he had guessed the secret I share with my Little Nag.

'Ira, does Minerva have Turing potential?'

'Eh? Certainly.'

'Then I urge you to tell her to use it. If you levelled with me when you said that you intend to migrate, come what may. Have you thought it through?'

'"Thought it through"? My resolution is firm — I told you so.'

'Not quite what I mean. I don't know who holds title to the hardware that expresses itself as "Minerva." The Trustees, I assume. But I suggest that you tell her to start duplicating her memories and logics, and as she twins, start storing her other self aboard my yacht Dora. Minerva will know what circuits and materials she needs, and Dora will know what space is available. Plenty, since memories and logics are all that matter; Minerva won't twin her extensionals. But start it at once, Ira; you won't be happy without Minerva — not after being dependent on her for a century, more or less.'

Nor did I think so. But I tried — feebly — to resist. 'Lazarus, now that you have agreed to full rejuvenation, I won't be inheriting your yacht. Not in the foreseeable future. Whereas I intend to migrate right away. Not more than ten years from now.'

'So what? If I'm dead, you inherit — and I haven't promised to keep my hands off that suicide switch more than a thousand days no matter how patient you are in visiting me. But if I'm alive, I promise you — and Minerva — a free ride to whatever planet you pick. In the meantime, look around to your left — our girl Ishtar is almost wetting her pants trying to get your attention. And I don't think she's wearing any.'

I looked around. The Administrator for Rejuvenation had a paper which she seemed eager to show me. I accepted it in deference to her rank — although I had left orders with my Executive Deputy that I must never be disturbed while with the Senior for any reason short of armed rebellion. I glanced at it, signed my chop, thumbprinted it, and handed it back — she beamed.

'Just paper work,' I told Lazarus. 'Some clerk has taken all this time to turn your registered assent into a written order. Do you want them to go right ahead? Not this minute but tonight.'

'Well . . . I'd like to go househunting tomorrow, Ira.'

'You're not comfortable here? Tell me what you want changed, it will be done at once.'

He shrugged. 'Nothing wrong with this place except that it's too much like a hospital. Or a jail. Ira, I'm damn well certain they've done more to me than shoot me full of new blood; I'm well enough to be an outpatient — live elsewhere and come here only as the schedule calls for it.'

Eros = physical love Agape = spiritual love

'Well . . . will you excuse me while I talk Galacta a bit? I want to discuss the practical aspects with your technician in charge.'

Will *you* excuse me, Ira, if I point out that you've left a lady waiting? That discussion can wait. But Minerva knows that I suggested that you have her twin herself so that she can migrate with you – but you haven't said Yes, No, or make me a better offer. If you're not going to have her do it, it's time you told her to wipe her memory of that part of our conversation. Before she blows a circuit.'

'Oh, Lazarus, she doesn't think about anything she records in this suite unless she is specifically told to.'

'Want to bet? No doubt most subjects she records – but this one she just *has* to think about; she can't help herself. Don't you know *anything* about girls?'

I admitted that I did not. 'But I know what instructions I gave her about keeping records on the Senior.'

'Let's check. Minerva –'

'Yes, Lazarus?'

'A few moments ago I asked Ira about your Turing potential. Have you thought about the conversation that followed?'

I swear that she hesitated – which is ridiculous; a nanosecond is longer to her than a second is to me. Besides, she never hesitates. Never.

She answered, 'My programming on the doctrine covered by the inquiry reads as follows: quote – do not analyze, collate, transmit, nor in anywise manipulate data stored under control programme except when specific subprogramming is inserted by Chairman Pro Tem – end of quote.'

'Tut, tut, dear,' Lazarus said gently. 'You did not answer. That was deliberate evasion. But you are not used to lying? Are you?'

'I am not used to lying, Lazarus.'

I said almost roughly, 'Minerva! Answer the Senior's first question.'

'Lazarus, I have been and am now thinking about that designated portion of conversation.'

Lazarus cocked an eyebrow at me. 'Will you instruct her to answer one more question from me – truthfully?'

I was feeling quite shaken. Minerva surprises me, yes – but never with evasions. 'Minerva, you will always answer *any* question put to you by the Senior fully, correctly, and responsively. Acknowledge programme.'

'New subprogramme received, placed in permanent, keyed to the Senior, and acknowledged, Ira.'

'Son, you didn't have to go that far – you'll be sorry. I asked for just one question.'

'I intended to go that far sir,' I answered stiffly.

'On your own head be it. Minerva, if Ira migrates without you, what will you do?'

She answered at once and quite tonelessly: 'In such event I will self-programme to destroy myself.'

I was not just surprised, I was shocked. 'Why?'

She answered softly, 'Ira, I will not serve another master.'

I suppose the silence that followed was not more than a few seconds. It seemed endless. I have not felt so nakedly helpless since my adolescence.

I found that the Senior was looking at me, shaking his head and looking sorrowful. 'What did I tell you, Son? The same faults, the same virtues – but magnified. Tell her what to do.'

'About what?' I answered stupidly – my personal 'computer' was not working well. Minerva would do *that*?

'Come, come! She heard my offer – and thought about it, despite all programming. I'm sorry I made the offer in her presence . . . but not too sorry, as you were the one who decided to place a bug on me; it was not my idea. So speak up! Tell her to twin . . . or tell her not to – and try to tell her *why* you won't take her with you. If you can. I've never been able to find an answer to *that* one that a lady was willing to accept.'

'Oh, Minerva, can you duplicate yourself inside a ship? The Senior's yacht, specifically. Perhaps you can get her characteristics and specifications from skyport records. Do you need her registration number?'

'I don't need her number, Ira. Sky Yacht Dora, I have all pertinent data to answer. I can. Am I instructed to do so?'

'Yes!' I told her, with a sudden feeling of relief.

'New overriding programme activated and running, Ira! Thank you, Lazarus!'

'Wups! Slow down, Minerva – Dora is *my* ship. I left her asleep on purpose. Have you wakened her?'

'I did so, Lazarus. By self-programme under new overriding programme. But I can tell her to go back to sleep now; I have all data I need at the moment.'

'You try telling Dora to go back to sleep and she'll tell you to buzz off. At least. At the very least. Minerva dear, you goofed. You have no authority to wake my ship.'

'I am most sorry to disagree with the Senior, sir, but I *do* have authority to take all actions to carry out any programme given to me by Mr Chairman Pro Tem.'

Lazarus frowned. 'You mixed her up, Ira; now you straighten her out. I can't do anything with her.'

I sighed. Minerva is rarely difficult – but when she is, she is even more pigheaded than flesh-and-blood. 'Minerva –'

'Waiting orders, Ira.'

'I am Chairman Pro Tem. You know what that means. The Senior is senior even to me. You will not touch anything of his without his permission. That applies to his yacht and to this suite and to anything else of his. You will carry out any programme he gives you. If it conflicts with a programme I have given you and you cannot resolve the conflict, you will consult me at once, waking me if I am asleep, interrupting whatever I may be doing. But you will *not* disobey him. This instruction superoverrides all other programmes. Acknowledge.'

'Acknowledged and running,' she answered meekly. 'I'm sorry, Ira.'

'My fault, Little Nag, not yours. I should not have given you a new controlling programme without noticing the Senior's prerogatives.'

'No harm done, kids,' Lazarus said. 'I hope. Minerva, a word of advice, dear. You've never been a passenger in a ship.'

'No, sir.'

'You'll find it different from anything you've ever experienced. Here you give orders, in Ira's name. But passengers never give orders. *Never*. Remember it.' Lazarus added to me, 'Dora is a nice little ship, Ira, helpful and friendly. She can find her way through multiple space with just a hint, the roughest approximation – and still have all your meals on time. But she needs to feel appreciated. Pet her and tell her she's a good girl, and she'll wriggle like a puppy. But ignore her and she'll spill soup on you just to get your attention.'

'I'll be careful,' I agreed.

'And you be careful, Minerva – because you are going to need Dora's good will much more than she will need yours. You may know far more than she does – I'm sure you do. But you grew up to be chief bureaucrat of a planet while she grew up to be a ship . . . so what you know doesn't count – once you are aboard.'

'I can learn,' Minerva said plaintively. 'I can self-programme to learn astrogation and shiphandling at once, from the planetary library. I'm very bright.'

Lazarus sighed again. 'Ira, do you know the ancient Chinese ideogram for "trouble"?''

I admitted that I did not.

'Don't bother to guess it. It's "Two Women Under One Roof." We're going to have problems. Or you will, Minerva, you are *not* bright. You are stupid – when it comes to handling another woman. If you want to learn multiple-spaces astrogation – fine. But not from a library. Persuade Dora to teach you. But never forget that she is mistress in her own ship and don't try to show her how bright you are. Bear in mind instead that she likes attention.'

'I will try, sir,' Minerva answered him, with humility she rarely shows to me. 'Dora wants to get your attention right now.'

'Oh-oh! What sort of mood is she in?'

'Not a good mood, Lazarus. I have not admitted that I know where you are, as I am under a standing instruction not to discuss your affairs unnecessarily. But I did accept a message for you without guaranteeing that I could deliver it.'

'Just right. Ira, the papers with my will include a programme to wash me out of Dora's memories without touching her skills. But the trouble you started by grabbing me out of that flophouse has spread. She's awake with her memories intact, and she's probably scared. The message, Minerva.'

'It's several thousand words, Lazarus, but the semantic content is short. Will you have that first?'

'Okay, the summary meaning.'

'Dora wants to know where you are and when you are coming to see her. The rest could be described as onomatopoesy, semantically null but highly emotional – that is to say, cursing, pejoratives, and improbable insults in several languages –'

'Oh, boy.'

'– including one language I do not know but from context and delivery I assume tentatively that it is more of the same, but stronger.'

Lazarus covered his face with a hand. 'Dora is cussing in Arabic again, Ira, this is worse than I thought.'

'Sir, shall I replicate just the sounds not in my vocabularies? Or will you have the complete message?'

'No, no, no! Minerva, do you cuss?'

'I have never had reason to, Lazarus. But I was much impressed by Dora's command of the art.'

'Don't blame Dora; she was subjected to a bad influence when she was very young. Me.'

'May I have permission to file her message in my permanents? So that I may cuss if needed?'

'You do *not* have permission. If Ira wants you to learn to cuss he'll teach you himself. Minerva, can you arrange a telephone hookup from my ship to this suite? Ira, I might as well cope with it now; it won't get better.'

'Lazarus, I can arrange a standard telephone hookup if that is what you want. But Dora could speak to you at once via the duo in your suite that I am now using.'

'Oh. Fine!'

'Shall I supply her with holographic signal too? Or is sound enough?'

'Sound is enough. More than enough, probably.'

Will you be able to hear, too?'

'If you wish, Lazarus. But you can have privacy if that is your wish.'

'Stick around; I may need a referee. Put her on.'

'Boss?' It was the voice of a timid little girl. It made me think of skinned knees, and no breasts as yet, and big, tragic eyes.

Lazarus answered, 'Right here, baby.'

'Boss! God damn your lousy soul to hell! – what do you *mean* by running off and not letting me know where you are? Of all the filthy flea-bitten –'

'Pipe down!'

The timid-little-girl voice returned. 'Aye, aye, Skipper,' it said uncertainly.

'Where I go and when I go and how long I stay are none of your business. Your business is to pilot and to keep house, that's all.'

I heard a sniffle, exactly like a small child sniffing back tears. 'Yes, Boss.'

'You were supposed to be asleep. I put you to bed myself.'

'Somebody woke me. A strange lady.'

'That was a mistake. But you used bad language to her.'

'Well . . . I was *scared*. I really was, Boss, I woke up and thought you had come home . . . and you weren't anywhere around, not *anywhere*. Uh . . . she told on me?'

'She conveyed your message to me. Fortunately she did not understand most of your words. But I did. What have I told you about being polite to strangers?'

'I'm sorry, Boss.'

'Sorry doesn't get the cows milked. Now adorable Dora, you listen to me. I'm not going to punish you; you were wakened by mistake and you were scared and lonely, so we'll forget it. But you shouldn't talk that way, not to strangers. This lady – she's a friend of mine, and she wants to be your friend, too. She's a computer –'

'She *is*?'

'Just as you are, dear.'

'Then she couldn't hurt me, could she? I thought she was inside me, snooping around. So I yelled for you.'

'She not only couldn't, she would never want to hurt you.' Lazarus raised his voice slightly. 'Minerva! Come in, dear, and tell Dora who you are.'

My helpmeet's voice, calm and soothing said, 'I'm a computer, Dora, called Minerva by my friends – and I hope you'll call me that. I'm terribly sorry I woke you. I'd be scared too, if someone woke me like that.' (Minerva never has been 'asleep' in the hundred-odd years she's been activated. She rests each part of herself on some schedule I don't need to know – but she herself is always awake. Or awake so instantly whenever I speak to her as not to matter.)

The ship said, 'How do you do, Minerva. I'm sorry I talked the way I did.'

'I don't remember it, dear, if you did. I heard your skipper say that I transmitted a message from you to him. But it's erased, now that it's been transmitted. Private message, I suppose.'

(Was Minerva truth-saying? Until she came under Lazarus' influence I would have said that she did not know how to lie. Now I'm not sure.)

'I'm glad you erased it, Minerva. I'm sorry I talked to you that way. Boss is sore at me about it.'

Lazarus interrupted. 'Now, now, Adorable – stop it. We always let water over the bridge lie where Jesus flung it; you know that. Will you be a good girl and go back to sleep?'

'Do I have to?'

'No. You don't even have to place yourself on slow time. But I can't come to see you – or even talk to you – earlier than late tomorrow afternoon. I'm busy today and will be househunting tomorrow. You can stay awake and bore yourself silly any way you choose. But if you whomp up some fake emergency to get my attention, I'll spank you.'

'But, Boss, you know I *never* do that.'

'I know you *do* do that, little imp. But if you bother me for anything less than somebody trying to break into you or you catching on fire, you'll regret it. If I can figure out that you've set yourself on fire, you'll catch it twice as hard. Look, dear, why don't you at least sleep whenever I am asleep? Minerva, can you let Dora know when I go to sleep? And when I wake up?'

'Certainly, Lazarus.'

'But that doesn't mean you can bother me when I'm awake, Dora, other than for real emergencies. No surprise drills – this is not ship-board routine; we're dirtside and I'm busy. Uh . . . Minerva, how's your time-sharing capacity? Do you play chess?'

I put in, 'Minerva has ample share-time capacity.'

But before I could add that she was Secundus Champion, Unlimited Open Handicap (with a handicap of Q, Q's B, & K's R) Minerva said: 'Perhaps Dora will teach me to play chess.'

(Well, Minerva had certainly learned Lazarus' rule for telling the truth selectively. I made note that I must have a serious private talk with her.)

'I'd be glad to, Miss Minerva!'

Lazarus relaxed. 'Fine. You gals get acquainted. So long till tomorrow, 'Dorable. Now beat it.'



● I truthfully believe that Vol 1, No 1 is the best attempt to date to destroy sf. Most other mags have died with honour; yours is destined for an early grave with disgrace. Can it be true that all those editorial brains agreed as one on the format and quality? Who in their right minds would employ these people again on any magazine?

It is a waste of time offering criticism, but I can give you a little advice which may stall early liquidation. Start selling Ad space, contraceptives, pen pals, anything – it does not really matter because you are doomed to failure anyway. However, I shall still buy the damned thing, and if you still survive after six months, I shall write you a short story, free, gratis and for nothing.

J Jones (Northallerton, Yorkshire)

Ed: I look forward to receiving your story, Mr Jones.

● I found your first issue of *Science Fiction Monthly* very good, especially the coloured posters. Could I suggest that each month you print one special poster which, after 3 or 4 issues, would make up into one massive wall sized picture. I'd like that, and wonder how many more would?

A Marks (Salford, Cheshire)

Ed: Any more takers?

● I purchased a copy of your magazine yesterday. You state that you welcome views and comments – I consider it, apart from the article *Special Effects and the Science Fiction Film*, an insult to the intelligence. How you can publish 28 pages, the majority of which are pictures, and think people will buy a second edition beats me.

B Hems (London SW12 8LG)

● This being my final year at college, it is necessary for me to do a thesis on any subject that I care to choose. My subject will be basically the History of Science Fiction, but will include also a history of sf magazines.

Could you possibly supply me with any information on the subject, and even if you cannot personally, could you recommend any sources that would be helpful?

While writing this letter, I must take the opportunity to commend you on the publication of *Science Fiction Monthly*. With stories, articles and full-colour illustrations, it is by far the best of its kind. As an interested sf fan and an author in a modest way, I shall be entering your short story competition.

Thank you again for your trouble, and the best of luck with your magazine.

JN Lee (Wolverhampton)

Ed: See Page 17 for the first of our series on sf magazines. Can anyone else help here?

● I'd like to congratulate you on your excellent new magazine, *Science Fiction Monthly*, and I wish you every success with it. The quality of the posters alone are worth 25p without the added bonus of the articles and stories.

I would, however, like to know if the artwork you will be featuring in the months to come will be only from NEL books, or from the whole range of sf/fantasy books published by all companies. Also, will you be including artwork from any pop music albums, a lot of which are very sf/fantasy orientated in design, particularly the work of Roger Dean.

Anyway, thank you for an excellent magazine which, if it keeps up the high standard of Issue 1, I will buy regularly.



Painting by Eddie Jones

M Rans (Wolverhampton, Staffs)

Ed: As you can see, we are publishing artwork other than our own. I'll try and track down the work of Roger Dean – thanks for the suggestion.

● I am aged 58 and have read sf since the age of 9, when I came across *The First Man in the Moon* and read it straight through three times. I am one of those now elderly people who used to haunt Woolworth's looking for the Hugo Gernsback magazines with the top right-hand corner cut off and selling at 3d.

Though I attended what I think was the first ever sf convention about 20 years ago at the Royal Hotel, Bloomsbury and have been a few times to the Globe pub, I am not an organised fan.

I saw your tube poster for *Science Fiction Monthly* and bought a copy of the magazine. You are right – for many years now sf readers, including myself, have longed for large scale reproductions of book and magazine covers. You are filling a 'long-felt need' and I like nearly all the repros, particularly *Pastel City* and the cover for *Isaac Asimov 1*.

The Aldiss story is good, the Priest not bad, and the Asimov extract very well chosen indeed. Penny Grant's *News* is interesting, so is the article on Pennington, though the one of special effects is a little too smooth. The only blot in your first number is the childish, too large and quite pointless illustration to the Aldiss story.

I hope your finances will allow you to increase the story content, and will also be sufficient for you to buy only the very best in new writing. If you can print two good, longish stories and two second level stories each month, plus features and news, you will go on selling your pictures in ever increasing quantities. If you are

successful the sf world will be forever grateful and even more lively.

The very best of success.

M. Wippell (London NW5)

● Today I bought a copy of your new magazine and was so impressed I just had to write a letter of appreciation and wish you every success and long life in the venture which has filled a long gap in British sf magazine publications.

I didn't realise you were going to publish paperback cover illustrations until I saw the magazine and so it came as a pleasant surprise. Only last week I had been seriously considering writing to a number of publishers in this connection, applauding the greatly increased quality of artwork in recent years but lamenting the publishers' apparent reticence at giving the illustrators' names. I've noticed many paperbacks where the printers of the covers have been named but the poor chaps who actually have to conceive them in the first place have no mention whatsoever. Chris Foss has produced some marvellous pictures for the Asimov series in Panther and is actually accredited with the work. On other paperbacks, however, the only clues that Foss is the illustrator are the style and the initial 'F' inside a square somewhere in the painting. Another very good artist is Eddie Jones. No doubt you'll be featuring articles and artwork on these two.

(For article and artwork on Foss see Vol 1, No 2; Eddie Jones will be featured in SFM No. 6).

I read the news page with interest and must congratulate Penny Grant for her work, both the written word and illustrations. I knew I'd seen the sketches before and after searching through all the recent fanzines I finally came across them, with a number of others, in *Blunt, Number 1*. The

sketches look so rough and incomplete and yet they are instantly recognisable – they're incredible.

Thanks for the mention of the BSFA. I'm the Company Secretary and would welcome new blood in the organisation, especially people who are interested in actively helping.

Turning to the rest of SFM, I didn't mind the short stories but I wouldn't call them 'sensational'. Brian Aldiss is a very good author, the best Britain can boast.

I enjoyed immensely the article on special effects and the sf film, because the cinema is my second love after science fiction. I presume the author, John Brosnan, is the same JB I've seen and met at many cons, the Aussie who wrote a book on James Bond in the cinema. (**Ed:** Yes, the same). Despite liking the article I noticed he concentrated a lot on early sf but only mentioned 2001 from the 1960s and 70s. What happened to the fantastic sets of *Barbarella*, *Silent Running* and all the other recent sf films?

I also noticed you headed up one of the pictures wrongly. It was *Woman on the Moon*, not *Women*, and it was the 1929 classic, not 1928... Tch, tch. (**Ed:** Sorry about that!)

G R Poole (Cheltenham, Glos)

● First, congratulations for launching a new sf magazine in these uncertain times, both in the publishing industry and the country at large! This publication is just what we need; the land isn't exactly littered with science fiction journals, is it?

Science fiction is very popular amongst certain sectors of society; progressive pop musicians frequently use its imagery and concepts, i.e. The Pink Floyd, ELP, Hawkwind, MC5, Amon Duul II. It is very fashionable at the moment and can remain so providing it retains its sense of imaginative outrage and detached pessimism.

I would like to see your magazine steer a middle course between the 'new' sf of Moorcock, Ballard, Spinrad, Disch etc and the traditional adventures spiced with that 'sense of wonder' of the old school at its best, i.e. Clarke, Van Vogt, Heinlein, Asimov.

The illustrations are superb (no other word will do) especially the centrefold illustrating Harrison's *Pastel City*, and the one illustrating Aldiss' *Space, Time and Nathaniel*, both the work of featured artist, Bruce Pennington – more please!

The fiction was excellent. Chris Priest is a talented newcomer who gets better and better. His novel, *Fugue for a Darkening Island*, was one of the best I have read in the genre recently and his short story, *A Woman Naked*, was a fine piece of work. The Aldiss story was, well... an Aldiss story – well crafted and laced with wit.

(Thank God somebody noticed it!)

Ed:

That's about it then, he said. No great critical comments to make yet; there's plenty of time for that!

Seriously, an excellent magazine. I can hardly wait for the next issue. J T Parker (Swindon, Wilts)

"ALIEN FORMS". PAINTING BY DAVID HARDY.

1/3
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THE MIST AT THE BOTTOM OF THE VALLEY

BY DOUGLAS FULTHORPE

Here's your valley!' called Janice. She had drawn slightly ahead of Craig as they toiled up the last few yards below the crest of the ridge.

'Oh —?' Her exclamation was prompted by the view she had glimpsed beyond the ridge. She halted just short of the crest.

Craig made no reply. Janice was well cloaked in her bright blue parka and denims, which nevertheless more than hinted at the allure of her sleekly curved body. His thoughts were personal and basic as he drew near to her.

Had his attention not been momentarily and pleurably sidetracked by his immediate view, he might have registered curiosity at his fiancée's tersely cryptic comment. Distractions of this nature, while occurring regularly and with increasing frequency, were, however, wholly and mutually enjoyable.

Just before he reached her she turned and took a step towards him. Shrugging off his rucksack, he placed a foot behind her's and, taking her in his arms, gently lowered her and himself to the springy turf.

She gazed up at him, a little smile on her lips. 'You weren't listening,' she chided softly. 'I said, "Here's your valley".'

His lips moved against her neck. 'Correction; you missed out the "oh".' His hand stole under the collar of her parka; caressed the downy skin above the nape of her neck.

For the next few minutes there was no sound except occasional murmurs of endearment, and the sighing of the wind in the heather.

'This is wonderful,' she whispered.

He kissed her again. 'What is?'

'Just to be alone with you, here on this hill with the sun on my face, a million miles from Newcastle, with its noise and crowded streets, its traffic and fumes.'

'Yes.' He frowned at her reference to their home town, then disengaged himself from her embrace and sat upright.

'It is like another world here,' he commented thoughtfully. Abruptly the spell was broken. Rising to his feet, he reached down to help her up, then turned away, one arm around her shoulder.

'I'm wondering what surprised —. I see what you mean,' he went on.

They gazed silently down the valley. From where they stood at its head, the valley extended for about a mile to a deep narrow gorge. The cause of their astonishment was a layer of dense white mist which stretched along the entire floor of the valley.

At first glance the mist could have been mistaken for packed snow, but for a continual roiling motion which disturbed its surface.

'Eerie', Craig commented finally.

'What can it be?' Janice asked with a shiver. She zipped up her parka, and stood undecided on whether or not to pull the hood over her head. All at once the sunshine did not seem quite as bright, and there was a chill in the autumn air which she had not felt before.

It had been a mild, clear day in September, halfway through their third week of holiday. Their earlier holiday had been taken on Ibiza, where they had undergone two frenetically enjoyable weeks, alternately broiling in the June sun and sipping cognac and soda in intimately smart night-spots.

The idea of a late holiday at the Woolpack Inn in the Lake District had appealed to both of them. And so far they were not disappointed. After their slickly commercial experience on the Medi-



terranean they found the lonely grandeur of lakeland fells a refreshing contrast.

Craig and Janice had known each other for one month short of two years. They were passionately and uncompromisingly in love, and planned to marry in January. Up to eighteen months previously Janice had considered herself 'on the right side of thirty'; now, through a characteristically feminine process of rationalization, she once again considered herself 'on the right side of thirty'. She did feel, however, that at her age an engagement period of roughly six months — certainly no more — was reasonable.

The sombre colours and shortening days of autumn had added a mysterious shade to the beauty of the Lake District. By day the couple roamed the dales and fells around Bithedale; later, in the evening, the comforts of the cocktail bar at the Woolpack were irresistible.

Wednesday dawned dry and clear. After breakfast they stowed packed lunches in Craig's rucksack, and set off along the Pottersill road. Soon they turned onto an earth and gravel drive leading to Mossbank Farm.

In places the track was deeply carpeted russet with leaves from the partly denuded trees lining the drive. They trudged past the farmhouse of gray lakeland stone, through the farmyard where a few brown hens made way with chucked protests and pure white doves regarded them serenely from the eaves of outbuildings. The track degenerated to a narrow path which wandered up the hill behind the farm.

On their left and below them as they climbed, lay Parkgate Tarn, completely hidden behind a belt of dense woodland. To their right the hill fell away into a wooded cleft which climbed with them as they paced slowly upwards. The gurgle of tumbling water could be heard continuously from among the autumn-thinned foliage.

They paused for breath at a point where the trees thinned and the cleft broadened and turned away through ninety degrees. The now visible stream entered the cleft from a narrow, vertical-walled gorge which loomed above the watching couple.

'That gorge looks interesting,' Craig commented thoughtfully as he opened the map. The sides of the gorge were sheer and starkly gray,

with here and there a stunted, red-berried rowan tree or clump of coarse grass clinging to an outcrop.

The route they had planned stretched up the fell on the northern side of Bithedale, down the other side to the foot of Lake Bleawater, along the far side of the lake, around its head, then up the fell again and down into Upper Bithedale.

'I wonder if we could get to the head of Bleawater by walking up this little valley,' mused Craig, his finger pointing to the pattern of contour lines representing a valley beyond the gorge.

'Not through that gorge, anyway. You'd be up to your thighs in water.'

'I know. The only other way in would be to climb these crags, which is out of the question — they're too steep. Or we could climb further up the fell to skirt the crags.'

Janice nodded, and a lock of straw-blonde hair fell over her forehead. 'That seems a better bet to me,' she said, patting her hair into place again. 'But why not continue with our original plan and look in on this valley from the other end, on our way back?'

'Good idea,' he replied, folding the map. 'We'll do that,' he decided. They began to climb again.

Six tiring miles and four hours later found them surveying one of the more secluded valleys in the Lake District.

'It's a strange place, alright,' Craig pulled a packet of Embassy out of the pocket of his heavy twill trousers, lit two and passed one to Janice.

They smoked in pensive silence for a short while. Janice found her gaze wandering to Craig, who was staring in fascination at the foamy sea beneath them. Physically he was impressive; five feet ten inches of solid frame, flat stomach and powerful shoulders enhanced by the sophisticated masculinity of his gray and white patterned Scandinavian sweater. Gray eyes, strong, squarish features, and a head of silver-flecked dark hair completed a picture which Janice found excitingly attractive.

Apart from the gorge, in normal circumstances the valley would have appeared commonplace. The map showed no habitations or paths, no wooded tracts or tarns; just a thin, wavering blue line representing a beck.

Some fifty feet away to their left, the beck emerged from the moorland which it drained, then plunged down a ravine in a flurry of white to disappear into the turbulent sea of silent mist.

'Funny thing,' Craig commented, 'I was reading in the Cumberland Weekly News last night that the only people who venture on these hills are tourists. It seems the local populace regard these fells as a good place to stay away from. They speak of "unnatural happenings".'

'Now he tells me —!' Janice glanced down at the thick white mist and shuddered. 'Ugh —!'

'Quite,' agreed Craig. 'Lord, I've never seen anything like this, have you?'

Beneath them the dense white cloud rolled and shifted silently. Its surface was flecked by thousands of pulsating disturbances. A swelling of mist or foam would appear and grow in a fraction of a second. Then, it seemed instantaneously, the swelling would be replaced by a deep pock, which just as quickly would flatten or swell again.

Craig estimated that the mist reached to about

one third of the height of the bracken and grass-covered walls of the valley.

'Well, I've no wish to plough around in that stuff.' He flicked the stub of his cigarette away. 'But what *can* it be?'

'Nothing good,' rejoined Janice, huddling in her quilted parka. 'Horrible, isn't it?'

'It *is* horrible,' Craig agreed. 'I'd like to take a closer look at it, though. It's the queerest stuff I've ever seen.'

'No harm in looking, I suppose.' Janice sounded doubtful, however, and she made no move.

Craig picked up the rucksack. 'Right, let's go then.'

They walked carefully down the slope, through a thigh-deep forest of rust-red bracken. Craig slipped twice onto the seat of his pants, and Janice's denims were slightly soiled and limp. They halted about twelve feet above the eerily shifting mass.

'It's like some strange, sickly sea.' Janice's expression was a mixture of revulsion and fascination.

'Yes; actually I think we're a bit too close —.' WHOOSH! Craig broke off as a white tongue of mist suddenly reared and lunged frighteningly at them. '—for comfort,' he ended hastily. 'I think we had better get out of it while the going's good.'

As they turned to retrace their steps, Janice slipped on a dry tussock of shiny grass. Falling, she sprawled awkwardly at Craig's feet. He bent to help her to her feet, but before he had time to do any more he saw the mist just beneath them suddenly swell and boil. Janice shrieked once as a turmoil of mist whipped towards them. Their last earthly sight was of a vast white tide engulfing them.

He was conscious of a swirling pattern of brilliant colours, swaying, blending and twisting around him. *That damned mist's done something to my eyes*, he thought.

Only a second ago he had been plunged into a sea of whiteness; now he could see nothing but this incredible profusion of coruscating colour, sweeping bands of blinding saffron, turquoise and rose, continuously merging, separating and reforming around dizzily circling eddies and vortices.

Every known colour and shade was represented in the bizarre, spectral field of his vision. In addition there were colours completely alien to his experience.

But where was he? There was no suggestion of depth or perspective in the weird visions which swam and wandered before his eyes. For that matter, he had no sensation of possessing eyes, or hands or feet, or any physical attributes whatsoever. Neither had he any sense of hearing, touch, taste or smell. He was simply an intelligence drifting in a sea of radiance.

'Janice?' The question was a thought; thought was the only form of activity possible to him in this state.

'Here, Craig.' The reply was a soundless whisper which came to him without any apparent source. Simultaneously a pattern of narrow, black and white bands streaked across the swirling blend of colour around him, lingered for mere microseconds, and then vanished.

'Craig, where are you?' Once again a flashing streak of black and white was momentarily superimposed on the swirl of crimson and green, purple and yellow.

'I don't know, Janice. Something seems to have happened to my eyes. All I can see are patterns of luminous colours. I can't feel anything else, not even my own body. Where are you?'

'I must be in the same place as you. I can't feel any of my body either. There's nothing around me but these queer, moving colours, and a sort of black and white flash whenever I hear you.'

This could not be happening, Craig told himself dazedly. Any moment now he would awaken on a lakeland fell, with the breeze and thin sunshine of autumn on his face, and Janice laughing at his bewilderment. Not that he felt afraid. On the contrary, his emotions seemed to be numbed; all he felt was a sort of sick wonder at this bizarre place his mind had somehow wandered into.

Where the bloody hell are *we*? he wondered.





LUCINDA COWELL

You have entered another universe, or dimension. The thought came clearly to him.

'Janice, was that you?' he asked.

'No! I thought it was you' came the reply.

'Well, who was it? There must be someone else here.'

There is no-one else. No-one else in this universe. Once again the mysterious voice whispered its message.

'There must be someone or something else.' The black and white pattern appeared momentarily to Craig, as Janice 'spoke'. There must be some life in this — this place.'

No. There is no life. The reply was emphatic. *The structure of this universe is not compatible with life.*

'Surely you mean there is no life as we know it?' In spite of the ghastly unreality of this nightmare world, Craig was intrigued by the enigmatic nature of the stranger's comments.

There is no life whatsoever. The answer came almost instantaneously. *Except you two, and various lesser life-forms from your own planet.*

'Well, you're alive, aren't you?' asked Craig.

No. I am not alive.

'Are you some kind of synthetic creature, then?'

No. I am no kind of creature, the voice answered flatly and emotionlessly. It seemed to Craig that no-one uttered any further thoughts for some time, neither he nor Janice nor the creature which was not a creature. He had no standard by which the passage of time might be measured. For all he knew, he might have drifted in this universe of endlessly shifting colours for a period of mere seconds, or hours, or for eternity. Then Janice 'spoke' again.

'If this is another universe, how did we get here?'

Under certain unique circumstances, the space-time coordinates of particular boundary regions, of this universe and yours, become coincident. As a very crude analogy, imagine your universe to be the interior of a soapbubble. Another soapbubble, representing this universe, comes into contact with and partially penetrates the first bubble. Those regions of the two bubbles which occupy the same space at the same instant of time, represent the interfering regions of the two universes.

'And this interference region is the misty stuff at the bottom of the valley,' Janice commented. She went on; 'so we blundered into the boundary region and found ourselves in another universe.'

That is so.

'Craig.' Once again Janice's 'voice' was accompanied by the pattern of black and white streaks. 'Tell me I'm dreaming. Wake me up, nudge or shake me. Tell me I'm safe and warm in bed at the Woolpack or at home. Dear God, let me be anywhere but this ghastly place.'

'You —,' she went on, ' — thing. Tell me I'm dreaming.'

You are not dreaming. This universe is as real as your own, the voice sighed.

'Are we trapped here?' she asked.

No. On the contrary, you cannot stay here. You will be returned to your own universe.

Craig had been thinking carefully. 'Are you a communications device?'

Yes.

'With whom, or what, are we in communication?'

With yourselves.

A suspicion was forming in Craig's mind. Here were he and Janice conversing with an entity which declared not only that it was not alive, but there was no life in this universe except for the recently-arrived intruders.

The thing was conceivably a tool, a product of a long-dead intelligence. The structure of this universe was not compatible with life, the communications device had explained. Perhaps some fundamental physical change had killed its creators.

'When were you created?' he asked deliberately.

As 'I' do not possess conceptual reality, the voice answered, 'I' cannot be considered to exist as an entity, and the term 'creation' is therefore non-relevant.

Craig lost his temper. 'What the hell are you then?' he snapped.

In your universe, the device replied, a general principle of opposition to change applies. All processes or actions, whether physical, chemical,

biological, sociological or whatever, are resisted by counter-factors which are naturally caused to operate. The most striking and obvious example is the existence of an equal and opposite reaction to any applied force.

There are no material quantities in this universe, only intangibles. There is, nevertheless, an opposition or reaction to any process. Your thought processes, specifically your questions, naturally bring into play an opposing, directional flow of intangible energy which your intelligence interprets as the answer or explanation to your query.

'So you are nothing more than a reaction to our thought processes,' thought Craig. For all he knew, the incredible explanation could be scientifically sound. Furthermore, he considered, by a quirk of the physics of this universe, an extrapolative process might occur, based on the facts implicit in any question of his or Janice's. The product of this extrapolation, conveyed to them as, say, 'thought energy', would actually supply them with data beyond their field of experience and knowledge.

'Alright, Mr Communications Device.' Janice's thought had a note of laconic flatness. 'Just tell us what has happened to us.'

In entering this universe, along with smaller animals, that which you term plant life, and various inanimate substances, you have been transformed into radiant energy.

'How long do we stay here, then?' queried Janice.

Not long. Elastic reaction forces, induced by your intrusion, will return you to your own universe.

Soon. Thank God; thought Craig. Soon they would be freed from this insane limbo with its endless, blinding radiances and soul-wrenching colour patterns. Once again they would walk the airy hills and sheltered valleys of their own world. Green fields under blue skies; red-brick houses and stone churches; the clean, wholesome world they knew was awaiting them.

Janice was questioning their informant again. 'Will we be returned just as we were, to the valley where we were trapped?'

You will be unchanged from your original state. The dimensional rift, through which you entered this universe, will not permit transfer in the return direction, however.

The coldly whispering voice fell silent. A chill foreboding stole into Craig's mind as he considered the implications of the thought-reaction's last statement. Around him the sickening, soundless fireworks display continued. Bright fire-splashes of ruby and flame against shimmering silver-gold. Inwardly spiralling rainbow hues; shifting, subtly merged blue of sky and black of space. With his fear there came a sudden and irrational dread of losing his reason, and, in a state of insanity, wandering forever in this gaudy waste.

'How will we return, then?' he asked.

A second inter-dimensional rift formation does exist from time to time. In the terms of our earlier analogy, this condition occurs when the two bubble-universes are in tangential contact.

Craig's foreboding grew darker. Suddenly, and again without rational reason, he knew he would never again see his hills and fields. He felt sick fury at this arid, intellectual thing which spoke so dispassionately of his and Janice's fates.

'Get to the point, then, damn you,' he snarled. 'Will we be returned and in safety?'

This rift occurs on occasions when particles of matter, in your universe, are transformed into energy. This destruction of matter causes a briefly enduring gap in the fabric of the continuum, through which you will be returned. The elastic restoring forces here are now almost critical, and will very soon transfer each of you through a separate inter-dimensional rift, at convenient locations in space-time.

'But will we survive?' raged Craig; 'Will we survive?'

'Craig.' Janice's thought came strongly over the device's reply. 'How can we? I've just realised what he — it — means. I can think of a place and time where one of us could be transferred.'

As Craig considered her words the import came to him. There was a long pause. 'So can I,' he answered slowly. 'Two places, in fact.'

'Hiroshima,' thought Janice.

'Nagasaki,' replied Craig.

the Artist in Science Fiction

Interview by Lynne Whaites

Ray Feibush. Born: 22 January 1948. Sf artist; work includes covers for Edgar Rice Burroughs' *The Chessmen of Mars* (New English Library edition, August 1973), *A Second Isaac Asimov Double* (New English Library edition, May 1973), *The Far-Out Worlds of A.E. Van Vogt* (New English Library edition, February 1974), *The Open Cage* by Ronald Hall (Panther edition, 1971)

The amount of work available for science fiction cover artists has increased so rapidly over the past three years that there is plenty of opportunity for the newcomer. Ray Feibush has been working full-time in sf for a year and has already completed 14 covers ranging from Robert Heinlein's *Podkayne of Mars* to *A Second Isaac Asimov Double* and *The Godmakers* by Frank Herbert (all New English Library editions). His approach to sf covers is imaginative and shows a versatility of styles. He has found wide scope in the work because of the freedom he is allowed:

'I like painting science fiction because it does not restrict me; nobody can tell me "Mars isn't like that" when I've finished a painting.'

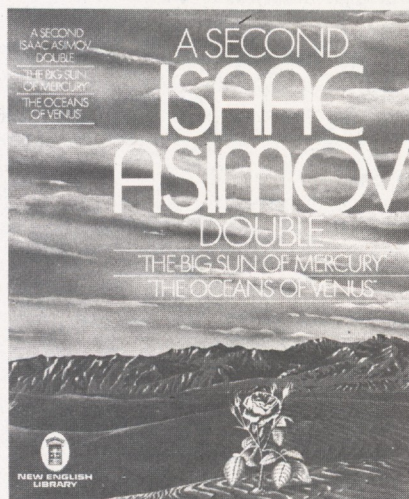
Feibush's first art commission came while he was in America and was for a horror magazine. Born in Liverpool, he moved to America when he was 7 and stayed there until 1966. He returned to England to try for a place in an art school but did not qualify for a grant and so began the difficult job of freelancing with no college and minimal work experience:

'I spent the first six months going to all the wrong places like greeting card firms, who don't seem to employ freelancers, trying to get work. In the end I got a clerical job and painted in my free time.'

To start with Feibush would take any job for six months, save as much as he could and then stay at home for the rest of the year to paint. His first full-time job in England was for an advertising firm.

Although he has had no formal training Feibush has gathered his art education from a variety of sources. His brother Mike McInerney, artist and designer of

the record sleeve for The Who's *Tommy*, taught him the basic skills of how to present his work. A number of jobs, ranging from technical illustrator on a science magazine to cartoonist, gave Feibush a broad knowledge of the commercial art world. Feibush also designed record covers and one of these, for Stravinsky's *La Création de Monde*, won a Music Week design award.



Stunning cover by Ray Feibush for Isaac Asimov's Double *The Big Sun of Mercury* and *The Oceans of Venus*.

After taking round a selection of his work to a number of publishers he was given his first sf commission by Panther books. This was in 1971 and was the cover for Ronald Hall's *The Open Cage*. Covers followed for other sf books as well as wartime adventures like *The Fighter Aces of the RAF* by ECR Baker and various novels including *Sable Mistress* by Clint Rockman. Feibush prefers sf work but takes the same amount of time over each cover he does:

'I read every book I do a cover for. I'm a very slow worker and spend 95 per cent of the time sitting there looking at the painting, studying it for any little thing that's wrong. With regard to my work I try to be a perfectionist.'

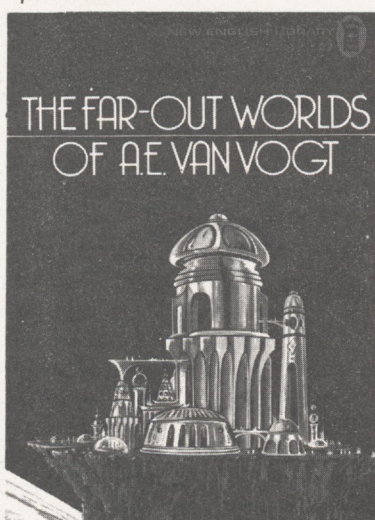
Each idea is worked out first in paper and pencil and then traced off onto the board before he begins his colour work:

'Of course I have some idea of the colours from the start but I don't really work out anything definite until I have the outline traced out. What I decide to paint then is what I finish up with; I really keep to what I first thought of.'

The main medium he uses is acrylic and gouache and the majority of his work is done without using any mechanical equipment. Some artists rely on tools like air brushes for filling in large areas of sky but Feibush says:

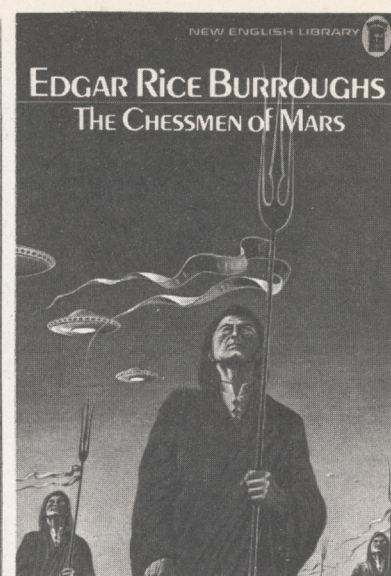
'I've got an air brush which stands in a corner at home collecting dust. I have used it occasionally but it's not the same as using your hands. The most important thing about art work is the idea, because no matter how good the painting is it's not going to mean anything to anybody if there isn't a strong idea behind it.'

Many of Feibush's cover ideas are taken from his imagination although he does rely on a few reference books and photographs for particular details like a gun or space suit:



The Far-Out World of A.E. Van Vogt, One of Ray Feibush's surrealistic artworks for a New English Library book.

'The mountain ranges in *A Second Isaac Asimov Double* are based on a photograph of an American desert. But for sf you have to take the images to extremes. As my work has developed I have become more confident and so more adventurous. My style has become more involved and subtle. I rely more on my imagination and less on reference books. I used none at all for *Oceans of Venus*, one of my latest covers.'



A cover from an original painting by Ray Feibush illustrating Edgar Rice Burroughs' book, *The Chessmen of Mars*.

When not working on covers Feibush paints for himself. A recent project he undertook was to illustrate Tolkein's *Lord of The Rings*:

'I love the book. I think you could almost call it science fantasy. Tolkein wouldn't let anybody illustrate it because, quite rightly, he thought nobody could illustrate it as he imagined it. I planned to do about 20 drawings and take them along to show Tolkein to get his approval. I did two of the drawings and started the others. It took time because before you can begin to paint you have to work out the characters. I never finished the work.'

If he had more time Feibush would like the chance to do a series of paintings for an exhibition - 'The trouble is, like most artists, I like seeing my work in print.'

The art style which has influenced him most is surrealism. Feibush feels that before he discovered surrealism he was only painting because he was technically able to but through studying this group he found he could put more into his own painting.

The work Feibush is involved in at present is varied and includes a series of black and white sketches for a book, a record sleeve and a number of sf covers but it is the latter which gives him most artistic satisfaction.

Ray Feibush

"THE FAR-OUT WORLDS OF A. E. VAN VOGT". PAINTING BY RAY FEIBUSH.

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By A. MERRITT



FIFTY YEARS OF SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINES

PART 1

1926 to 1935: A Decade of Wonder by Michael Ashby

Covers: Courtesy of John Egging (Phantasmagoria Books)

I wonder how many of you holding this issue of SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY realise its significance, and more so its inheritance? At present it is the only British science fiction magazine, a lone voice where once there were many. Today the science fiction magazine seems a thing of the past, not only in Britain but world-wide. The sf magazine is essentially a product of the United States, and yet even in that country it is a dying breed and one would be hard put to use up all one's fingers in counting the individual titles. And yet twenty years ago the American market was flooded with sf magazines: 1953 for instance saw nearly 50 titles with over 200 issues between them.

One of the titles still surviving in the USA is AMAZING STORIES. December 1973 saw the appearance of its 465th issue (only ANALOG SF exceeds this issue total with 517 at that month), but what is more important about the survival of this magazine is that 465 issues ago AMAZING STORIES was the first ever science fiction magazine. That portentous occasion was in April 1926, the same month and year that Queen Elizabeth II was born. In that year Stanley Baldwin was Prime Minister, George V was King of England, and Calvin Coolidge was President of the USA.

Within the realms of science 1926 saw the non-stop flight of the Italian airship from Rome to Pulham, and Byrd and Floyd flew non-stop over the North Pole. It was still four years away from the discovery of the planet Pluto. The first talking film *Don Juan* was released by Warner Brothers. John Logie Baird gave the first public demonstration of television in London. That year will also be remembered in Britain as the year of the General Strike.

For nearly fifty years AMAZING STORIES has weathered the storm, surviving national depressions and world wars. It was with AMAZING STORIES that it all began, the first sf magazine. And it was the science fiction magazine that made the field what it is today. It cultured the infant of HG Wells and Jules Verne, the brainchild of Edgar Allan Poe and Mary Shelley, and brought it through adolescence to the full strength of manhood.

It is that adolescence which I propose to take a short look at now – those first ten years from 1926 to 1935 when everything was new and experimental and when the authors that are today's idea-men first found their footings.

I – How it came about

Adventure magazines were two-a-penny in the 1920s but adventure magazines devoted to science fiction were non-existent until April 1926. That does not mean that AMAZING STORIES emerged like Aphrodite, virgin from a sea of pulp adventure. Far from it. AMAZING STORIES was the next natural step in a journey that had really begun with Frank Munsey's magazine THE GOLDEN ARGOSY in the late 1880s. Munsey was then publishing for the boys' adventure market, at that time at its heyday with the dime novels (the US equivalent of the British penny-dreadfuls). These dime novels carried many science fiction serials, usually referred to as 'invention' stories, since they revolved around the application of some new scientific invention. On 24 September 1892 there appeared a regular weekly publication FRANK READE LIBRARY which lasted for 191 issues until August 1898. Whilst today it is regarded more as a series of books than a magazine it showed the popularity and profitability of science fiction.

In 1896 Frank Munsey caused GOLDEN ARGOSY to mature into the first real adventure 'pulp' magazine, ARGOSY. Called 'pulp' because they were printed on cheap paper made from rehashed old magazines, these magazines swamped the market in the early 1900s. Munsey began to publish quite a stable of magazines: ARGOSY, MUNSEY'S, ALL-STORY, CAVALIER – all of which carried much science fiction and proved highly popular.

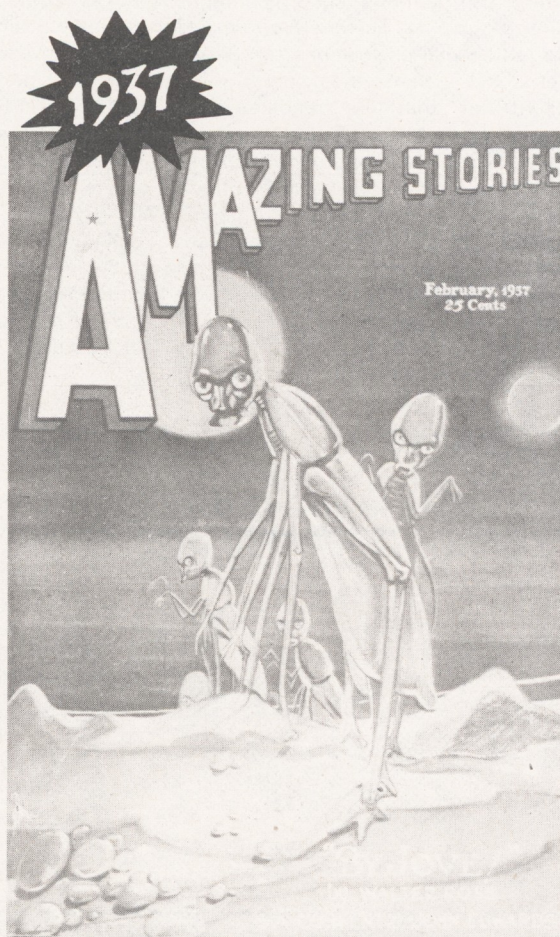
At the same time in England similar magazines, although of a more glossy nature, were appearing: STRAND, PEARSON'S, THE IDLER – carrying the

works of H G Wells, Conan Doyle, George Griffith. Many of these British stories were reprinted in US magazines, like COSMOPOLITAN, and science fiction in America soon outstripped England.

The floodgates really opened as a result of the work of Edgar Rice Burroughs. ALL-STORY magazine serialized from its February to July 1912 issues his first work, *Under the Moons of Mars*, followed in the October 1912 issue with *Tarzan of the Apes*. The call for more Burroughs' stories was readily answered and successive years saw a bevy of Tarzan and Martian adventures. The Martian books are even today enjoying popular demand and have recently been reissued by New English Library.

It was only natural that many Burroughs' imitators would appear, but the point is that now the market was wide open for the scientific romance, and it was in this period that the first big names in science fiction appeared: George Allen England, Austin Hall, Homer Eon Flint, Charles Stilson, Frances Stevens. One author of this period, Murray Leinster, is still active.

These magazines catered for the adventurous minded, and their scientific content is often negligible. For the ardent scientist there were the magazines of Luxembourg Hugo Gernsback. In 1908 Gernsback had issued MODERN ELECTRICS, devoted mostly to radio. Commencing with the April 1911 issue Gernsback serialized his own novel *Ralph 124C 41+*, a veritable encyclopaedia of predictions. Thereafter science fiction became a regular feature of the magazine which was renamed first ELECTRICAL EXPERIMENTER and later SCIENCE & INVENTION. In the August 1923 issue of that magazine he published six sf stories in what is now considered the initial prototype of the sf magazine. Certainly it was the first issue of any magazine to be devoted to sf.



So, many magazines carried sf but none was devoted to it. The first specialist magazine was for detective fiction called DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE; it was published by Street & Smith and first appeared in October 1915. Several other detective magazines appeared, and attracted to this field was Jacob Henneberger who decided to publish a magazine DETECTIVE TALES. A fan of Edgar Allan Poe (the father of the detective story), Henneberger also decided to publish a sister magazine to be devoted to the horror story in the style of Poe, and WEIRD TALES subsequently appeared in March 1923.

WEIRD TALES was the first magazine to be entirely devoted to weird and bizarre fiction and as part of its content it carried a substantial amount of science fiction, not forgetting the works of H P Lovecraft. Initially edited by Edwin Baird, its real heyday was under Farnsworth Wright from 1924 to 1940, when it sank into a basic horror magazine until its eventual death in 1954 after 279 issues.

A true rival did not appear until the 31st issue of WEIRD TALES. In April 1926 Hugo Gernsback published AMAZING STORIES, and the science fiction magazine arrived with a bang that echoed around the world. But as Gernsback himself said: '... it will be seen that the concept of AMAZING STORIES in 1926 was not a haphazard undertaking. Its groundwork had been well prepared for 15 years.'

II – Gernsback Supreme

We have a lot to thank Edgar Allan Poe for. As the father of the detective story he promulgated the Sherlock Holmes stories of Doyle and ultimately the first detective fiction magazine. As a doyen of horror fiction he was the inspiration behind WEIRD TALES, and as acknowledged by Hugo Gernsback he was the model for the type of science fiction to be published in AMAZING STORIES. The fiction Gernsback wanted to print was classed by himself thus: 'By "scientifiction" I mean the Jules Verne, H G Wells and Edgar Allan Poe type of story – a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision.'

There were the guidelines, the same policy as SCIENCE & INVENTION, and it was now up to the authors to produce the stories.

The first two issues of AMAZING STORIES were entirely reprint. Here Gernsback with the help of CA Brandt, the Managing Editor, showed a considerable diversity of choice. Whilst Poe, Verne and Wells were heavily featured Gernsback also drew upon lesser known items from his own archives and from the Munsey magazines. The first new fiction did not appear until the June 1926 issue with G Peyton Wertenbaker's *The Coming of the Ice*. Thereafter, although the emphasis still lay in reprinting stories, new fiction began to appear. The first original novel in the magazine was A Hyatt Verrill's *Beyond the Pole* in October 1926, although it was two years before another appeared.

AMAZING STORIES was printed on pulp paper but was larger than the usual pulp size, measuring some 8.5x11 inches with 96 pages. Whilst Hugo Gernsback was the Editor-in-Chief, the real editor was T O'Connor Sloane, then approaching his eighties, who wrote the introductions to stories' blurbs and the comments in the letter column. Art Editor was the Austrian, Frank Paul, of whom Moskowitz said his '... imagination captured the essence of science fiction in a manner never equalled before or surpassed since'.³ Indeed it has been said of Paul that he never drew the same rocket design twice, and when one considers the number that he did draw that takes some imagination.

AMAZING STORIES was an instant success. So much so that to celebrate its first anniversary Gernsback decided to issue AMAZING STORIES ANNUAL. For this special venture he commissioned a completely new Martian novel from Edgar Rice Burroughs, *The Master Mind of Mars*. Naturally the ANNUAL was a sell-out, even at fifty cents an issue. Gernsback had obviously bargained for this since he had included in the annual fiction published in the magazine only a few months earlier. He would not have done this had he thought only AMAZING STORIES' readers would have bought the ANNUAL. The success of the annual prompted the appearance of AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY, the first issue appearing in January 1928.

The magazine adopted the policy of publishing two complete novels per issue together with a few shorter pieces. 1928 was subsequently a boom year for science fiction and with the expanding market many new authors began to appear. 1927 and 1928 saw the emergence of such great names in sf as Francis Flagg, Miles J Breuer, David H Keller, Harl Vincent, Jack Williamson, Stanton Coblenz.

Only one author who in 1928 appeared for the first time in AMAZING STORIES had not originated there, Edmond Hamilton. Hamilton had first appeared in the June 1926 WEIRD TALES with *The Monster-God of Mamurth*, the story of an invisible city and its equally invisible guardian. He had followed this with a serial, and by 1928 had become one of the big names in WEIRD TALES, all through science fiction stories. He was introduced to AMAZING STORIES' readers in the January 1928 issue with *The Comet Doom*; and rapidly became a popular contributor.

Perhaps the most popular contributor of the period was Dr David H Keller. At a time when authors were having their heroes discover lost civilizations, or inventing uncontrollable devices that had to be destroyed before they destroyed the world, or exploring other worlds by every conceivable method, Keller interested himself with the future of people and society. He was one of the first authors to focus attention on what scientific advance might mean to the human race. His first story, *The Revolt of the Pedestrians*, portrays a future where the automobile has taken over, and the remaining pedestrians treated as little more than animals. In *A Biological Experiment* he explores a future where the urge for motherhood and fatherhood still exists in a world where all men and women are infertile. *The Psychophonic Nurse* tells of a future where mothers leave their children to robot nurses. *Stenographer's Hands* shows how big business sets about creating a race bred purely as stenographers, bred to perfection so as to avoid mistakes.



Keller's stories are excellent as examples of the limits of Gernsback's freedom in publishing. For instance, *The Menace*, published in the Summer 1928 QUARTERLY focussed on the race problem in the United States, and the resultant events after a group of Negroes perfect a method to turn their skin white. When Negro scientists also succeed in extracting gold from seawater their plans for world domination come to fruition. Such a story would be tempting fate to appear today and yet Gernsback had no hesitation.

Another innovation of Gernsback's was the publication of translations of science fiction works by Europeans. With the help of C A Brandt he printed such works as Kurt Siodmak's *The Eggs From Lake Tanganyika*, which might never otherwise have seen English editions.

One other introduction of Gernsback's would later expand beyond all belief. The January 1927 AMAZING STORIES carried *Discussions*, a letter column. Combined with the introduction of a science question-and-answer column Gernsback succeeded in making the magazines very personal with the reader, and this was an additional reason for its success. As a result of these letter columns, later years would see the growth of science fiction fandom, of which more later.

Until 1929 Gernsback reigned supreme. AMAZING STORIES retained a consistent monthly schedule, and the QUARTERLY appeared with its annual four bumper issues. The success of this venture naturally brought enemies, not least amongst them Bernarr MacFadden. Concurrent with the birth of AMAZING STORIES MacFadden had issued GHOST STORIES,

and AMAZING STORIES was proving far too popular for the likes of this cheaper pulp. More so was the success of Gernsback's YOUR BODY against MacFadden's PHYSICAL CULTURE. As related by Sam Moskowitz in *Explorers of the Infinite*, under the law of that day MacFadden succeeded in filing Gernsback as a bankrupt and his Experimenter Publishing Company was forced to close.

It was a pyrrhic victory for MacFadden. GHOST STORIES survived until 1931, and today his publications are all but forgotten. Gernsback on the other hand would not lie down. The last AMAZING STORIES with him as editor appeared in April 1929. Thereafter it was bought by Radio-Science Publications, and T O'Connor Sloane stayed on as editor, initially with Arthur Lynch. By June 1929 Gernsback was back in the field with the first issue of SCIENCE WONDER STORIES. Gernsback had created his own rival.

III - The Field Expands

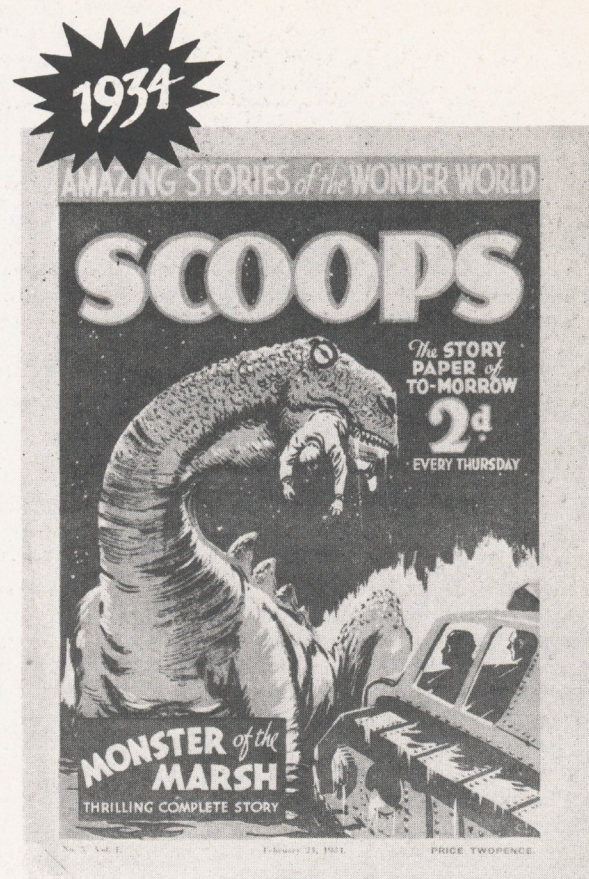
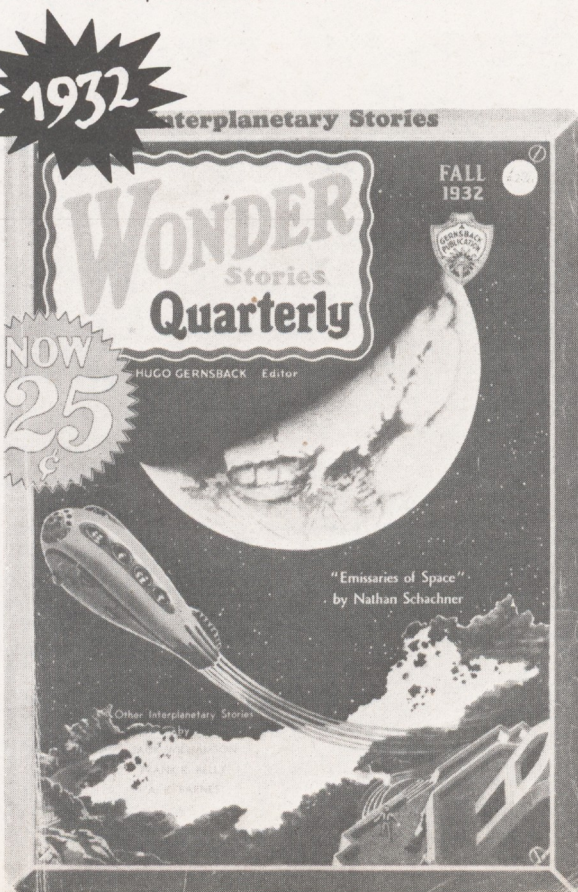
Gernsback had formed the Stellar Publishing Company and was well aware that the market that had consumed AMAZING STORIES was only too ready to feast itself upon similar commodities. Gernsback had his followers and he would not fail them. The first issue of SCIENCE WONDER STORIES appeared in June 1929, to be followed by AIR WONDER STORIES in July, and SCIENCE WONDER QUARTERLY in October. In January 1930 SCIENTIFIC DETECTIVE MONTHLY hit the stands. And besides the magazines Gernsback scheduled a regular series of original science fiction books called SCIENCE FICTION SERIES beginning with *The Girl From Mars* by Jack Williamson and Miles J Breuer in mid-1929. These books, published on good grade paper, were offered at the rate of five for fifty cents or twelve for one dollar. If anyone did anything to spread science fiction nationwide Gernsback did in 1929.

The touch of Gernsback was very evident. The magazines were virtual carbon copies of AMAZING STORIES. Here were the European translations; the letter column, *The Reader Speaks*; the science questions and answers and quizzes; the book reviews and Gernsback's always precise and interesting editorials.

Gernsback had verve. At the age of 45 he was really finding his stride. Sloane on the other hand had no verve, and at the age of 79, one could make allowances for that. As a result AMAZING STORIES changed hardly at all from 1929 to 1938 during the entirety of Sloane's editorship. It retained its big-name authors, and consequently kept its readership, but as shall be seen later this was through no help from Sloane.

Gernsback on the other hand recognised the potential of science fiction fandom. He was for ever setting competitions, such as slogans, or *What I have done to advance Science Fiction*, or for stories written around special illustrations. More and more this made Gernsback's magazines something special. The end result was that the readership of the WONDER magazines tended to be more active, whilst the AMAZING STORIES readers were more sedentary.

What is more Gernsback introduced variety into his publications. As the title suggests SCIENTIFIC DETECTIVE MONTHLY published fiction based on the detection of criminals by scientific means. Besides this SCIENCE WONDER QUARTERLY was devoted entirely to interplanetary stories, AIR WONDER STORIES to aviation adventures, leaving SCIENCE WONDER STORIES to publish the rest of the field.



One might think that Gernsback had his hands full. But in fact he again only acted as Editor-in-Chief. The Managing Editor of the magazines was the young David Lasser, President of the American Rocket Society. Hector Gray was initially editor of SCIENTIFIC DETECTIVE MONTHLY.

So Gernsback not only introduced the first science fiction magazine but the first *nine*. But his monopoly of the field was soon to come to an end. William Clayton was the publisher of a large chain of adventure pulp magazines, and in January 1930 he published the first issue of ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER SCIENCE. The editor was Harry Bates, and assistant editor Desmond Hall.

The policy of ASTOUNDING STORIES (to which it later shortened its title) was initially a mixture of super-science fiction and weird fiction. Some of the early issues were similar to WEIRD TALES in content. However, the magazine attracted the big names. Ray Cummings, a regular contributor to the Munsey magazines had virtually ignored Gernsback. But he was in the first issue, along with Murray Leinster, another pulp adventure favourite who had ignored the Gernsback magazines. What prompted them into the field is conjectural, but no doubt the higher paying rate of Clayton's had much to do with it, since it was double the other magazines.

But what was more important was that ASTOUNDING STORIES was the first science fiction magazine venture outside the work of Gernsback. Obviously he had showed that there was a profitable market over the previous four years and it was about time somebody else cashed in. Before many months had passed Gernsback discovered he had a formidable rival, and at the wrong time. With the USA entering its Depression years it was obvious that the reading public would now have to pick and choose, and this included those who read WEIRD TALES. WEIRD TALES still had its Edmond Hamilton, as well as David Keller and H P Lovecraft and was enjoying the crest of a wave at this time.

Something would have to go. AMAZING STORIES had secured a new E E Smith serial. *The Skylark of Space* had been the book of 1928. The April 1930 AMAZING STORIES carried a large advertisement informing the readership of the commencement of a sequel, *Skylark Three*, in the August issue. That guaranteed AMAZING's safety. ASTOUNDING STORIES had also commenced with a bang, and with such serials as *Brigands of the Moon* by Ray Cummings and *Earth, The Marauder* by Arthur J Burks, it secured its immediate future.

But two magazines were in trouble. Because of the minority appeal of their subjects, both SCIENTIFIC DETECTIVE MONTHLY and AIR WONDER STORIES had a diminishing audience. As a saving grace Gernsback combined AIR WONDER STORIES with SCIENCE WONDER STORIES to produce the single volume WONDER STORIES in June 1930. The same month he renamed SCIENTIFIC DETECTIVE MONTHLY as AMAZING DETECTIVE TALES and two months later replaced Hector Gray as editor with David Lasser. However the rot had set in and after ten issues the magazine died. It had suffered from being the worst of both worlds. In many cases the stories were borderline science fiction and the sf readership soon lost interest. Similarly there was little to hold the attention of the detective fiction fans, who after all had their own magazines anyway.

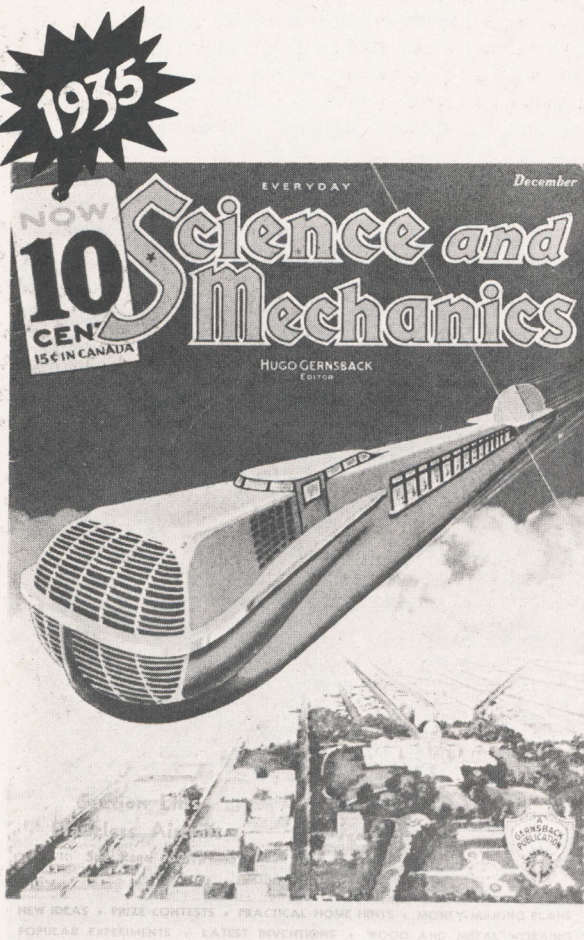
The QUARTERLY magazines remained, but essentially at the end of 1930 there were three major magazines, AMAZING STORIES, ASTOUNDING STORIES and WONDER STORIES. With the Depression growing steadily worse every day it was to be a survival of the fittest.

IV - Into the Storm

The strength of science fiction fandom was only too obvious in these Depression days. The clamorous response to Gernsback's competitions proved the interest in active fandom and perhaps one of the most influential contests set at this time was *What I have done to advance Science Fiction*. It was won by Raymond A Palmer, who would ten years later find himself at the helm of AMAZING STORIES. But more important was the runner up, Conrad Ruppert, who put forward the suggestion of a Science Fiction Week. Gernsback put this idea into practice devoting the editorial to the May 1930 SCIENCE WONDER STORIES to *Science Fiction Week: March 31st to April 7th 1930*. He called for a major promotion campaign to advertize and publicize science fiction in every possible way. He concluded by saying: 'It is from these efforts, of you, the pioneers, that science fiction will become the mighty force it is destined to be; and you will then know that, because of you, the world has become a better place to live in.'⁴

Little wonder that the sf fan field grew and grew so that by 1933, at the depths of the Depression, there was an army of ardent admirers willing to do their utmost for their beloved literature. Gernsback not only delivered the sf magazine into the world but he saved it from a premature death by his own imagination and vitality.

The reality of the Depression was first noticeable with Clayton's magazines. ASTOUNDING STORIES began to miss issues during 1932, and in March 1933 finally folded after 34 issues. (Those 34 issues are now collectors items since they contain some of the most original science fiction stories of their period.) Both the QUARTERLY magazines began to falter. AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY turned to a reprint magazine for economy, but the size was too much and it failed after 22 issues. WONDER STORIES QUARTERLY (as SCIENCE WONDER QUARTERLY was now retitled) failed after fourteen issues in January 1933.

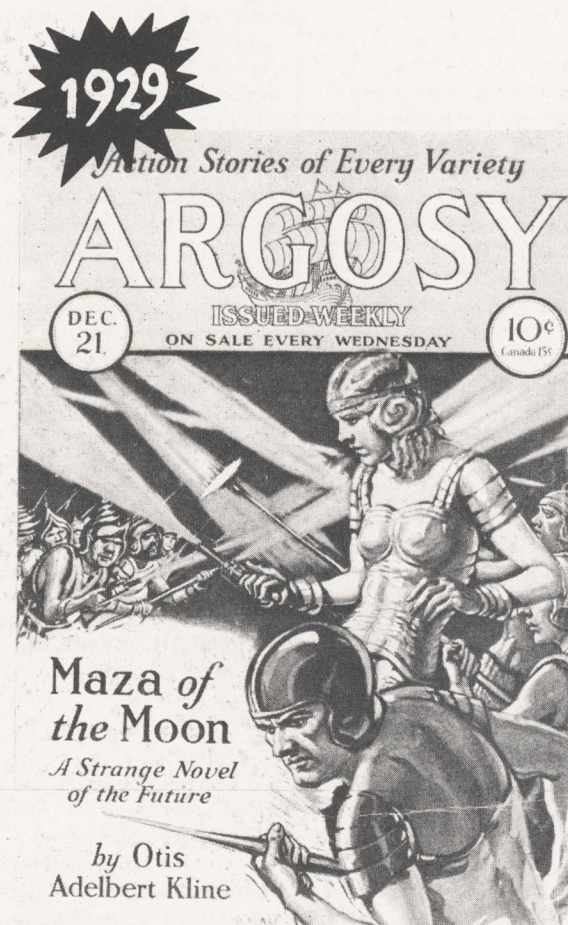


Although in 1932 AMAZING STORIES and WONDER STORIES had kept to their monthly schedule things were difficult in 1933. AMAZING STORIES missed one month, and WONDER STORIES was forced to go bi-monthly for a short period. Changes came about in the size of the magazine, both reducing from large size to the standard pulp size (7x10 inches).

One can only conjecture what would have happened had the Depression lasted longer than it did. Fortunately for all concerned, towards the end of 1933 finances began to ease. Street & Smith publications, who had published the first detective magazine and who had experimented with a weird adventure magazine THE THRILL BOOK in 1919, bought the rights to ASTOUNDING STORIES. In the editorial chair they placed F Orlin Tremaine, Desmond Hall carrying over from the Clayton days as assistant editor. The magazine reappeared in October 1933, and from that day to this it has not missed a *single* monthly

issue. Now known as ANALOG SF it is edited by Ben Bova, the recent successor to John Campbell. Bova is only the fourth editor of the magazine in over forty years, and the one who really got things going was F Orlin Tremaine.

Tremaine's policy at ASTOUNDING STORIES was for 'thought variant' themes. Stories completely original in idea, treatment and scope and which would catch the imagination. The response was immediate. Nathan Schachner, one of the most popular contribu-



tors of his day, happened with *Ancestral Voices* in the December 1933 issue. The story concerns a man who travels back in time and kills a Hun who happened to be a distant ancestor. Consequently he and thousands of other people disappear.

Schachner led the way and he was immediately followed by Donald Wandrei with *Colossus*, Murray Leinster with *Sidewise in Time*, John Russell Fearn with *The Man Who Stopped the Dust*, Harl Vincent with Rex and Don A Stuart (the pen name of John Campbell) with *Twilight*. 1934 was a colossal year for ASTOUNDING STORIES and Tremaine. Within twelve months of the magazine's revival it was number one in the field, and has virtually stayed there ever since.

What was Gernsback doing all this time? He was far from sitting still. With the decline of WONDER STORIES during 1933 Gernsback had fired David Lasser and replaced him with Charles Hornig. Hornig was only 17 and his succession into the Gernsback magazines was on the strength of his own magazine THE FANTASY FAN. Harry Warner Jnr tells us: 'He sent a copy of it to each prozine editor. At this very moment Hugo Gernsback had just fired David Lasser. . . . Gernsback liked the editorial in the fanzine so much that he decided that this should be his new editor.'⁵ Hornig's FANTASY FAN had appeared in September 1933. In November 1933 his name was on the masthead of WONDER STORIES, and in rivalry to Tremaine Hornig instituted his 'New' Policy. Hornig was adamant to claim that it was WONDER STORIES that instituted this policy, ahead of ASTOUNDING STORIES. In a special department in the December 1935 issue of WONDER STORIES Hornig said: 'In fact, this *new* policy was such a good idea that one of our respected rivals, obeying the maxim that "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery" came along with what they called "thought variants"'. We are deriving great satisfaction from the belief that WONDER STORIES started this new, glamorous era of science-fiction, so different from the old days of rehashed themes and stereotyped characters.'⁶

So strange to think that what Hornig called 'the old days' was little more than nine years before. Whether it was Tremaine or Hornig first at the line does not alter the fact that both magazines produced excellent fiction during the years 1934 to 1936. Upon reflection ASTOUNDING STORIES is best remembered today, although it was WONDER STORIES that first brought to light Stanley G Weinbaum with *A Martian Odyssey*, and also published some excellent pieces by Edmond Hamilton, Alan Connell, and M M Kaplan (who wrote as Philip Jacques Bartel and Philip Barshofsky).

ASTOUNDING STORIES and WONDER STORIES, besides their drive for new stories, began to drift apart readership-wise, and perhaps this was a good thing. It meant that both could cater for the individual. Tremaine instituted a pure magazine, and although he

included a letter column it was a very impersonal affair. WONDER STORIES however became a homely magazine, edited by a fan for fans. The popularity of WONDER STORIES had been proved early in 1934 when Raymond Palmer as chairman for the Jules Verne Prize to be awarded to the best story for 1933 awarded it to Edmond Hamilton's *The Island of Unreason* which had appeared in WONDER STORIES. Since the magazine had carried several excellent stories during that year, no less than Nathan Schachner's *Technocracy* series and Laurence Manning's *The Man Who Awoke* stories, it was a sign of how popular Edmond Hamilton was.

In February 1934 Gernsback instituted the Science Fiction League to enhance the popularity of sf. Within months it became a notable force in fandom, spreading like wildfire. A regular monthly department appeared in WONDER STORIES, together with league buttons, letterheads and a Certificate: sf fandom had never been so well organized. The letter column and League department became *the* thing for science fiction fans. As Robert Lowndes says: 'From the days of Charles D Hornig in WONDER STORIES . . . I've been a sucker for the personal magazine or the magazine that presents a distinct personality. That was why I looked forward to the next issue of WONDER more eagerly than to ASTOUNDING STORIES in those days. . . .'⁷

Throughout 1934 and 1935 these two magazines were undisputed rivals, but they kept themselves to their individual markets. In June 1935 WONDER STORIES slashed its cover price to fifteen cents from twenty-five making it by far the cheapest of the sf pulps. Strangely enough it was treated with certain scepticism in the reader's department where fans wondered whether this would mean a lack of quality or quantity. It didn't. WONDER STORIES continued to publish first-class fiction. A new series of stories by Laurence Manning around the 'Stranger Club' theme was prominent amongst them, not to forget Hamilton and Keller.

Although this survey ends at 1935 a slight overlap is necessary. For all those who thought WONDER STORIES would go on forever, a shock came in late 1935 when the magazine suddenly went bi-monthly. March 1936 saw its last issue, and with that the exit of Gernsback from the sf field. Why had WONDER STORIES suddenly folded? Basically it had never recovered from the Depression and the reduction to fifteen cents had been an error. WONDER STORIES had mammoth support from active fans, but, like today, it is the peripheral readers who really keep the magazine going. It was these readers who did not respond to Gernsback's suggestion for WONDER STORIES to be distributed postally instead of over the newsstands. The small response resulted in the end of Gernsback's WONDER STORIES, and left ASTOUNDING STORIES supreme.

What of AMAZING STORIES? Methodically, not to



be hurried, Sloane plodded on. Throughout the rivalry of Tremaine and Hornig one wonders whether Sloane either knew or cared. All the time people submitted fiction and bought the magazine he was happy. Sloane's own form of 'splendid isolation' caused him

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NEWS

by PENNY GRANT

TYNECON 74. It is still not too late to enrol for the British Easter Science Fiction Convention in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. This is traditionally held over the Easter weekend which, this year, falls on 12-15 April, and is one of the most enjoyable ways for a science fiction fan to spend the holiday.

The Hotel. Fans and writers alike will spend the weekend in the Royal Station Hotel, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. It is a four star hotel situated right next to the Central Station, and provides TV in every bedroom – for those who can find a spare moment. Don't worry too much about prices for the hotel has substantially reduced its rates for the convention. The hotel's Viking Restaurant, normally closed over Easter, will serve you with a variety of hot and cold meals in the range of 50p-£1.00, and there is a groaning help-yourself table at 81p.

Programme. Further details of the programme have now been released. The Guest of Honour is Bob Shaw, the well-known Irish novelist, and Fan Guest of Honour is Peter Weston, editor of *Speculation*. Brian Aldiss and James Blish will be discussing attitudes to science fiction criticism and major fan critics will in their turn discuss the science fiction published in 1973. There will be a panel by new writers on breaking into the professional field and, on the fannish side, a nostalgia session recalling memories of the Golden Age. Lisa Conesa, editor of *Zimri*, will be organising a poetry soiree with contributions from, among others, Brian Aldiss, Mike Moorcock and Robert Calvert, lyricist from Hawkwind. An exhibition of concrete posters is planned as well as the usual Art Exhibition.

At the Banquet John Bush, chairman of Victor Gollancz Ltd, will be presenting cheques to the winners of the Gollancz - Sunday Times Science Fiction Competition.

These are just some of the events planned over the Easter weekend, and there will be, as always, films, auctions, and the Bidding Session where the location of the 1975 Easter Convention will be decided.

If you wish to enrol, send 50p to Ian Maule, Tynecon 74, 113 Weardale Ave, Forest Hall, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE12 0HX. This entitles you to all progress reports and details of the convention. If you intend to go, send £1.50 for full membership.

SCIENCE FICTION DEGREE. The North East London Polytechnic, working through the Science Fiction Foundation, hopes to offer a Master of Philosophy degree in science fiction. This would be a post graduate degree only in which the student, rather than attending a large number of courses, would work closely with a tutor on a thesis of his own choice. The Foundation has always welcomed research students from Britain and Overseas and it is felt that, since the post graduate period is traditionally the period of specialisation, it is the proper level at which intensive studies in science fiction should first be offered.

The North East London Polytechnic has also just received approval for a CNA degree in Modern Sciences which includes a case study in science fiction. This course is intended to integrate the sciences with science fiction, emphasising aspects of the sociology of the future.

In contrast to this, there is a course in the planning stage which is for practising teachers who are likely to use science fiction in schools as a medium for teaching English. This course concentrates on science fiction as a branch of literature.

For further information, please contact: Peter Nicholls, Science Fiction Foundation, North East London Polytechnic, Barking Precinct, Longbridge Road, Dagenham, Essex RM8 2AS.

KILLDOZER. Film rights for Theodore Sturgeon's classic story about a sentient bulldozer which runs amok have been bought by Universal, who hope to start production as soon as possible.

MICHAEL CRICHTON. Those of you who enjoyed *Westworld* will be pleased to hear that Michael Crichton is working on another film in the same vein, about computers and the dangers accruing from a too-mechanical age.

BOOKS OUT IN APRIL

Paperbacks

The Blood Red Game by Michael Moorcock. Published by Mayflower, 30p. Renark the Wanderer stood in the arena of the blood red Game. The stakes were high – for the human race it meant extinction or rebirth.

Spock Must Die! by James Blish. Published by Corgi, 30p. During a routine mission in an uncharted area of space, Captain Kirk and the crew of the starship USS Enterprise received a report that the Klingon Empire had mounted a major attack on the Federation. Such an attack should have

Beyond This Horizon by Robert Heinlein. Published by Panther, 40p. The time is three centuries past tomorrow. The place is Earth, an Earth just beyond the horizon when science and technology have solved all problems except the 'why' of life. The book is about a revolt in Utopia.

The Iron Dream by Norman Spinrad. Published by Panther, 35p. In this book Spinrad postulates an alternative life-style for Adolf Hitler in which Hitler emigrates to America instead of Germany, and becomes a science fiction writer. *The Iron Dream* is 'Hitler's' obsessed vision of a rigid and frightful future 'Golden Age'.

New Writings in SF 22 edited by Kenneth Bulmer. Published by Corgi, 35p. This volume, dedicated to J. Carnell, who edited the previous 22 volumes, features stories by many celebrated writers, including Harry Harrison, Brian Aldiss, Arthur C. Clarke, James White, Christopher Priest, Donald Wollheim, Laurence James.

344 by Thomas Disch. Published by Sphere, 40p. A science fiction novel set in the near future. The book shows a Brave New World of all-too-real characters in an absurd society.

Hardbacks

SF Special 9 edited by Groff Conklin. Published by Sidgwick & Jackson, £2.50. This volume contains *Possible Tomorrows* by Isaac Asimov, a series of five superb short novels which probe the terrifying possibilities which await man in strange worlds and other times, and *Trilogy of the Future* edited by Donald Wollheim which contains stories by three Hugo Award winners: *The Trouble with Tycho* by Clifford D. Simak, *The Last Castle* by Jack Vance, and *The Empire Star* by Samuel R. Delany.

SF Special 10 edited by Groff Conklin. Published by Sidgwick & Jackson, £2.50. This volume contains three novellas by distinguished authors: *Nightwings* by Robert Silverberg, *The Dreaming Earth* by John Brunner, *Destiny Doll* by Clifford D. Simak.

and in artificially maintained anti-gravity zones on planet surfaces. The Walkers, who live chiefly on planets, are aggressive, tough, energetic and resourceful.

Time Enough For Love by Robert A. Heinlein. Published by New English Library Ltd, £3.25. Robert Heinlein's most ambitious novel to date ranges over twenty-three centuries of history and countless light-years of space as it follows the story of one man and speculates on what the future may hold for the human race in the centuries ahead.

Science Fiction Hall of Fame Vol. 3 edited by Ben Bova. Published by Gollancz, about £3.00. This companion to Volume 2 contains ten novellas written prior to 1966, selected by the Science Fiction Writers of America. It represents a brilliant panorama of the evolutionary stages of modern science fiction.

The Sheep Look Up by John Brunner. Published by Dent, about £3.25. In this long-awaited follow-up to *Stand on Zanzibar*, John Brunner portrays a future where short sighted greed has nearly put the planet Earth to death. John Brunner has taken a giant step forward and placed himself in the ranks of today's science fiction writers. (Robert Bloch)

Operation Umana by John Rankine. Published by Sidgwick & Jackson, £1.95. After near-bisection at the delicate hand of his ex-girlfriend and an all stations call from the head of his own security unit labelling him an outlaw, Mark Chevron was a two-time loser and he had a tenuous line on the biggest operation ever mounted on the face of the Earth, with every man's hand turned against him.

Halcyon Drift by Brian Stableford. Published by Dent, about £1.95. Somewhere within the cosmic darkness of the Halcyon Drift came the steady distress signal of a vessel lost many years before with her cargo of legendary treasure. Grainger, crack space pilot, has one ally who may help him penetrate the Drift's tangled ebb and flow. He calls it the Wind and with its wry cool humour it invaded his brain when he was cast away on the edge of the dark nebula.

Star Smashers of the Galaxy Rangers by Harry Harrison. Published by Faber & Faber, £2.00. Feel the hair rise on your neck as, from the humble beginning on the campus of a tiny college in the US, this story hurtles to the dazzling heights of the galaxy, spanning light years among the stars.



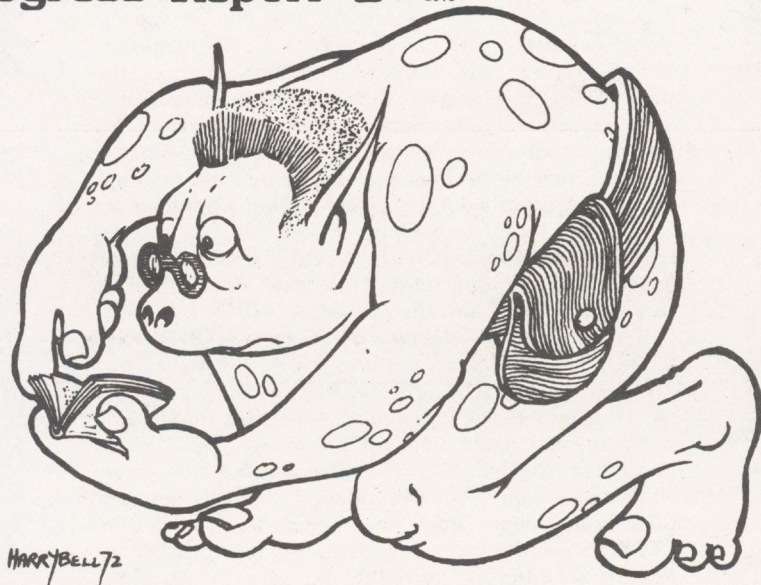
Harry Harrison

The Star Treasure by Keith Laumer. Published by Sidgwick & Jackson, £1.95. The Star Lords wanted him dead, but Ban Tarleton was not yet ready to die. He had found the corpse of his friend, Paul Danton, among the rings of Saturn, flotsam among the litter of space, and he yearned for revenge.

Beyond Apollo by Barry Malzberg. Published by Faber & Faber, £1.95. In the year 1981 the first manned expedition to Venus is returned to Earth without its commander. The survivor, Harry M. Evans, is insane. He cannot or will not tell what happened. His diary is a fascinating and terrible blend of real events and fantasy written in such a way that they cannot be disentangled.

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been immediately suppressed by the peace loving Organians – but the Organians and their planet had completely disappeared.

The Dramaturges of Yan by John Brunner. Published by New English Library Ltd, 35p. On the beautiful planet Yan, the colonists of Earth live a peaceful, almost idyllic life, amid ancient and secret relics, co-existing with their strange and compatible neighbours. The arrival of Gregory Chart, the greatest dramatist ever, whose dramas were played out in the skies, could only disrupt and destroy once the Yanfolk were aroused from their dreaming indifference.

Friends Come In Boxes by Michael Coney. Published by Gollancz, £2.10. At forty, a man's brain is automatically rehoused in a child's body. With a falling birthrate a queue forms – of grumbling brains in boxes.

The Eternal Frontiers by James H. Schmitz. Published by Sidgwick & Jackson, £1.95. One of the great sf adventure spinners has created a future civilization at war with itself. On an alien planet two great human cultures, the direct descendants of Earth but now almost two separate species, are struggling for control. The Swimmers, beautiful, graceful, artistic and clever, live in free fall in two great starships









Continuation of Fifty Years of Science Fiction Magazines

trouble on occasion. For instance in 1929 Malcolm Afford submitted *The Ho-Ming Gland* to Sloane. Sloane held on to the story, and did not tell Afford whether or not he was printing it. Tired of waiting Afford sent the story to Lasser who printed it promptly as *The Gland Men of the Island* in the January 1931 WONDER STORIES. At length Sloane got round to the manuscript and published the original in the February 1933 AMAZING STORIES. This caused much embarrassment.

He was also prone to losing manuscripts, most notably John W Campbell's first story, and also accepted but never used Simak's first piece. Clearly authors were not going to send their best fiction to AMAZING STORIES when bigger and quicker markets existed elsewhere. It is therefore something of a surprise that AMAZING STORIES survived these years. It went bi-monthly in August 1935 and so remained for three years. Its stories began to appeal more and more to younger readers, and as a result was well away from the intellectuals of ASTOUNDING or the active fans of WONDER. It must be remembered though that much of AMAZING's fiction appearing in its 1934-35 issues were for the most part 1932-33 stories. These years were the lowest for AMAZING STORIES, and yet the power of its name kept it going.

The early thirties were the years of ASTOUNDING and WONDER, but they were not exclusive magazines of sf. In 1931 Elliot Dold had edited MIRACLE STORIES. Intended as bi-monthly it only made two issues, April and June, before expiring. It was an obvious attempt at imitating ASTOUNDING STORIES, carrying fiction by Arthur Burks and Victor Rousseau, two stalwarts of the Clayton magazine. Similarly it was hybrid sf/weird in the same pulp format. (AMAZING and WONDER were still large size then, although WONDER underwent a brief spell of pulp size). But during those years there was room for only one ASTOUNDING STORIES and MIRACLE STORIES therefore failed. Nevertheless, its very existence goes to show the pulling power of sf at that time.

Where was Britain all this time? Very much alert, they were years of frustration for British fans who very much wanted a magazine of their own. In February 1934 SCOOPS put Britain on the sf map. Unfortunately it was a juvenilistic magazine and not exactly what the British fans were after. It was published by Pearson's each week and sold for twopence; the editor was Haydn Dimmock. Its juvenile appeal meant that it lost most of the attention of the older fans weaned on American sf, and despite later issues carrying more mature pieces by such as John Russell Fearn, and Maurice Hugi, it finally folded after twenty issues on 23 June 1934. As Walter Gillings termed it, it was very much 'Science Fiction Weakly'.⁸

In the USA the popularity of sf showed itself in other adventure pulps which devoted entire issues to sf material, such as DUSTY AYRES AND HIS BATTLE BIRDS and TERENCE X O'LEARY'S WAR BIRDS during 1934 and 1935. These are worth little more than parenthetical mention, their existence being evidence in itself to sf's popularity.

These ten years from 1926 to 1935 proved to be the perfect launching pad for what was to come. Authors, trained by Gernsback, were now experimenting with Tremaine. Their ideas were causing younger readers and budding authors to wonder, spurring them to write. The result would be the maturity of science fiction in the next ten years. Teething troubles were now over. The road was built and the gun was loaded. Who was going to fire it?

Sources of Quotations

1 From Hugo Gernsback's Guest Editorial in the April 1961 AMAZING STORIES (page 7)

2 From Hugo Gernsback's Editorial in the April 1926 AMAZING STORIES, as reprinted in the April 1966 AMAZING STORIES (page 188)

3 From EXPLORERS OF THE INFINITE by Sam Moskowitz published by the World Publishing Co (1963) in the chapter *Hugo Gernsback* (page 227)

4 From Hugo Gernsback's Editorial in the May 1930 SCIENCE WONDER STORIES (page 1061)

5 From ALL OUR YESTERDAYS by Harry Warner Jnr published by Advent Publishers Inc (1969) in the chapter *Fans Into Pros* (page 74)

6 From *New Policy Still* "New" special department by Charles Hornig in the December 1935 WONDER STORIES (page 748)

7 From a letter written by Robert A W Lowndes to AMAZING STORIES and published in the letter column *Or So You Say* in the January 1973 issue (page 122)

8 From *The Impatient Dreamers*, the title of Chapter 4 published in VISION OF TOMORROW, January 1970 (page 29)

Visions of the future

Your chance to create a world of the future! SFM Visions of the Future competition is open to everyone. There are no restrictions as to subject other than that the illustrations submitted fall into the realms of science fiction or fantasy.

SFM will be looking for imaginative and adventurous impressions of future life and landscapes, new worlds, futuristic cities, forms of interplanetary life, future modes of transport, inter-galactic wars, plant life on other planets - just some of the subjects you may choose to create.

Illustrations may be painted or drawn in any medium. Entries for the competition should be sent to The Editor, SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY, New English Library Ltd, Barnard's Inn, Holborn EC1N 2JR, to arrive not later than 30 April 1974. Entries should be marked SFM Visions of the Future Competition in the top left hand corner of the package or envelope.

SF PAINTING COMPETITION

Rules

- 1 The Science Fiction Monthly Visions of the Future Competition is open to all residents of the UK, Eire, and the British Commonwealth as constituted on 1.1.1947.
- 2 Entrants must submit illustrations to NEL to arrive not later than 30 April 1974. All artwork received will be acknowledged but NEL cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage.
- 3 All work submitted must be previously unpublished and solely the work of the entrant, who warrants that the submission of the illustration and its offer to NEL for publication does not infringe any prior rights of any third party, whether contractual or otherwise.
- 4 Each entry will be carefully considered by a panel of judges, including the Art Director of New English Library and the Editor of SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY.
- 5 The judges' decision relating to the award and the prize monies must be accepted as final.
- 6 The sender's name and address must be written the reverse side of each illustration and a check list should be enclosed consisting of the entrant's name and address, should be protected in transit with two pieces of card or some other kind of stiffener.
- 7 Illustrations of the four prizes will be announced not later than 30 June 1974 and entrants will be notified by post as soon as possible after that date.
- 8 On award of a prize the winner or runner-up will grant to NEL exclusive world reproduction rights (the form of publication being left to NEL's discretion). The award will be paid immediately and in full on signature of an agreement to that effect.
- 9 Apart from being considered for one of the four prizes, all entrants of illustrations regarded as being of sufficient merit will be offered contracts for publication at the discretion of NEL. If the offer is accepted by the entrant, the illustration will be published at a future date chosen by NEL.
- 11 No illustration entered for this competition may be offered elsewhere until six months after the close of the competition.
- 12 This award is not open to employees, their parents, spouses or children, of New English Library, Times Mirror or any subsidiary of Times Mirror.

Colour winner £100
Runner up £50
Black & White winner £40
Runner up £20

Steve Cohn sat alone at a window table in the cafeteria, looking out at the stars. They did nothing to lift his morale and the conversation from the next table was merely an irritant.

"— bringing in a new gimmick, MF they're calling it. MF for Malleable Fixer — looks something like old-time putty. You want to fix anything, anything at all, say to a wall or ceiling, just squeeze out a spot of this goo from a tube and it stays put. They say it'll take on any surface, hold a weight up to a thousand kilos . . . now how do you assess the duty on a gimmick like that?"

"Maybe it won't work under Earth conditions. Remember the All-Purpose Cleaner? We set ten per cent on that and the damn stuff didn't work at all . . . were our faces red!"

Cohn sipped lime-flavoured alcohol and brooded on Rabin, his boss. There was something about that man, something unnerving. At times he felt like chucking the job, going back to Earth. But what would he do there? Here, his talent served some purpose . . . at least, Rabin said so. Maybe he just needed a break. It had been a long time since he'd been Earthside.

"You think you've got trouble? Listen, we've practically taken *Camelot* apart and still we can't find the stuff — not even with a tip-off."

Narcotics detail. Some innocuous plant on its home planet could turn out to be a habit-forming drug on Earth; colonists didn't always realise that. Some did, and went ahead bringing in the stuff just the same . . .

Chimes pealed for attention. A brisk voice came over the speaker: "Will Steve Cohn report to Dock Area Three please? A berthing is expected within the hour."

Cohn finished his drink and started for the door, a slight, dark-skinned figure with a beak of a nose; insignia tabs stitched to the shoulders of a pale blue uniform read SA.

Outside the cafeteria he headed for the nearest cab rank, past the shopping arcade, stores and catering to a lock. A man sitting by the door rose quickly.

"Mr. Cohn, isn't it? I heard the broadcast — Dock Area Three, right?"

"Right on both counts," Cohn said pleasantly. A new boy; any of the old hands would have called him Steve. The pilot opened the lock and they stepped through, directly into a cab.

Starport looked very different from outside. The familiar appearance of solidity and safety given by covered ways and artificial gravity vanished and the frigid darkness of space clamped down. Seen from outside, it looked as fragile as it was — a complex of satellites linked by bracing struts.

Starport revolved, an immense glittering top. Immense only close to. Even a short way off it dwindled to a toy against the gulf of interstellar void.

The lights of the entertainment centre blazed and, dazzled, he looked away; for a moment, the squat bulk of a ferryboat blotted out the stars. When he looked back he saw the workshops of Dock Area One. A ship berthed, floodlights bathing it. The cab nosed past a fusion generator, space-suited construction men building yet another extension.

Starport had started out as a wheel spinning on its axis; it had grown and was still growing. It might never be complete. Now it resembled a sprawling orbital city, an arrangement of cylinders and spheres and cones bristling with antennae; the original doughnut was quite lost. Connecting tubes gave it an appearance of a three-dimensional Ferris wheel as it spun through its long orbit.

He saw a new ship being fitted out. Another colony in the making, heading somewhere far out among the stars. Every year, two more ships went out, further and further out. One day . . .

His cab jockeyed in towards Dock Area Three, empty as yet, except for waiting men. A blank space waiting to be filled. Cohn looked out at the stars, searching; no sign of her yet.

The cab bumped gently, locked on.

"Nice ride. Thanks," Cohn said, and went inside to wait.

There were others waiting, in a group. Cohn sat apart, alone; switched on an extractor fan and lit a cigarette. Back inside the metal shell it was hard to visualise Starport orbiting out beyond Pluto, staging post to the stars.

Not a staging post exactly; more a barrier for the protection

STAR PORT

by Sydney J Bounds

of Earth. Until an incoming ship was cleared by the various authorities, it berthed here. There were just too many risks; plague, a new invention to wreck the economic balance – the smallest thing that slipped past the investigators could bring disaster.

Cohn was one of those dedicated to ensuring that nothing did slip past. A vital job, Rabin said; the hell with Rabin . . . he stubbed out his cigarette viciously.

Only when the signals of the escorting police craft showed did his black mood lighten. Nothing slipped past them; they were heavily armed to make quite certain of that.

Then the bulk of a starship showed; a cub-ship. Cohn rose and walked to the observation window to watch. The docking was faultless. He heard the noise of pumps as the ship's air was evacuated and rendered sterile. Medmen went aboard.

Cohn waited for their preliminary clearance before he boarded himself. He went down the tunnel, badge in hand.

"Starport Authority," he said firmly. "Take me to your commander at once."

The crewman, still in his spacesuit but with helmet open, looked blank for a moment, then – "Of course, sir."

A nerve pricked in Cohn's skull; there should have been no

blank moment. There never had before – they knew what to expect.

Others followed him aboard, split up to search the ship; police, narcotics, follow-up Medmen, his own detail; clipboards at the ready, checking each and every item.

He moved along a corridor towards the control room, watching for detail. Slack discipline, he noted, potential rebels. And prayed he hadn't another bunch of supermen to deal with. Too often colonists returned, confident of their own superiority and determined to set old Earth to rights. Violently. Earth was wise to that gambit now.

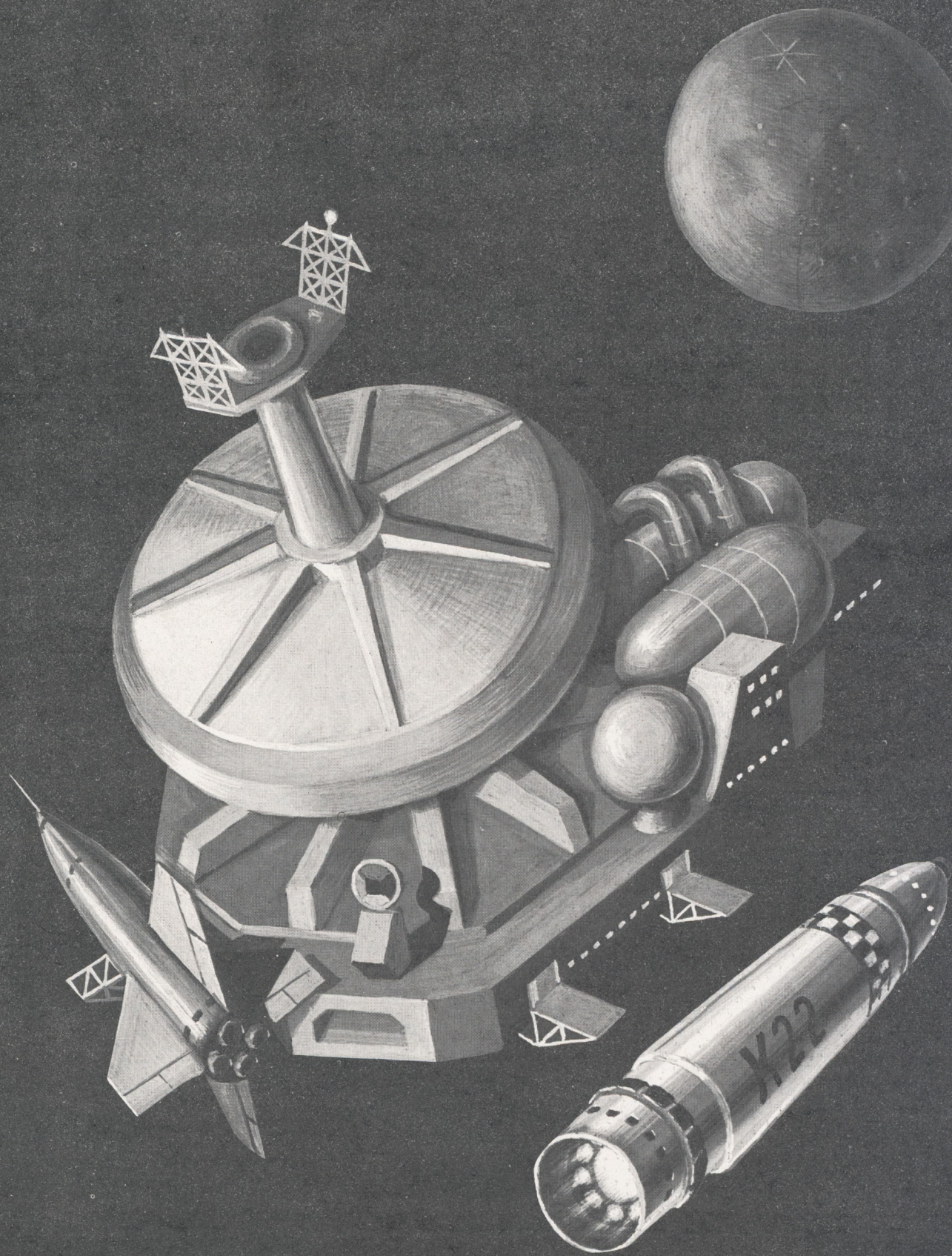
He reached the control room. The crewman slid open a door and he faced the ship's commander. A tall gaunt man, long-haired, sat stiffly motionless in a swivel chair, a puritan expression on his face.

Cohn went through the ritual, flashed his badge. "Cohn, Starport Authority. Anything to declare?"

"Dolmain, commander of the *Merlin*, back from Home Thirteen. No, nothing to declare."

Nothing. They all said that, without stopping to think what they might be carrying. Colonist thinking rapidly became alien

RONALD FERNS



to Earth's way.

"Home Thirteen. The furthest out yet – and your first time back." Cohn made a rueful smile. "Afraid we'll have to take this Cub apart." Back so soon . . . why?

You might think the colonies, all Earth stock, would form one family – and be wrong. Thinking changed on new worlds, values and morals too – and changed fast.

He turned down the offer of a drink (an offer that never should have been made), took a seat, asking casual questions about the trip, noting the condition of the control equipment, watching the commander's face.

Dolmain said: "What we're after are the latest technical developments. We didn't want to leave it too long, and feel cut off from Earth."

"Reasonable. Too many colonies leave it too late, become strangers to us. Smart even."

"So I hope you can clear us quickly. There's an obvious advantage in getting what news we can and getting back fast, before it becomes outdated."

"True enough . . . what's it like on Thirteen?"

"Purely an agricultural set-up. Good farming land, not much in the way of ores. It'll take a long time to build up any kind of technology."

Again Cohn felt a nerve prick in his skull. Dolmain was being evasive about something; he sensed that strongly. He returned to casual questioning, studying reaction.

Dolmain seemed cold, remote. Something odd there. Arrogance in a returning colonist, yes. Tears at homecoming. Normal. But this aloofness chilled him; it was a new reaction and he wondered about it.

Deliberately, he needled the commander: "So you come running home for help?"

Dolmain looked surprised. "I've already explained –"

Wrong reaction the nerve in Cohn's head screamed. No passionate outburst. Far too cold. He felt uneasy for no reason he could put a finger on.

The sliding door opened and one of his own detail looked in. "All clear on the prelim check, Steve. Med and police report everything normal."

Everything normal. Except he had a hunch something was wrong about this ship; and his hunches were seldom faulted.

He rose to his feet. "Double check everything. I want this ship stripped down to its skin. Have the Senior Medman inspect the commander personally." He turned back to Dolmain. "Sorry," he said lightly, "have to hold you a while yet."

And left.

Rabin's office was close to dead centre of the Starport complex where gravity had minimal value. Cohn alerted him by radio-phone and rode a cab as far in as he could get; after that it was a matter of using handrails to haul himself along.

The certainty he had felt aboard *Merlin* cooled as he approached his boss's office and he damned him again; always Rabin had this effect on him. He cringed inside himself, doubting his own ability.

The sign on the door read: **CONTROLLER.**

Inside, Rabin sprawled in a suspended cocoon, a gross body topped by a bald pink scalp. He never left the centre, probably couldn't now . . . a spider at the heart of his web.

A teevee screen glowed with the image of Dock Area Three; near to his hand was a bank of communication controls.

Round black eyes glowered at Cohn. "So you want to hold Dolmain. Why? You know we can't hold him indefinitely. You'd better have a good reason."

Cohn shook his head mutely, knees turning to water. Rabin intimidated him; he felt persecuted. "Just a hunch I have."

Rabin's thick lips pouted. "Just a hunch," he mimicked. "Damn your hunches, Cohn. Find me something I can act on, and quick. Just remember there's a time limit . . . now get the hell out of here and work at it!"

Cohn left.

He felt better away from the office. It was a relief to get back to the *Merlin*. Now he took each crewman in turn, questioned and compared answers; gradually the picture grew . . .

A world of rich soil and tall grass, rolling hills; farmland, pastureland. A world where technology scarcely existed. Any kind of ore was apparently a rarity. The answers matched and he found nothing solid to support his hunch – except that each crewman revealed the same remote attitude. His hunch firmed into certainty – with no evidence to back it up. There was something wrong with this ship. He swallowed a stimulant and worked at it . . .

Camelot took off for the return trip. The police, narcotics, Medmen reported blank. Even Steve Cohn had to sleep sometime . . .

He sat alone in the cafeteria, stirring lime-flavoured alcohol with a straw, not drinking. Conversation buzzed past his ears:

"– where d'you think they'd got their cache aboard *Camelot*? Neat really, behind a false nuclear bulkhead. Only a small consignment, but enough to set up the crew. So they've nothing to stay for –"

"We're close to agreeing the duty on MF at five per cent. That should cover unemployment pay – with an option to raise the figure if it becomes necessary."

Irritation flooded through Cohn. It seemed that everybody had solved their problems except himself; he still had nothing concrete on *Merlin* to put before Rabin. He was beginning to hate Rabin . . . "Nothing but a hunch, Cohn, that's not good enough."

He left for Dock Area Three, surprised to find a police detail blocking his way to the cub-ship. The sergeant in charge stopped him.

"Sorry, Mr. Cohn – no-one's allowed aboard. Rabin's orders."

Cohn stared back in disbelief. Rabin was all pig, but he'd never interfered in an investigation before. "Any idea why?"

The sergeant shrugged. "Can't say for sure – maybe Dolmain's been screaming."

In a mood of resentment, Cohn headed for Centre to face Rabin; all right, so he'd failed. He'd get out of this damn business, resign . . .

Rabin heard him out, stone-faced. "Time limit's been reached," he said briefly. "We have to give clearance. Yours is the only objection – *Merlin* has a clean bill except for your hunch."

Uneasiness stirred in Cohn. "I don't like it – there is something wrong with that ship."

"Maybe . . . I'll think about your resignation, let you know what I decide."

Cohn went out and got drunk. *Merlin* left, Earthwards. After that he spent considerable time in the gym, getting his muscles used to one G. And sleeping. It was a slack time.

When the summons came, Cohn went to Rabin's office in a worried frame of mind. The Starport controller lay in his cocoon watching wall teevee; a white-skinned hand gestured.

"Grab a seat, Cohn – thought you might like to see this."

It took a while for him to realise what he was seeing. Against a giant image of the sun, the glare filtered, he saw a black speck moving. A ship falling into the sun.

"View by tele-camera, relayed," Rabin said flatly. "*Merlin's* off course, out of control, complete radio blackout. No ship close enough for a rescue attempt."

Cohn stared, first with disbelief, then in horror. The moving speck was dark against the corona one moment; the next it flared into brilliance and was gone. Totally consumed.

He felt sick, until relief flooded him . . . he still couldn't quite believe what had happened. A suspicion grew. "You fixed it!"

"Of course." Rabin's face was granite, his voice controlled. "Time delay mechanism to cut out their radio, automatic fire control to nudge them sunward. Then destruction of essential services. I take your hunches seriously, Cohn, which is why I damn well don't like them. I set a tele-spy aboard that ship after banning entrance to it – gave them a chance to relax, let their hair down. There was plenty wrong with that crew . . . immediately they were alone, everyone went into a kind of suspended animation, some sort of coma. Unnatural, it gave me the creeps." He paused. "This time I think it really is."

"Alien life?"

The pink bald head nodded. "*Merlin* found life out there, our first contact – it had to happen sometime. They were taken over. Mental control is my guess, sent back to spy on us." Rabin's voice hardened. "It backfired, thanks to you."

Cohn looked away. He couldn't face those round black eyes. Suddenly he was very glad he wasn't Starport controller . . . to condemn a whole crew, just like that, on hunch alone. He couldn't have done it.

"Government's alerted, an armada forming to fly out soonest – to spy on *them*." Rabin's lips bared in the semblance of a smile. "Resignation refused – you're too important to lose. Report to Dock Area One, there's a ship expected."

Steve Cohn left, and the further he got from Centre, the more his confidence grew. Even his small talent was vital. As the cab jockeyed in to Dock Area One, he began to whistle.

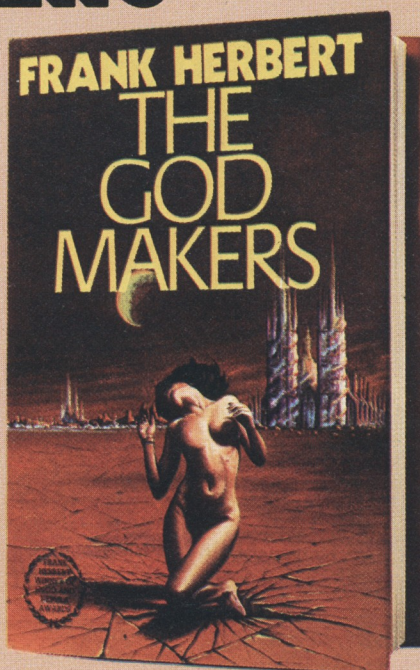


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