

WILLIS DISCOVERS AMERICA



**and other fan fiction by
WALT WILLIS**

Willis Discovers America and Other Fan Fiction

Walt Willis

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Publisher's Note

Past collections of Walt Willis's writings for science fiction fanzines have for the most part focused on his articles and columns – especially the fine long-running column “The Harp that Once or Twice” that spanned several fanzines – and tended to downplay the fan fiction. The major exception here is the legendary fannish allegory *The Enchanted Duplicator* (1954) written with Bob Shaw, which has been many times reprinted, serialized and adapted for other media; this was included in full in the near-definitive Willis collection *Warhoon 28* (1980), and there has been an ebook version in the TAFF library since its launch in 2015. The less resonant sequel *Beyond the Enchanted Duplicator... To the Enchanted Convention* (1991), written with James White, was added to the TAFF ebook library in late 2019.

The present ebook brings together as much as possible of Walt Willis's *other* fan fiction, in the old sense of stories woven around real-life fans and fandom in general, rather than the usual modern meaning of new adventures written for existing fictional characters. Apart from the essential *Willis Discovers America* and (because its creation was explained in a “Harp” column also included here) the straight humorous tale “The Spanish Main”, none of this material appears in that famous Willis issue of *Warhoon*.

Walt Willis's own annotations in *Willis Discovers America* may provide new readers with some background on the early 1950s fan scene with its many established personalities and in-jokes. For example, the remark that Sam Moskowitz (the pioneering fan historian and author of *The Immortal Storm*) notoriously had a very loud voice also explains a gag in a later piece here. The first six chapters were reprinted in issues #23 to #28 (January 1961 to February 1962) of the US fanzine *Void* edited by Greg Benford, Terry Carr (from #26), Pete Graham and Ted White: a few more clarifications to the notes – shown here [in square brackets] – were inserted by Ted White, and one (signed “tgc”) by Terry Carr. Maybe *Willis Discovers America* could use even more notes – Rob Hansen points out that some younger fans may not recognize *The Con-Take-Me Expedition* as punning on Thor Heyerdahl's *The Kon-Tiki Expedition: By Raft Across the South Seas* (1948), as also echoed in the raft made of sf magazines – but one set of detailed annotations seems enough. However, I have added a little further information to the notes here,

including a reconstruction of an intended note that never actually appeared; and also a small number of footnotes or endnotes to other pieces, always signed [Ed.].

As always I'm indebted to Rob Hansen (Historian of Fandom, By Appointment) for his research work. "The Alien Arrives" below is taken directly from his *Faan Fiction 1930-2020: an exploration* (2021), and Rob also unearthed the hard-to-find "Whiskers"; both of these are scripts for humorous "taperas" or tape operas, played or broadcast at 1950s conventions. Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer sent photos of "Superfan!" from *Pulp*, whose editor Hansen and columnist Langford were both embarrassingly unable to trace the relevant issue. Greg Pickersgill transcribed "A Modest Proposal" from a copy of the even more obscure *Century Note* in his Memory Hole Permacollection. The ever-growing archive of scanned classic fanzines at Fanac.org is also an indispensable historical resource.

Thanks in particular to Pat Charnock for careful proofreading, and for queries that led to the addition of a couple more editorial notes.

David Langford, 2021

Autobiography

Written for *Quandry*

I was born of poor but dishonest parents, shortly after the first World War – Nature’s answer to the influenza epidemic. For the first three years of my life I was called Rover (my father had wanted a dog) but actually I was a pretty curly-headed little girl. Then one day some gypsies came and stole me out of my cot and left a hideous little boy in my place. Even at an early age I looked like a faned. But I very nearly died without issue because my father, refusing to believe that two heads were better than one, tried to teach me to swim under water and I had to be brought up by the police.

These are about all the corny gags I have left after Vernon McCain’s autobiography, and anyway it has just occurred to me that after Dianetics this sort of account should start much earlier. However, not having any preconceived ideas on the matter, let us pass on to my life with science-fiction. I started with H.G. Wells in the public library and after I had read all his books I started looking for others. This explains my vast knowledge of authors whose names begin with S, T, U and V. Then in 1948 I found in a second hand bookshop the first American edition of *ASF* which had eluded the greedy tentacles of James White (then unknown to me except as the mysterious figure who “Was In Ten Minutes Ago And Bought It”). I asked myself how long this had been going on and without waiting for an answer traded my monomania for hi-fi amplifiers for a bad case of backissue-ache. In ten months I had accumulated an almost complete set of wartime *ASF* (I still want April 1943 – advt!) and many other magazines, catching up with James White, joining fandom, and starting a fanzine in the process.

I am slightly over 6' high, not counting the bit turned off for feet. I weigh almost 11 stone in my socks. (My wife wishes I would stop because it’s very hard on the socks.) Likes: people, puns, *Quandry*, and life. Dislikes: cheese, Hubbard, professional Irishmen, and British fans who write begging letters in prozines.

May 1951

The Immoral Storm

by Walt Moscowillis

To us in the 95½th Fandom, Era 17, Period 49, Stage 63 (knock Wollheim and ask Taurasi), the shattering events of the year 1952 seem as real as they did when they first took place – perhaps even more real. Few of those who took part in the great battle to clean up the Filth Fandom can have realized that their efforts would have brought about the tidy little fandom of today, with its three antiseptically clean fanmags, *Soperation Sanitas*, *Saint*, and *Flushing Newsletter*, with their three highminded subscribers, Kleen Slater, James “Lily” White and Larry Newsoap. A fandom without the slightest vestige of so-called “humour”, sober, responsible, and kept firmly in order by the paternal discipline of the prozines.

Ragnarok, “The Twilight of the Bawds”, opened quietly. Towards the end of 1951 our revered St. Watkins, the Pope of Wampum, issued his first Papal Bull. In this long message – that issue of *Dawn and the Imaginative Collector* consisted almost entirely of Bull – he called on fandom to arise against the sex maniacs.

With admirable restraint and the better part of valour, he forbore to name these fans, but there can be little doubt that he was referring to F.E.G. Davis and his fanmag *Insinuations from F.E.G.* and to the notorious Keasler of *Banvariety*. Fans of today will find this hard to believe, but these blackguards actually went so far as to publish anything they thought interesting or amusing, even when it dealt with s-x. Let us be thankful that nothing like this can happen today, now that fan-eds have realized that the only way to be sure of not giving offence is to avoid everything interesting or amusing and confine themselves to reprinting from *Dawn and the Imaginative Collector*.

Fandom’s response was at first very galling to St. Watkins. Like many other prophets he was stoned by the unbelievers. But he braved the shower of gallstones, and finally aid arrived from an unexpected quarter. He lifted his eyes towards the setting sun and to his side there strode that staunchest of allies, none other than our beloved St. Francis.

St. Francis de Laney had for many years been waging a lone war against

certain aspects of s-x in fandom. Without fear or favour he had spoken out on every occasion when it seemed appropriate, and on many when it did not. No considerations of personal friendship or enmity lay behind his disinterested campaign – the principle was all. So, when St. Watkins made his clarion call for the suppression of all s-x in fandom, St. Francis, in the fabulous *Quandry*, invoked his help in putting down the particular form of s-x he had dedicated his life to eradicating. This was a considerable sacrifice for St. Francis, for he did not see eye to eye with St. Watkins on other matters, but he had not spared fandom in his unremitting propaganda, and now he did not spare himself.

But even now fandom was reluctant to turn from its evil ways. The voice of St. Francis had been heard daily throughout the land denouncing the evil practices of certain fans, but since he never thought to tell fandom exactly who the offenders were, fandom was at a loss to know whom to cast out. They were eager to do so, if only so that St. Francis and themselves could have some peace, but although they carefully studied every fanzine for signs of a fundamental bias towards some base subject, the only ones they could find were edited by St. Francis himself and his friends. The fan in the street was baffled. The march of CCF* seemed to have ended in a cul de sac.

* “*The Crusade to Clean Up Fandom. A campaign for fanzine censorship launched by Russ Watkins in 1951. Its targets were anti-religious and pro-sex fan writings.*” (Fancylopedia 2, circa 1959) [Ed.]

A miracle was called for. And then, like a sign from heaven, it came. Fandom was rocked to its foundations by the most startling disclosure of all time, the N3F Scandal.

It is interesting to speculate how long the infamy in the inner circles of N3F might have continued had they not been betrayed by one of their most trusted henchmen. The rest of the N3F Directorate had been fiendishly cunning. They had devoted just enough time to a mock attack on *Banvariety* to prevent fandom asking too loudly what they were doing, and they had taken special care to prevent any copies of the *National Fantasy Fan* from reaching European fans whose keen perceptions they had, as it proved, good reason to dread.

It was doubly unfortunate for them that R.C. Higgs’s conscience smote him at the very date when the October 1951 issue was being prepared, for a strange accident had made it possible for Higgs to destroy the whole cesspool of N3F by the simple, if unprecedented, act of sending copies of the Official

Organ to the European members.

During Christmas of that year copies of the October issue came into the hands of European N3F members Harris and Willis. From that moment the N3F Directorate was doomed. Both these fans would have perused their copies *very* carefully in any case, if only because they were apparently worth a dollar, but on this occasion they subjected the entire magazine to the closest semantic analysis. It was obvious to them that Higgs must have had some ulterior motive in sending them voting papers and literature for an election that had already taken place.

It was Harris who first noticed the all-revealing sentence that spelled the downfall of the vast sink of iniquity that was the N3F Directorate. Higgs had worded the sentence so cunningly that while it would escape the notice of the rest of the N3F Directors in their licentious stupor, it conveyed a message to clean living and keen minded fen like Harris and Willis that was unmistakable in its stark and dreadful clarity. The fateful sentence read:

“Ed. note. In fairness to both members running for the office of president, I suggest that the winner of the office choose the *looser* to fill the office of secretary-treasurer.”

With the revelation that the criterion of success in N3F was *looseness*, fandom rose up in arms against the N3F Directorate. The whole seething mass of dreadful corruption was dragged into the light. St. Francis exposed the real reason for Sneary’s interest in Young Fandom, Elsberry exposed the wild night life of Upton, Wyoming, Les and Es Cole revealed the hideously perverted mind that lay behind the lace frills and odd formats of G.M. Carr’s APazines, and Jack Irwin exposed the White Slave traffic being carried on in the *Kaymar Trader*.

All these fiends were at once run out of fandom, along with Keasler, Rotsler, Nelson, Bloch, Burbee, Moffatt, Tucker and Ackerman. Shortly afterwards Harris and Willis voluntarily retired from fandom, closely followed by Hoffman, McCain, Vick, Burwell, Elsberry, Boggs, Fabun, Venable, Ish, Posetsky, the Coles, Riddle, Conner, Silverberg, Hickman, and several others. Laney, from force of habit, brought up the rear.

With nothing left in fandom but the very cream of the cream – the very clots – peace reigned supreme. The fanzines that remained were combined into the four best, in accordance with the Watkins Plan. But within a year a terrible catastrophe struck Watkins. The joint Editorial Board was enlarged to

two, and *Dawn and the Imaginative Collector* was considered unworthy to be published. Rather than continue it as a hootchzine Watkins took a short course of instruction from Bob Tucker and successfully committed suicide.

So at the present day only one of these great leaders remains in our midst. In a recent interview for *Flushing Newsletter*, St. Francis announced, reflectively sticking pins into a wax doll, that he was at last going to retire from ex-fandom. “I may still insult a mere dozen or so fans every day,” he explained, “but no more. I am getting old, and the strain of ex-fandom was becoming too much for me. I shall become an active fan like Duggie Fisher and have a little rest for a change. Besides I seem to have lost interest. It was all very well when I was fighting the good fight to rid fandom of perverts, but now all the homos have left fandom.” He looked dazed. “I feel somehow as if the bottom had dropped out of my life.”

January 1952

Francis Towner Laney's frothing about homosexuality in the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society can be found in his memoir Ah! Sweet Idiocy! – yet another fanhistorical volume in the TAFF ebook library. [Ed.]

Willis Discovers America

Preface

This is a fannish-fiction serial I wrote in the summer of 1952, while Shelby Vick was raising the Fund which brought me to the Chicon that autumn. I'm reprinting it now because I'm rather fond of it myself – it has happy associations and in some ways I think it's the best thing I've ever done... at least it's the ultimate in something or other – and partly as a sort of monument to the era which is now known as Sixth Fandom. Several faneds in the last three years have asked permission to reprint the thing as a whole but I've always asked them to hold off because so many of the dozens of allusions would be incomprehensible to current fandom. On the other hand it's struck me that it might be possible to convert this disadvantage into a virtue by explaining the references and publishing it as a sort of historical document or fannish curiosity. Hence the footnotes. Here, preserved like a fly in amber (or ointment) is fandom as it was in 1952.

To us survivors that has sometimes seemed a sort of Golden Age, when fandom was happier, brighter and more intimate than it is today. But now it looks to me as if the days of bitty fandom are over and that we're having a new dawn; which has, appropriately, risen in the East – in Britain. At any rate fandom at the moment seems more like its Quandam self: for one thing it's taking an interest in its past again. Well, here's a part of it I enjoyed. I hope you like it too, but if the esotericisms of three years ago aren't even of historical interest please just make allowances for the tendency of old fans to be sentimental.

My thanks to Vin¢ Clarke and Chuck Harris for well-remembered encouragement and suggestions during the writing of the thing, and to Bob Shaw for reproducing the original illustrations from *Quandry* and *Confusion*.

1955

Chapter 1 (*Confusion #8*)

As the *Queen Elizabeth* edges the last few inches towards the quayside the

excitement of the waiting crowd approaches hysteria. At last all the mooring cables are made fast and the gangway lowered. The crowd on the deck parts as a tall distinguished figure appears at the top of the gangway, escorted by the Captain. He pauses dramatically before making his descent. The band strikes up, only to be drowned by the cheering crowd. ("They mustn't like music," says the third trombone, as he goes down for the third time.) Acknowledging the cheers with a courtly bow, the great man walks slowly down the gangway, to be swallowed up in a throng of admirers and reporters. Slowly, signing an occasional autograph book, he makes his way to the waiting car to begin his triumphal drive through the streets of New York.

Meanwhile the raft on which Shelby Vick is rowing Walt Willis across the Atlantic is nearing the Statue of Liberty, some miles from the scene of General Eisenhower's arrival. [1] Willis looks up from the typewriter on which he has written his passage across the Atlantic and examines the huge stone figure with awe. "Begorra," he exclaims (he is practising saying "Begorra" because he knows it is expected of him). "I knew sf had caught on over here, but I didn't realise it had gone so far that they were making statues of ASF covers. February 1941 [2], isn't it? I know it's not April '43." [3]

"I think it's been there longer than that," says Shelby doubtfully. "Must be a Clayton issue." [4]

"I told you we should have brought James White," says Willis. "He could have told us right away."

"Roscoe forbid," replies ShelVy, "I've got a blister on my hands already."

"I don't think that's a very nice thing to say," replies Willis, hurt. "Don't forget all the money you're going to make from this book of ours, *The Con-Take-Me Expedition*. And you have finally proved that is is possible for copies of *The National Fantasy Fan* to drift across the Atlantic by themselves. Think what a relief that will be to Bill Berger." [5]

"Don't look now," says Shelby, "But there's a launch coming."

"Good," says Willis, "I'm hungry. Haven't had a thing to eat for days except corn. Good thing I brought all those old articles of mine, but it's hard on me to have to live by eating my own words."

"Oh you are a silly columnist," says Shelby impatiently. "It's a launch, not a lunch. I think it's the Immigration Officers."

The launch draws near and bumps into the raft, which promptly disintegrates and begins to sink. "There now," says Willis, "I told you we

should have used three staples. It was a silly idea to make it out of old *Amazings* anyway.”

“I couldn’t get enough *Fantastic Adventures*,” explains Shelby as he climbs aboard the launch. He looks back as the raft disappears beneath the waves. “Poor George,” he says mournfully, “you played your part well.” [6]

“Never mind the raft,” says the Immigration Officer. “Which one of you is Willis?”

“Shure and I am to be shure, begorra,” says Willis. He consults his notebook. “Bedad, bejabers and faith, ye spalpeen,” he adds for good measure.

“Mmm,” says the Immigration Officer. “Nationality?”

“Well,” says Willis, “Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, but as a native of Erin, that emerald gem set in a silver sea, I claim jewel nationality.” [7]

Willis is hastily overpowered and searched for further concealed puns.

“Allegations have been made,” says the Immigration Officer sternly, “that you are a Fifth Columnist, and guilty of Un-American fan activities.”

“It’s a lie,” shouts Willis. “I never had more than three columns going at once. I’ll bet it was that dirty redd Boggs who put you up to this.” He draws a copy of *Spacewarp* from his pocket, raises it in his right hand, and declaims passionately: “I swear by the Sacred Writings of Roscoe that I am not now and never have been a member of the Columnist Party. I swear that I have no intention of overthrowing the National Fantasy Fan Federation by force of arms. I –”

“A Roscoeite!” exclaims the Chief Immigration Officer in horror. “By Ghu, this is a purple-letter [8] day for us. We’ll show you how we treat vile infidels here. Men! Seize Ellis and transport him to Willis Island. His confederate too.”

“The South Shall Rise!” [9] shouts Shelby defiantly as the Ghuist hordes close in on him. “Yeast is yeast and...” He continues to outline the cardinal points of his faith as he and Willis are carried below and chained in the hold.

[1] At this time General Eisenhower was preparing to return to the States to accept the Presidential nomination.

[2] The Statue of Liberty appeared on the cover of the February 1941 ASF, illustrating Bond’s “Magic City”.

[3] At one time I needed only the April 1943 ASF to complete my collection. Actually at the time this was written the April ’43 issue

was the only one I had, the rest having been sold to help the Fund.

[4] Clayton were publishers of ASF from 1930 to 1932.

[5] Berger was at that time mailer of the NFFF official organ and there had been complaints about delays in sending it to British members.

[6] George Raft, then still appearing in films. At least in Belfast.

[7] Citizens of Ireland have dual Irish/British nationality.

[8] Purple is the official colour of the Ghuist religion. (From hecto ink.)

[9] Slogan popular in Quandry, the only fmz sold for Confederate money. (Richard Eney sent Lee a Confederate \$100 bill, and was thereafter listed as "Financial Editor.") [Efforts to confirm this in Quandry have failed – the only relevant masthead credit found is "treasurer – Rich Eney (obsolete currency)" in #25 dated October 1952. – Ed.]

Chapter 2 (Quandry #20)

"Your Immigration Service not only disarms me," says Willis, "It sends me into transports."

"Oh shut up," says Shelby crossly. "Ghosh I wish I had a cigarette." He paces up and down the narrow hold, the ball and chain at each ankle clashing about as he walks and making his remarks sound like a Stan Kenton vocal arrangement.

"It's a good thing I'm a chainsmoker," says Willis, puffing reflectively at a link of mild steel. "While you've been stalking up and down there throwing your weights about, I have figured a way to get us out of here. Just in the nicotine."

"How?" asks Shelby, pulling up his stalking.

"We'll bore a hole in the side of the ship," explains Willis.

"What with?"

"With one of my boring articles, of course." He takes the deadly thing out of his pocket and presses it against the side of the ship. It makes very little impression.

"That's only to be expected," says Willis, "it had the same effect when it was published. Everyone said it had no point. Here, we'll try this very cutting one I wrote about Russ Watkins." [1]

This time the article rapidly bores its way through the ship's timbers. In a few moments it cuts completely through. A torrent of water pours through the hole, rapidly filling the hold.

"Hmm," says Willis. "Something would appear to have gone wrong. Wonder if I have another article with a good plug in it?"

"Puns!" shrieks Shelby hysterically, "at a time like this! We are trapped! Trapped, I tell you, trapped like rats in a trap!"

"Speak for yourself," says a passing rat, swimming confidently through the hole.

"Hm," says Willis. "I could have sworn that was Edwin Siegler." [2]

Abruptly the inrush of water stops, and the hold is flooded instead with liquid notes of music. It is some strange denizen of the deep.

Shelby stares in disbelief. "I must write to Willy Ley about this," [3] he says. "I never saw a fish playing the banjo before."

"Don't be ridiculous!" says the unexpected visitor, wedging himself further into the hole. "This isn't a banjo – it's a *guitar*." [4]

"Oh, that's different," says Shelby, "But what are you doing here?"

"I was the only one that escaped of that band playing at the quayside," explains the stranger. "We played our very best, but we were drowned by the cheering crowd."

"You must have been playing in the wrong quay," says Willis. "But what's your name, and what are you here for?"

"My name is Ted," says the stranger, "I'm a Sturgeon by trade. I'd like to help." He proffers a fin. [5]

"Keep your filthy money," says Willis proudly. "As a True Fan I would never accept money from any vile pro –" He stops abruptly as Shelby kicks him violently on the shin. There is a muttered conversation in which the words "five dollars" can be heard. Willis rapidly divides by 2.80. [6]

"On second thoughts," he says, "I've decided that since you are not a filthy huckster we can accept your help. We'll send you to rouse fandom on our behalf. I'll just dash off a brief note telling them of our plight."

Two hours pass, and Willis is still battering away at the typewriter. Shelby goes over to him. "All you have to do is ask for help," he complains. "You don't have to write a column about it. And what's all this about the April 1943 ASF? How will that get us out from behind bars?"

"Well, it would give me a complete file," pouts Willis. "But all right. There," he says, tearing a piece of paper from the roll in the typewriter and

handing it to Sturgeon, “Go!” He points dramatically in the direction of the Sargasso Sea. “Tell fandom!”

As Sturgeon wriggles out of the hole and darts away, the sea begins to pour in again. The water level in the hold rises. The ship takes on a heavy list, which is checked. [7]

“As if things weren’t bad enough,” groans Shelby, “they have to take aboard the Don Day Prozine Index! What’ll we do now?”

“I think we should bore another hole and let the water out,” suggests Willis brightly.

“That’s absurd,” cries Shelby. “What’s to stop the water coming through both holes?”

“Easy,” says Willis. “We’ll label one hole ‘IN’ and the other one ‘OUT’. Any water worth its salt will be able to tell the difference.”

“I don’t think it’s just as briney as that,” says Shelby doubtfully.

They are still arguing when the ship grinds to a shuddering stop and cries of panic are heard from above. The ship is sinking rapidly.

[1] Russ Watkins’s “Clean Up Fandom Crusade” was the current controversy. [Also known as CCF, the Crusade to Clean Up Fandom: see [The Immoral Storm](#) above. – Ed.]

[2] Siegler had made himself notorious for his race hatred letters in the promag letter columns.

[3] Willy Ley’s The Lungfish and the Unicorn, dealing with rare and mythological creatures, had recently been published.

[4] Ted Sturgeon’s guitar playing is a feature of American Conventions.

[5] American slang for five dollars.

[6] Current dollar/sterling exchange rate.

[7] The Don Day Checklist of promags had just been published.

Chapter 3 (Confusion #9)

Up on deck the Captain peers anxiously into the gathering fog. He turns to the Assistant Flag Lieutenant. “Lieutenant Willow,” he says, “I think the fog is thickening.”

“Oh, I couldn’t agree more,” says the AFL. “I think it’s th pothitively dithguthting mythelf.”

The Captain gives him a cold look and turns to the Chief Immigration

Officer.

“Would you mind going up top and having a look?”

The CIO pops up to the poop, peeps, and pops down again.

“Captain!” he cries, “There is a dangerous pile of flotsam ahead. I don’t know what it is, but it looks for all the world like a shoal of musical instruments!”

Before the Captain can stop the ship there is an earsplitting noise, a hideous cacophony of sound.

“By Ghu,” exclaims the CIO, “We have struck a submerged riff!”

“It must be that jazz band that was playing on the quay until it was drowned by the cheering crowd,” says the Captain. “ABANDON THE SHIP!”

“I don’t see any band on the ship,” expostulates the CIO. “It’s still in the sea.”

“Don’t quibble!” roars the Captain. “Get in the lifeboat.” He turns to the AFL. “Go and join the CIO,” he says, “and strike for the shore. [1] I am standing by my ship.” He darts into the radio room to send a message to the news agencies. [2]

When he comes out again the lifeboat is drawing away. “What about the prisoners?” shouts the CIO.

“Oh Ghu yes,” says the Captain. “Are you there?” He throws open the hatches.

“Bubble bubble,” says Shelby.

“What about Willis?”

“O’bubble O’bubble,” says Willis, with his last gasps of Eire.

“Well don’t just stand there blowing bubbles. Come on up.”

Vick and Willis emerge onto the deck and are thrown into the lifeboat. Before they have covered ten yards the waves close over the launch. The Captain’s head can be seen for a moment, still looking for the newsreel planes, before it too disappears beneath the sea.

“I wish he’d never heard of Captain Carlsen,” says the CIO. “Ah well, there goes the finest boat in the Immigration Service, the good old S.S !*@&=+**!. ”

“What was that name again?” asks Shelby. “The !*@&=+***?”

“No,” says the CIO, “the !*@&=+**!. ”

“Even so,” says Shelby, “that’s a funny name to call a ship.”

“Yes,” says the CIO, “but you see, while Judith Merrill was launching it

she hit her thumb with the bottle.” [3]

“It was a launching slip,” comments Willis weakly.

“Shut up,” says the CIO, “and keep rowing.”

“She had real pain instead of champagne,” says Willis, still working on it.

“SHUT UP!” shouts the CIO.

“There must be a better one,” persists Willis doggedly. “Cursory send-off... stern words... embrocation... bargee Pohl [4]... naughty-call names... quay words...” he mutters.

“I wonder where we are?” queries the Lieutenant, trying desperately to change the subject.

“Ghu knows,” says the CIO. “Shall I give you a sounding?”

“Have you April 1943?” asks Willis stupidly.

The CIO ignores him and drops the plumb line over the edge of the boat. In a moment he pulls it up again. “This is plumb crazy,” he says, “It shows the depth as zero.”

“I wish the fog would lift,” complains Willis. “I feel as if I were rowing into a brick wall.”

The CIO stretches his hand into the fog. “You are,” he says. The fog lifts for a moment, and they see before them the wall of an enormous building, stark and forbidding.

“Where is this?” asks Willis fearfully.

The CIO laughs cruelly. “We are on the mainland,” he gloats, “and this is the dreaded Chateau d’IF!”

“NO! NO!” screams Shelby. Struggling vainly, the two fans are dragged inside the great iron doors and along vast echoing corridors to a door marked “Prison Ghuvornor”. The CIO knocks and they enter. Behind an enormous desk sits the Governor of the Chateau d’IF.

“Sir,” says the CIO respectfully, “these are the two Roscoeite prisoners we were taking to Ellis Island when our launch was shipwrecked. May I borrow a boat to proceed with our journey?”

“I don’t have any lending craft at the moment,” says the Governor, “but there’s no hurry.” He selects a long spaceship-shaped object from the box on his desk and lights it. Eying Willis thoughtfully through a cloud of smoke he remarks thoughtfully, “So this is the great fan wit I’ve heard so much about. Say something funny, Willis.”

“Er...” says Willis, “er..... Duhhhhhhhhh.”

“The reports seem to have been only half correct,” sneers the Governor. “And this is the renegade Ghuist, Vick. I must say I cannot see how a man could sink so low as to reject the Ghuish Way Of Life once the True Ghospel had been revealed to him.”

“You must remember,” intervenes the CIO, “that he was under the corrupting influence of Willis for the entire Atlantic crossing, constantly exposed to rapturous [5] pro-Roscoe propaghanda.”

“Well, they seem harmless enough,” says the Governor, “but better search them for concealed weapons.” The CIO frisks them rapidly and produces a horse-whip from a secret pocket in Willis’s jacket. The Governor examines it gingerly. “What a ghastly weapon,” he says, horrified. “To think that anyone would use this on a poor animal...”

“But it’s for Max Keasler,” explains Shelby. [6]

The Ghuvornor silently hands it back to Willis and turns to the CIO. “I shall arrange for their transportation to Ellis Island,” he says, picking up the phone, “Hello? Hello? Ghuvornor Fairman here, I –”

“FAIRMAN??!!!” screams Willis hysterically. He throws himself across the desk, knocking over nine signed portraits of Howard Browne. [7] Seizing Fairman’s throat he beats his head violently against the stone floor, muttering through clenched teeth, “Slater, huh?...Grrrr.” [8]

After some time he is overpowered and Fairman struggles to his feet, “By Ghu,” he exclaims, “he’ll suffer for this. He’ll rot here in the Chateau d’IF until his case comes for trial. The man is a raging maniac!”

“He’s only raging because you asked Ken Slater to write your guest editorial,” explains Shelby. “You shouldn’t have done that, Mr. Fairman.”

“But I’d never heard of Willis,” says Fairman, puzzled.

At this Willis collapses on the floor in a foetal position, moaning piteously. After a few moments he crawls into a corner, where he begins to recite the *Quandry* Poll results to himself. “Willis 76, Tucker 27...” [9]

Fairman calls the guards. “Men,” he says, “lock these creatures in the vilest durance we have.”

[1] The AFL and the CIO are the two main US Trade Union organizations. [Since this footnote was written, the two have merged.]

[2] This was shortly after the episode of the Flying Enterprise.

[3] Judy Merril was supposed to have a great command of invective.

[4] *And was married to Fred Pohl. [At the time.]*

[5] *The True Faith of Roscoe was founded by Arthur Rapp.*

[6] *Max was supposed to have designs on my wife Madeleine.*

[7] *Fairman, then editor of If, had expressed great admiration for Howard Browne and*

[8] *Had asked Ken Slater to write a guest editorial as the most prominent overseas fan.*

[9] *The Quandry Poll results for “Best Fan of 1951”, just published.*

Chapter 4 (Quandry #21)

Shelby totters into the dungeon with Willis’s lifeless body and dumps it on the bed. He looks around at the cracked walls and sloping floor of the dungeon and protests to the guard.

“This place doesn’t look structurally sound!”

“Naturally,” leers the guard, “It’s the condemned cell.” He draws his gun and shoots the bolts. As the smoke clears away Shelby walks round the cell reading the cracks on the walls. “YNGVI IS A LOUSE... FORWARD WITH FOO FOO... I HAVE A COSMIC MIND [1]... THE POO IS MIGHTIER THAN THE YOBBER... EAT AT OMAR’S [2]... ROSEBUD [3]... MY ALL PRO ISSUE [4]... JOIN THE N3F... KONNERS CORNER WAS HERE [5]... UL-UL [6]... BURBEE WAS A GOOD EDITOR... KUTTNER IS VANCE [7]... THE MIRROR OF FANDOM [8]... BLOCH KORSHAK ESHBACH AND EVANS [9]... TUCKER LIVES ON... BHEER... NWT IN 53 [10]... CHRISTIAN SLANS READING SLANZINES [11]... ULTRA WEIRD ARTIST [12]... THE ROOSTER THAT WORE RED PANTS [13]... FANDOM IS A WAY OF LIFE... THE SOUTH SHALL RISE... ROOM 770 [14]... UNENDURABLE PLEASURE INDEFINITELY PROLONGED... SOUTH GATE IN 58... SPRAGUE DE CAMP IS A LOUSE...” He breaks off on hearing a scrabbling noise behind him. Willis has come to what he refers to as his senses and is scraping on the floor of the dungeon with his screwdriver. Shelby watches him tolerantly for a few minutes.

“What do you think you’re going to find under that stone?” he asks.

“Max Keasler?”

“I’m digging a tunnel,” explains Willis, “like the Abbe Faria in *The*

Count of Monte Cristo. I knew all that non-sf stuff I used to read would come in handy some day. Broadens the outlook you know. You ordinary uncultured fans wouldn't understand them literary masterpieces."

"If you really want to broaden your outlook," says Shelby, "take a look out of the window. This dungeon is on the Eighth Floor."

"Oh bother," says Willis. "What a cell! I've a good mind to retire from fandom in high dungeon."

"You can't retire from fandom yet," points out Shelby. "You haven't even started on your memoirs. Lee Hoffman would never forgive you."

"True," says Willis. "We must think of an egress." [15]

"Suh," says Shelby stiffly, "You have insulted a fair flower of Suthun womanhood.."

"Tch, tch," says Willis, "I only meant we must think up some way to get out of here." He goes over to the window.

Suddenly a soft voice is heard raised sweetly in song and golden cadences of melody are wafted through the cell window.

"I say," says Willis, "Get a load of this. Golden cadences of melody are being wafted through the cell window."

"No kidding?" says ShelVy. He goes over to the window and looks out. "Why," he exclaims, "it's Sam Moskowitz! And there's Taurasi and Sykora too. I might have known *Fantasy Times* would get the news first." [16]

[1] *On a trip across the country Jack Speer sent Degler postcards signed by various names, including Will Sykora, reading "I have a cosmic mind. What do I do now?"*

[2] *Slogan popularized by Ian Macauley.*

[3] *Mysterious word used by Battle Creek fans. [Invented by Mari Beth Wheeler under somewhat intimate circumstances with Tucker, Liebscher, and another female.]*

[4] *Much heralded issue of crudzine Utopian.*

[5] *This column by Wilkie Conner was now in its fourth fanzine.*

[6] *Bem symbol plugged by Ralph Raeburn Phillips.*

[7] *Notorious mistake by Tucker's Bloomington Newsletter.*

[8] *Motto of VOM.*

[9] *Ubiquitous Convention figures according to Tucker.*

[10] *Slogan popularised by Bill Morse while stationed in North Canada.*

[11] *Famous remark by Eva Firestone.*

[12] *Ralph Raeburn Phillips's self-description.*

[13] *Slogan in Chanticleer (Walt Liebscher).*

[14] *Hotel room of famous Nolacon party.*

[15] *Chuck Harris was afraid this might offend Lee in view of the race feeling in the South but I knew she was of Illinois stock and took the chance.*

[16] *[Fantasy Times changed its name to Science Fiction Times.]*

Chapter 5 (Confusion #10)

With limitless velocity the slender fish-shaped object plunges through the inchoate darkness. With each millisecond its speed increases a thousandfold, though aeons ago it had already far outstripped human comprehension. Far behind in the impenetrable darkness there is a faint susurrations as unnamed entities of the depths voice their frustration, their feral eyes glowing with mindless hate. Unheeding, the silver fish speeds on, to the confines of the known universe, tearing at the very fabric of space itself. The structure of the cosmos changes beyond belief. The spacetime continuum warps into alien shapes, into a fantastic maze of intricately connected cylinders, crossing and recrossing in mindwrecking complexity. Grimly, the fish struggles on, each cell of its being indelibly impressed with one indomitable purpose. To find! To communicate! More slowly now, it moves onward to its destiny.

One final torturing twist, and the breakthrough is complete. Totality becomes a blinding white light, searing at the tortured consciousness. Slowly, painfully, sense-impressions emerge, coalesce, are collated, analysed, integrated with the purpose. At the rim of the new white universe there floats a reddish orb. It falls into a familiar pattern of spatial relationships.

A human face.

From out of the plumbed depths the fish speaks, all doubts at an end, wishing only that this typer had italics...

"Is this Flushing?" [1]

In the next room Moskowitz and Sykora are resting from one of Fandom House's riotous one-shot publishing sessions while they check Taurasi's

calculations on the postal rates to Minneapolis on second-class bombs. [2]

“No, we’ll never get Rich that way,” agrees Sykora. “By the way, Taurasi’s a long time in the bathroom. Do you think there’s something wrong?”

“Maybe we shouldn’t have given him that Elsberry wine,” says Moskowitz worriedly.

“It must have disagreed with him. We’d better call a fan doctor.”

There is a strangled cry from the bathroom.

“He seems to be a little hoarse,” says Moskowitz.

“Better make it a fan vet, then,” says Sykora. “He must have caught a colt.” He dials a number. “The Van Houten residence?” [3]

“Don’t be a foal!” shouts Taurasi, dashing in from the bathroom. “Sturgeon was in there and he says that Willis and Vick have been arrested by the Immigration Authorities.”

“I always said fans were arrested adolescents,” comments Sykora cynically. Moskowitz ignores him. “What a scoop,” he gloats. “Did you catch him before he could tell Tucker?” [4]

“No,” says Taurasi regretfully, “He came and went like a flush in the pan. Said something about having to catch a fast drain for the South.”

“He must be making for Savannah,” says Moskowitz, “That’s for sewer. There’s not a moment to lose before Tucker gets the story. You should have been able to catch him some way. Cast a net for instance.”

“He already had one,” says Taurasi, “and a couple of maracas. Said he picked them up from some band he met on the way that had been drowned by a cheering crowd. Their music had been pitched in a quay of sea.”

“That’s enough of that,” says Moskowitz. “Did he give you any more of Willis’s message?”

“Only something that sounded like *ASF 43*,” says Taurasi puzzledly.

“That doesn’t sound like Ellis Island,” muses Moskowitz. “It must be the Chateau d’IF.”

Taurasi hastily notifies Van Houten and Meyer and within an hour a special edition of *Fantasy Times* is on the streets.

“You know,” frets Taurasi, “I can’t help thinking we should have put some in the mailbox too. People are just kicking them into the gutter.”

“Well, at least Keasler will get one,” says Sykora. “But keep quiet for a moment. Moskowitz is calling Wollheim.” [5]

“Hello? Hello?” says Moskowitz. “Wollheim? We’re going down to

rescue Willis and Vick. Can I give you a lift?”

He listens for a moment and then turns sadly to the others. “He still refuses to have any truck with me.” [6]

“Gosh, Sam,” says Taurasi, taking his fingers out of his ears. “I wish you had used the phone.” [7]

“What, on a local call?” sneers Moskowitz. “But for long distance I open the window.”

“What window?” asks Taurasi.

“Oh dear,” says Moskowitz.. “Has it gone again? Never mind, we can go out that way and save time.”

They all jump down into the street, where Sykora starts to board Moskowitz’s truck.

“We haven’t got time for that,” snaps Moskowitz, knocking the planks and hammer out of his hands. “If it rains we’ll just have to let our insurance cover us. Let’s get going, and Laney take the hindmost.”

[1] This was supposed to be a parody of van Vogt. The editorial offices of Fantasy Times [now Science Fiction Times] are at Flushing, New York. [At that time, Taurasi called his publishing house “Fandom House”, but when he tried to incorporate it, Random House learned of his existence and threatened to sue if he did not change the name.]

[2] Rich Elsberry of Minneapolis was unpopular with Fantasy Times because he used their name in a hoax about ASF having folded.

[3] Van Houten is a leader of the Fan Veterans.

[4] There was rivalry for news between Fantasy Times and [Tucker’s] Bloomington Newsletter [later, Science Fiction Newsletter].

[5] An old enemy. See The Immortal Storm.

[6] Sam Moskowitz is, or was, a truck driver.

[7] He is renowned for his loud voice.

Chapter 6 (Mad, Special Issue)

Humming softly to himself, Moskowitz speeds his truck in the direction of Newark. The traffic draws into the kerb and air raid wardens rush to their posts. Through the deserted streets the truck rushes on until it reaches

Moskowitz's house, where the three fans leap out and start loading the famous collection onto the truck. Hour after hour they toil, carrying out armfuls of books and magazines and hurrying back for more. The wheels of the truck gradually sink into the concrete of the road, but still the work goes on. At last the entire collection is loaded, and the truck moves off slowly in the direction of the Chateau d'IF, leaving deep ruts in the road.

It is dusk when they arrive at the Chateau, and they are able to drive the truck right up to the building. They park it on the narrow spit of land between the Chateau and the sea, and gaze anxiously at the enormous walls.

"What a lot of windows," says Moskowitz worriedly, "How are we going to find out which cell Willis and Vick are in?"

They all get out of the truck and walk up and down the shore, turning over the problem in their minds. Suddenly there is a twanging noise and Taurasi falls headlong in the mud. The others help him to his feet and start wiping him down, but he brushes their hands aside impatiently.

"Something just struck me!" he exclaims.

"No," says Sykora, "You fell."

"I know," says Taurasi impatiently, "that's the point. I tripped over a chord. Haven't you noticed this whole beach is covered with musical instruments?"

"It must be the remains of that band that was playing on the quay until it was drowned by the cheering crowd," muses Moskowitz. "But so what? They're all washed up now."

"It's given me an idea," says Taurasi, "We'll serenade Willis and Vick like Blondin and Richard Coeur de Lion."

"Who's Blondin?" asks Moskowitz.

"Don't you ever read the funnies?" says Sykora in contempt. "Blondin Bumstead of course. Say, whaddya think of Lil Abner—" [1]

"Never mind that," says Sykora. "Moskowitz, you sing and Sykora and I will accompany you." He picks up a trumpet and hands it to Sykora, taking a saxophone for himself. Moskowitz takes out a copy of the *Dianetics Handbook* and clears his throat. He begins to sing.

"We three
Intend to free
You from the penitentiary,
Taurasi,
Sykora

And me.
I need hardly mention how at our Convention
We kept the Michelists at bay; [2]
And now we are prayin' that *we'll* find a way in
To –"

He breaks off abruptly as two arms are seen waving frantically from one of the windows. With an encouraging gesture the triumvirate run back to the truck and begin to unload it.

Watching them anxiously from the cell window, Willis turns to Vick, "What do you think they're doing?"

"It looks big enough to be SaM's entire collection," says ShelVy. "OH! They must be going to pile it up against the wall for us to climb down. Yes, look, they're laying a fantasy foundation of big ones first. Early *Fantasy Books*, old *Amazing Quarterlies*, 1943 *Astoundings* –"

"WHAT?" shouts Willis. He throws himself against the bars, wrenching at them vainly. Eventually he calms down and watches quietly as the three below erect an enormous mountain of books and magazines against the prison wall.

"Well, that's the last of them," says Moskowitz finally, "a file of recent *Fantasy Books* and the Dell edition of *Universe*. [2] I'm afraid it isn't enough, I wish they'd had *Common Sense*." He broods grimly. The others steal a look at him and turn their eyes away hastily from his harrowed countenance, Moskowitz stands still for a long moment and then grits his teeth and walks slowly back to the truck. He emerges with a white face and a roll of black velvet. Unrolling the latter he produces a book, at which the others gaze with reverent awe. Still holding the book he begins to climb up the mountain of sf. Sykora and Taurasi uncover their heads and stand in silent tribute.

Up above ShelVy turns to Willis. "He is making the supreme sacrifice," he says in hushed tones.

Even Willis is impressed, "Not... not *The Outsider and Others*?" he gasps. [4]

"Yes," says ShelVy sombrely. As Moskowitz continues his perilous ascent other fans begin to arrive in ones and twos and watch in perilous silence. There is a gasp of relief as he nears the top of the pile and places *The Outsider and Others* on the summit. Then, very carefully, he climbs the remaining few feet and stands on the sacred volume. He is now only a short

distance below the cell window.

Balancing himself precariously on the narrow peak, he reaches into his pocket and produces a small saw.

“Here,” he says, “Saw through the bars with this. It’s a hacksaw I borrowed from Ray Cummings.” He stands on tiptoe and reaches it up.

Willis and Vick both stretch out their hands but try as they will they cannot quite reach the saw.

“Another hundredth of an inch would have done it,” says ShelVy, falling back in despair. “Ricky Slavin has a lot to answer for.” [5]

Overcome with disappointment and emotion at the recollection of his lost dust jacket, Moskowitz has to rest for a moment before making his descent. He is just pulling himself together when there is a frantic cry from below and a wildeyed figure dashes towards the pile, muttering incoherently to himself and drawing a fountain pen from his pocket. It is Clark Ashton Smith.

“For Ghod’s sake stop him, Mike,” shouts Alan Pesetsky, “He’s caught sight of one of his published poems with uncorrected typos!” [6] But Michael de Angelis is unable to bring himself to restrain his hero. [7] “No human power could stop him anyway,” says Ken Beale in horror. “That was a Keasler zine he saw. Run for your lives!” [8]

But it is too late. Smith has already reached the pile of books and magazines. With maniacal strength he grabs a duplicated fanzine near the bottom of the mountain and pulls savagely. For a long moment the vast edifice shakes and quivers: then, with an earsplitting crash, it falls to the ground, burying Taurasi, Sykora, Gibson, Pesetsky, de Angelis, Beale, Clancy, Smith, Gluck, Quinn, Krueger, Crane, Wesson, Serxner, Friedman, Hoskins and Kirs.

“Well,” says Willis callously, “That’s the first time all New York fandom has been in Moskowitz’s good books.”

[1] Lil Abner had just caused a comics sensation by getting married to Daisy Mae.

[2] A reference to the famous “Exclusion Act” in which Moskowitz, Sykora and Taurasi prevented the Michelists (Wollheim etc.) from entering the 1939 Convention. See The Immortal Storm.

Incidentally I realise that the “Triumvirate” no longer exists but at the time my knowledge of the history of New York fandom stopped where The Immortal Storm did.

[3] *The Dell reprint of Heinlein's Universe was probably the thinnest pocketbook ever published. There was some wonderment that they hadn't included the sequel, Common Sense. [Actually, the Dell Universe was one of a series of 10¢ pocketbooks tried by Dell, Universe being the only sf title. The series proved unsuccessful and was immediately discontinued. – tgc]*

[4] *Moskowitz's copy of Lovecraft's The Outsider and Others was the pride of his collection and on a famous occasion, described in the Insurgent Spacewarp by Joe Kennedy...*

[5] *...New York fanne Ricky Slavin, during a quarrel with Moskowitz, tore the precious dust jacket.*

[6] *Smith was said to have the habit of correcting by hand any typos he found in his published works.*

[7] *Michael de Angelis published quantities of Smith's poems.*

[8] *Keasler's fanzines were of course notorious for their typos. (Cf. "Kerles" in The Enchanted Duplicator.)*

Chapter 7 (Confusion #11)

"Well," says Willis callously, "That's the first time all New York fandom has been in Moskowitz's good books."

"You just said that," points out ShelVy.

"I know," says Willis, "I heard me. But that was in another magazine. These people mightn't understand your next remark unless I repeated that one."

"Well, you should split your instalments better," says ShelVy crossly.

"Joe Palooka does it that way," says Willis mildly. [1]

"Always trying to end with a punch line," grumbles ShelVy.

"I'm sorry," soothes Willis, "I was only trying to do my judy."

"No order! No method!" ShelVy mutters.

"Look who's talking," says Willis indignantly, "Losing precious letters from Robert Bloch and sending Schultheis masses of blank pages? For ghoodness sake get on with it. Here we are halfway down the page already and we still haven't mentioned the April 1943 ASF."

"Oh well, if you want to make an issue out of it..." says ShelVy. "Where were we? Ah yes: that was only half of New York fandom down there. But here's the rest of it now." He points to a distant cyclist on the road below,

pedalling furiously in their direction and looking back guiltily over his shoulder.

“Looks like Keasler mailing the next *Opus*.” says Willis. “Who is it?”
[3]

“Bob Silverberg, of course,” says ShelVy. [4]

Silverberg jumps off his bicycle beside the pile of books and starts digging. There is another slight landslide and the movement revives Moskowitz, who has been lying dazed at the top. He waves weakly at Silverberg and starts to make his way down. “Avalanche?” asks Silverberg.

“No thanks,” says Moskowitz, “I just had one.”

The two have been working busily for some minutes when a fast car drives up and Gerry de la Ree jumps out, shouting and pointing excitedly upwards. There is a drone of aeroplane engines overhead and parachuted figures can be seen dimly against the darkening sky. As they land they are seen to be Darrell C. Richardson, Walter Coslet, Roy Squires, Clyde Beck, Russ Hodgkins, Lloyd Eaton, Don Day, Phil Rasch and Russell Leadabrand. [5] As soon as they have disentangled themselves from their parachutes they raise their heads and sniff keenly. Then with unerring instinct they rush toward Mt. Moskowitz.

“Amazing how they got wind of our plight so soon,” says Willis. He goes on brokenly, “It’s... it’s grand to see all these true fans rallying round like... like –”

“Like vultures,” says ShelVy bitterly. “Look at them!”

To his horror Willis realizes that they are not clearing away the pile of books at all, but are merely burrowing into it and comparing each item with their little black notebooks. Every now and then they come upon an item on their Want Lists and with eager grunts stuff it into their capacious pockets. There is an occasional vicious scuffle as two collectors seize upon the same item, and all the time Moskowitz is dashing around desperately trying to reclaim his treasures.

“What a shocking exhibition of greed,” says Willis, aghast. “And at a time like this!” He puts his head out of the window. “What about us?” he shouts. “HELP! FOR GHOD’S SAKE...”

“What do you want?” asks one of the collectors.

“Do you see an April ’43 *ASF*?” begs Willis.

But the collector is no longer listening, having come across Moskowitz’ copy of *The Outsider and Others*. Unfortunately for him he cannot resist

gloating over it for a moment before hiding it away, and with uncanny quickness three of his rivals notice it and pounce on him. They all lay greedy hands on the book and a grim tug-of-war ensues. Finally there is a horrible ripping sound and the book tears into four pieces. Moskowitz, fighting his way to the scene, cannot restrain his anguish and emits a bloodcurdling wail. The others realize it must have been heard inside the Chateau and prepare to flee. But they are too late. The great iron gates open and armed guards cover the collectors. In a moment a large garbage truck drives up, and the wretched collectors are forced to shovel the books and magazines onto it. Some of them collapse from sheer frustration, but eventually the entire pile is loaded onto the truck and the half suffocated fans who were underneath are revived. They and the collectors are all herded inside the Chateau and the truck drives off at breakneck speed. Just before it moves out of sight the driver is seen throwing away a false beard and a moustache. Borne upon the night air there comes a distant cry of triumph. "I'VE GOT THEM ALL. EVERY ONE!" [6]

"That vile truckster," says Willis bitterly. "But he's given me a novel idea. Suppose we disguise ourselves as guards and just walk out! They often do it in books."

"Where would we get the disguise?" asks ShelVy.

"Well," says Willis, "You pretend to be ill. I'll call the guard and when he comes in with the doctor we'll overpower them and take their clothes and keys."

"All right," says ShelVy. He lies down on the bed and starts to groan. Willis shakes the cell door and shouts, "WARDER WARDER!"

The guard strolls along the corridor and locks in, "Will you have it in a bucket or a glass?"

"Everyone wants to get in on the act," says Willis coldly. "That pun was beyond the pail. Take a gander at my friend here – he's sick unto death."

The guard peers into the cell. "He does look a bit thin," he admits. "Needs a shave too. But I'm not going to be taken in by any lying story."

"Take a *proper* gander," says Willis. "That's a broom you're looking at. There's ShelVy over there."

"Oh," says the guard, "I'd better call the doctor." He moves hastily off. [7]

[1] *The boxing comic strip Joe Palooka always starts off by repeating the last panel of the previous series.*

[2] *Recent mishaps in Confusion.*

[3] Keasler had so much trouble mailing his fanzines at his local Post Office that he used to cycle out of town with them. He claimed it was “the only border-run fanzine”.

[4] Bob Silverberg was reported as having said he was half of New York fandom.

[5] Well known collectors.

[6] Slogan of New York book dealer Frank Schmidt.

[7] Shelby is very thin.

Chapter 8 (*Oops!* #6)

Half an hour passes and the guard has still not returned.

“Looks as if he isn’t coming back,” says Willis. “We’d better try something else. Now what would a van Vogt hero do? But of course, he’d construct a deadly weapon from the simple materials at his disposal.”

“We’ve got a dry cell?” says ShelVy hopefully. [1]

Willis ponders for a moment and then produces a screwdriver from his pocket. Deftly he removes the front of the wall switch and examines the wiring.

“Are you sure you know what you’re doing?” asks ShelVy nervously. “Shouldn’t you be wearing rubber gloves or something?”

“I didn’t come here to be insulated,” says Willis coldly. “Of course I know what I’m doing.” He makes some delicate adjustments to the wiring with long sensitive fingers.

There is a blue flash and every light in the Greater New York area goes out. Willis reels back wringing a long sensitive finger. “I must have done something wrong,” he says regretfully, “If only I’d had that April 1943 ASF with the last part of *The Weapon Makers*....” He is still wringing his finger when the door opens and the guard calls: “Did I hear someone ringing?”

“Yes,” says Willis, “it was my finger. The skin is peeling. I hope you brought the doctor?”

“I couldn’t find him”, says the guard, “so I brought the nurse instead.”

By the moonlight shining through the cell window ShelVy and Willis can discern a tall and pretty brunette standing at the door.

“Come in,” says the guard, “The lights should be on any minute – every available electrician is working on it.”

“Many hands make light work,” mutters Willis. [2] The nurse comes in,

sniffing at the air. “What’s the matter?” she asks, “Somebody dead?”

“Not yet,” says the guard, glaring at Willis. “My patience may be exhausted, but yours is over there on the bed.”

The nurse bends over ShelVy. “My Goodness,” she says, “This man looks as if he’s at death’s door. But I’ll pull him through.” She reaches down the neck of her blouse and produces one after another a selection of small bottles. ShelVy watches with admiration. “That where you keep your medicines?” he asks.

“Yes,” she says, “This is my medicine chest.”

“Well,” leers ShelVy, “If you ever get a cold on it, remember I’m Vick.” Meanwhile Willis has been circling round the guard, and now sticks his screwdriver in his back, shouting “HANDS UP!” Taken aback, the guard obeys. “Now drop your gun,” says Willis, “or I’ve got something here that’s just the thing for obstinate screws.” [3] The guard drops the gun. Willis picks it up and puts his screwdriver back in his pocket with a sigh of relief. ShelVy changes clothes with the guard, then ties him up and dumps him on the bed.

“Now,” says ShelVy to the nurse.

“NO, no,” she cries, blushing.

“Yes, yes,” says ShelVy. “We are desperate fen, and we don’t care what we do. We correspond with Max Keasler and everything. I tell you, we stop at nothing.”

“Don’t be shy,” says Willis, “I’ll cover you with my gun.” The nurse takes off her blouse and skirt. “You know,” says Willis, “this is the most interesting thing I’ve seen in America yet. I think when I get out I’ll go on a lecher tour of the United States.”

“Careful,” warns ShelVy. “Don’t forget Russ Watkins has subbed to this issue.” [4]

“Oh da – er, bother... yes,” says Willis. “All right,” he tells the nurse, “That’ll do. But it’s lucky for you this instalment isn’t being printed in *Opus*.” [5]

He struggles and puffs his way into the blouse and skirt while the nurse puts on his jacket and pants. Then they tie her up and put her on the other bed.

“Can’t you forget about Watkins for once?” appeals the guard. [4]

“I say,” says Willis, “We can’t have these people shouting for help. We’d better think up some way to keep them quiet.”

“Well, there’s always those old articles of yours,” says ShelVy.

“You mean, for the gags in them?” grins Willis. “No, I was thinking more of something like chloroform.”

“So was I,” mutters ShelVy.

Willis is rummaging among the nurse’s bottles. “Here we are,” he says, “We’ve got both chloroform and nitrous oxide. I guess ether will do.”

He uncorks the bottle and sets to work. “What a horrible smell,” he says. “Reminds me of that bad spell of diphtheria I had.” [6]

“Well, that’s that,” he says finally. “Now all we have to do is walk quietly out.”

[1] In van Vogt’s “The Changeling” the hero made his escape from captivity by making a heat bomb out of a 1½ volt dry cell.

[2] This pun was donated by Bob Shaw.

[3] Criminal slang for prison warden.

[4] Fandom’s current controversy was Russ Watkins’s “Clean Up Fandom Crusade”.

[5] The Keasler zine which succeeded Fanvariety after the latter was pilloried in Amazing for alleged indecency.

[6] Peter Graham’s “Willis Death Hoax” announced that I had died from “diphtheria” – spelt that way.

Chapter 9 (*Fantasias*, Special Issue)

“Now,” says Willis, “All we have to do is walk quietly out.”

He unlocks the cell door with the guard’s keys and is opening it slowly and noiselessly when there is a sound of rushing feet in the corridor and several men in prison guard uniform burst into the cell. Before Vick and Willis can utter a word they are gagged and bound by six of the strangers while the rest carry out the unconscious guard and nurse. The leader pauses dramatically on the threshold. “If anyone asks you who rescued Willis and Vick,” he says proudly, “tell them it was Harlan Ellison and the Cleveland Science Fantasy League. That’ll show Ken Beale. [1] It’s not every fan group would have thought of overpowering some of the guards and taking their uniforms.”

He has barely finished his triumphant speech when he is knocked flat on his face by a rush of his followers back into the cell. They are engaged in a fierce hand to hand struggle with another group in guards’ uniforms. After a grim battle the Cleveland fans are all either unconscious or bound and gagged

and the newcomers have captured the guard and nurse and are bearing them triumphantly away. The leader pauses dramatically on the threshold. “If anyone asks you who rescued Willis and Vick,” he says, “Tell them it was Allen Newtown and the Baltimore Science Fiction Forum. That’ll show Dave Hammond. [2] It’s not every fan group would –” He breaks off at the sound of running feet in the corridor.

Two hours and six fan groups later the cell is piled high with bodies and fighting is still going on in the corridor. Willis and Vick have given up trying to get the gags out of their mouths and are communicating with each other, and relieving their feelings, by kicking the hot water pipes, “I thought the Michigan Fantasy League put on the best show,” taps out Willis reflectively. “So far,” agrees ShelVy. “I never realized there were so many fan clubs. I wish there was a bit more co-ordination between them...”

He breaks off at the sound of a pleasant female voice in the corridor. “Unless my natural born shellpink-type earbones deceive me,” it says, “I is heard fan-critters talking Morse. They is along here somewhere.”

The door opens to reveal Lee Hoffman. Manly Banister, Henry Burwell, Dick Ryan, Gregg Calkins, Dave English and Dave Ish. [3] They are all clad in guards’ uniforms, and Manly Banister carries a dowsing rod. [4] Lee Hoffman looks in alarm at the heaps of recumbent and unconscious fans. “Reminds me of Room 770,” she says. “Manly,” she goes on, “Us is gone to require your Walter-diviner again.”

Manly grips his hazel twig and picks his way among the bodies. It dips down over Willis, still clad in the nurse’s clothes. “Oh no.” cries Lee, “Don’t tell me WAW is a girl! No one could be so *deceitful!*”

“The rod never lies,” says Manly gravely. “Let’s take the gag out of her mouth and see what she has to say.”

As soon as the gag is removed Willis starts talking, but they have to remove ShelVy’s gag before they understand the situation. “The way I see it,” says ShelVy, “is that every fan club in the East has found its way into the Chateau in the darkness, overpowered some of the guards, and stolen their uniforms. The whole prison must be chonk full of fans in guards’ uniforms trying to rescue us and fighting each other, while the real guards are all locked in the cells. Just listen to that noise below; it sounds like a convention. We’ll have to go down and explain.”

They untie the other fans in the cell and venture out into the corridor, where they make peace between the Philadelphia Science Fantasy Society

and the Atlanta Science Fiction Organization. Then they make their way down to the entrance hall of the Chateau, from which most of the noise seems to be coming.

The place is a milling throng of fans, all shouting and fighting. The noise is so great that they cannot make themselves heard. "I wish we had Moskowitz here," says Ryan, "or at least a stick of dynamite. Anything to attract their attention."

As they are wondering what to do the main door of the Chateau opens and two mailmen stagger in with a huge box. They dump it just inside the door and stand mopping their foreheads.

"What's in it?" asks Burwell curiously.

"Don't know," gasps one of the men, "but it must weigh a blooming ton."

"Hmmm," says Burwell, "The postmark is Illinois. And here's a number, 280, scratched out and 702 written over it." [5]

"Open it!" cries Hoffman.

They throw open the lid. At first the box seems to be full of straw, with an occasional brick here and there, but they have hardly removed the top layer of straw when an alarm clock goes off somewhere inside. Suddenly Bob Tucker's head appears. He scrambles out, removing the straw from his hair and rubbing his head where he struck it on a brick. [6]

"Ha!" he gloats, "I made it."

He peers at the figures standing around him in the dim light.

"Who are you?"

"Well," says ShelVy, pointing out Lee Hoffman in her guard's uniform and close-cropped hair, "This is Lee Hoffman."

"HAW!" sneers Tucker, "You can't tell me that. Here boy," he says contemptuously, "sign your name." He gives her a copy of *SFNL* [7] and a pencil. Lee signs her name and hands it back. [8]

"There," says Tucker, "I told you you couldn't fool – My Ghod! It is her signature." He stares at it incredulously. "A double hoax!" As the full enormity of it strikes him he sits down weakly on the box.

"Ah well," he says after a few moments, "who are the rest of you?"

"Well," says ShelVy, indicating Willis, still in the nurse's clothes. "This is Walt Willis."

"OH NO!" cries Tucker. With a terrible expression on his face he silently hands Willis the *SFNL* and pencil. Willis signs his name and hands

them back. Tucker examines the signature. Then without a word he creeps back inside his box and pulls the lid down after him.

“Who was that?” asks Willis.

“That was Tucker, The Man Himself,” says Hoffman.

“The name seems familiar,” says Willis. “Not the Bob Tucker who had the story in ‘Probability Zero’ in the April 1943 –” [9]

Suddenly they are all thrown to the ground by a terrific explosion.

“Atomic war?” asks English, scrambling to his feet.

“Worse then that,” gasps Ish, who has dashed outside to have a look.

“It’s Ben Singer and some of the Michifans. They’ve let off a bomb outside the Chateau and blown half of it to FAPA.” [10]

“That’s torn it,” says Burwell, “We’ll have the police down on us in a minute.”

Sure enough the scream of police and fire brigade sirens can already be heard in the distance.

[1] *A current critic of the Cleveland group.*

[2] *A current critic of the Baltimore group.*

[3] *Principal supporters of Shelby’s “WAW With The Crew In ’52” Fund.*

[4] *At this time Manly Banister was keenly interested in water-divining.*

[5] *Tucker’s address had recently been changed from Box 280 to Box 702, Bloomington.*

[6] *In Quandry #19 Tucker drew attention to the high cost of hotel rooms, suggested that fandom should build its own Convention Hotel, and urged every fan to send a brick to the Chicon Committee. In Quandry #20 Rich Elsberry denounced this as a vile pro plot to get free bricks, said that Tucker should make his own, and urged everyone to mail him a bale of straw. (A group of British fans designed this Convention Hotel. The plans were beautifully drawn out by Bob Shaw, presented by me to Tucker at the Chicon and subsequently published in FAPA. The front elevation appeared again recently in Arthur Thomson’s illo on page 23 of Chuck Harris’s Through Darkest Ireland, illustrating an abandoned hotel we thought would be ideal for Conventions. A nice example of fannish time-binding.)*

[7] *New name for Tucker’s Bloomington Newsletter.*

[8] *Until Lee Hoffman appeared at the Nolacon, fandom thought she was a boy and Tucker refused to believe her identity until she signed her name for him.*

[9] *[This note is missing from both the collected Willis Discovers America and the Warhoon 28 reprint. Tucker did indeed contribute a short-short squib to the “Probability Zero” department in that much-mentioned issue of Astounding. – Ed.]*

[10] *After the famous “Michigan Bomb Plot” in which some local fans let off a small bomb in front of Arthur Rapp’s house, blowing out the front room window and bringing in the police, Rapp discontinued Spacewarp as a subscription fanzine and retired into FAPA.*

Chapter 10 – The Trial (*Confusion, Special Pre-Chicon Issue*)

“The Case of the State versus Willis and others,” calls the Clerk of the Court. He can scarcely be heard above the buzz of conversation from the public galleries.

“Tell the ushers I must have silence,” says the Judge. The ushers rush about calling “Ush! Ush!” The crowd peer forward to watch as Willis is brought in, followed by the 300 fans who are being tried as his accomplices. The District Attorney stands up to read the indictment.

“Walter Alexander Willis,” he says sternly, “You stand accused before this Court that on divers dates within the last seven days –”

“What do you mean, divers dates?” queries Willis. “Mermaids?”

The D.A. ignores him. “– you did feloniously and wilfully commit the following offences, to wit: illegal entry into the country, perjury, blasphemy, resisting arrest, malicious damage, mutiny, assault, attempted suicide –”

“Attempted suicide?” asks Willis puzzled.

“Making fun of Francis Towner Laney,” explains the DA. He goes on: “Attempting escape, incitement to riot, sabotage, indecent assault, theft, transvestism, AND...” He takes a deep breath and concludes grimly, “criticising the National Fantasy Fan Federation!” [1]

A shocked murmur goes round the Court. Three women faint and are carried out. Eva Firestone is expelled from the public gallery. [2]

Order is eventually restored and the trial proceeds. One after another the

various witnesses are called and the evidence against Willis piles up. Despite a brilliant speech by his lawyer the case is obviously going against him.

“Mr. Speer,” [3] says the Judge, “Does your client wish to give evidence in his own defence?”

“Yes,” says Willis.

An interpreter is summoned.

“He says ‘Yes’” he reports.

“Thank you Mr. Clarke,” [4] says the Judge. “The prisoner may take the stand.”

Willis goes into the witness stand. The clerk hands him a book.

“Take the gholly ghible in your right hand and repeat after me,” he says.

“After me. After me. After me. After –” says Willis.

“Not that,” says the Clerk impatiently, “I meant the oath.”

“Sorry,” says Willis. “Carry on.”

The Clerk reads the oath. “I had one grunch...”

“I had one grunch,” says Willis.

“But the eggplant over there.”

“But the eggplant over there,” says Willis. [5]

“So help me Ghu.”

“So help me Roscoe,” says Willis.

“Ghu,” says the Clerk.

“Roscoe,” says Willis.

“Ghu! Ghu!” says the Clerk crossly.

“Baby talk!” sneers Willis. “I refuse to swear by the name of the false ghod Ghu. Furthermore,” he goes on recklessly, “I refuse to recognise the jurisdiction of this court or any other run on the ghuist principles. Roscoe is the only true Ghod.”

“You realise the consequences of this?” asks the Judge gravely.

“Yes,” says Willis proudly, “Ghu is a creature of Oscar the Malevolent Muskrat.” [6]

The jury retire and bring in a verdict of guilty on all the counts of the indictment .

“Walter Alexander Willis,” says the Judge, “Have you any last request to make before I pass sentence of death?”

“I was hoping you’d ask me that,” says Willis. “Could I have the April ’43 ASF? I’d like to finish *The Weapon Makers* before I die.”

“Hmmm,” says the Judge, “What twickers have you got?”

“Which one do you want?” counters Willis.

“July ’40?” asks the Judge hopefully.

“No,” says Willis regretfully, “James White needs that one too.”

“You’ll just have to think of something else,” says the Judge. “I could let you have a complete file of OOTWA.” [7]

“Isn’t there a law against cruel and unnatural punishments?” protests Willis indignantly.

“Never going to get rid of that,” mutters the Judge crossly to himself. Aloud he goes on, “There’s nothing else you want?”

“No,” says Willis.

“In that case,” says the Judge solemnly, “nothing remains for me but to pass sentence.” He dons the black beanie. “Prisoner at the bar,” he intones sternly, “you are hereby condemned to be taken from this Court to the place of execution and there to undergo death by nausea through exposure to *Fantastic Science Fiction* [8] And may Ghu have mercy on your soul.”

Willis blanches, but remains silent until the guards begin to lead him away. Then he suddenly turns back to the Judge. “Would you,” he begs, “ask the Prison Governor to make sure that my Honorary Swamp Critter Certificate is buried with me?” [9]

There is a hushed silence.

“What did you say?” asks the Judge.

“My Honorary Swamp Critter Certificate,” says Willis. He produces it from the lining of his jacket.

“You mean,” says the Judge incredulously, “You is a genooine certificated honorary swamp critter?”

“Is,” says Willis modestly. He hands the certificate up to the Judge, who examines it respectfully.

“Well, dagnab and rowrbazzle!” exclaims the Judge, “This is sho ’nuff a genooine natural-born Honorary Swamp Critter Certificate! Lookee.”

He shows it to the jury. There is a murmur of awed admiration as the great names are recognized: Cherchez la Hoffman, Rinocerwurtz of the Macauleys, Heinrich de Burwell, Sarcophagous Macguthrie, J.F. (Bewitched) Streinz, Seminole Sam Thomas Esq., Alabaster Jacks, J. Wiley Cat Burge, Paul D. Cox (conosoor of fancy fried catfish), Jay Tadpole Liver, Bob Farnham and Roger (Rowrbazzle) Aycock. (Printed by Vernon McCain.) [10]

The judge beams at Willis. “Whuffo you not tell this hyer court yo was a honorary swamp critter, suh?” he whispers. “Could have saved all those

heavydents,” He raises his voice. “Honorary Swamp Critter Willis,” he declaims, “yo is hereby discharged without a stain on you character. This Court apollygises for yo inconvenients.”

“What about all these other fans?” asks Willis. “They is all for Pogo.”

“They is all freed,” says the Judge magnanimously. “And furthermore in reckonpence for the wrong this Court is done you I hereby donates you this little ol’ Chateau d’IF for yo personal use for as long as you stay in these Uninety States of the US & A, and for any time you come again.”

“Thank you,” says Willis, as the applause dies down. “And I in turn give the use of this building free of all charge to fandom for the holding of all future Conventions, conclaves and conferences, thus making them independent of the Tucker Hotel. Of course,” he murmurs thoughtfully, “it looks as if they’ll have to have me over here before they can use it...”

[1] Some of the leaders of N3F at this time were showing considerable sensitivity to criticism...

[2] Including Eva Firestone.

[3] Oldtime fan Jack Speer is now a lawyer.

[4] Vinç Clarke was quite confident no one in the States would be able to understand me.

[5] This phrase comes from Roger Price’s In One Head and Out the Other, a book which was popular in fandom at the time. Price’s character Clayton Slope “had a clever trick of saying any conceivable sentence so that it sounded like, ‘I had one grunch but the eggplant over there’”. Hence the title of Vinç’s column in Hyphen (“Grunch”), the subtitle of my Chicon report in Quandry (“Over There with Grunch and Eggplant”) and other fannish allusions. Incidentally, on the ship I went to the States on, a Greek one, one of the prominent items on the lunch menus was... eggplants.

[6] This is the evil deity in the Roscoe theology.

[7] Out of This World Adventures, the promag with the built-in comic section. It lasted two issues, for the information of students of Comic Sections.

[8] Probably the most tasteless and obnoxious promag ever published. (One issue this one lasted, thereby proving it is possible to lose money by underestimating the public’s taste.)

[9] This was a certificate Lee Hoffman sent me in December 1951,

signed by all the Georgia fans who were like most fans of the time keen admirers of Pogo. It was published in Q17 with a speech of acceptance, and the original hangs on the wall at Oblique House. I used to put the letters HSC after my name, until Lee and I went to the Okefenokee Swamp in September 1952 and sent postcards to all our friends (dipped in swamp water) and I signed them "SC". With 7th Fandom and Mad (the comic, that is) Pogo lost his exclusive hold on fandom's affections.

[10] Signatories and imprimatur of The Certificate. Incidentally Ian Macauley should have been included in the list earlier of the principal supporters of Shelby's Fund. The trouble was that at the time when this was written I didn't know the details about the Fund, and in fact I didn't see any list of contributors until the last few hours of the Chicon. This is being sent to all of them with renewed apologies to those I didn't thank personally.

1952; preface and annotations 1955

Thru Fort Mudge with Gun and Typewriter

Hoffman and Willis present
The Hoffman and Willis production of

Thru Fort Mudge with Gun and Typewriter

by Hoffman and Willis

starring Hoffman and Willis in the roles of Hoffman and Willis

technical advisors: Hoffman and Willis

The part of Bob Tucker is taken by J.T. Oliver

Genealogical research by the Fort Mudge Steam Calliope Co.

Lighting by Jim Webbert. Fire extinguishers by all exits.

Musical score by Andre Kostolanetz and his Whispering Steam Calliope
Gwosdorf Electrical Sound Recording

We greatfully acknowledge the invaluable aid rendered during this production by Hoffman and Willis, without whom this would not have been possible.

– Hoffman and Willis

Produced in collaboration with the Department of the Interior.

All characters in this travelogue are imaginary and vice versa

Come with us now to glamorous/glamourous Fort Mudge, city of magic and mystery, known far and wide as “The Unique Metropolis” – a name whose origin is lost in the mists of antiquity but which many scholars believe stems from the Latin words “unus” meaning one and “equus” meaning horse. (Note: this parade of erudition is to show Vernon McCain – see Cf. – how much both of us, Lee and Walt, utterly despise fans – waw) ((duuuhhh. yeah – leeh)). Observe as we stroll leisurely down the main thoroughfare the magnificent structure to our right – aw heck, you missed it. We’ll take it again in slow motion – a splendid example of early American architecture, towering to a height of 15 feet above the business district. It is said that the

roof of this building sways as much as twelve inches in a high wind or when leaned against. It was in the shadow of this colossal monument to the industry of the inhabitants of Fort Mudge that the recent First International Pogo and Steam Calliope Lovers Convention was held.

Previous to their departure from Savannah the delegates were regaled by a steam calliope recital on the city's main thoroughfare. Great crowds of townspeople foregathered for this momentous occasion, which proved to be a millstone in the cultural life of the old South. Many of the inhabitants were completely overwhelmed by the powerful impact of this most moving of all instruments (especially when the ponies drawing the calliope went wild and rushed into the crowd) and for days afterwards were deaf to the sounds of the workaday world. Oldtimers present likened the occasion to the flight of Lindbergh and many were inspired to try to emulate his performance, though because of the shortage of aeroplanes some were reduced to merely rushing into the sea in the general direction of Europe, with their fingers in their ears. But some less hardy (or sanforised) souls shrunk from the thought of being reduced to such depths, even with pressurised heads. Encouraged by the tumult, the calliopist pursued the concert and his audience with renewed vigor/vigour, rendering classical selections with Aplomb – a youth who had worked for him for several years, as a juvenile lead. This boy is the son of Aplomb, Aplomb & Appleby, the well-known vaudeville team of Siamese twins and flute accompanist, from whom he inherited his musical ability and four hands. Unfortunately at the time of the concert the boy was suffering from a slight injury; he had severed several fingers at the knuckles and consequently was shorthanded.

Before entering Fort Mudge the convention delegates called at the Okefenokee Swamp for an official tour of inspection. They arrived in two bodies escorted by the wellknown bullfancier Horrors Greeley, representing the cream of Fort Mudge Society. Special transportation had to be arranged since the bus company had proved incapable of coping with the influx of visitors from overseas, of whom a Mr Willis has been offered a position by the Trailways Company to travel the country on Greyhound Buses.

The delegate found that although the level of the water in the swamp was low, it came up to their expectations. During the tour they were entertained by a family of alligators who wanted to have them for dinner, but on account of other commitments they had to decline the invitation. They also had an interesting discussion with an elderly grey-bearded alligator

hunter who complained of the scarcity of elderly grey-bearded alligators.

Leaving the swamp, slightly ahead of a posse, the delegates toured the environs of Fort Mudge, overlooking the city from many points of scenic grandeur. They found the city remarkably easy to overlook. Pausing for a moment at the site of the A. Wilson Tucker Memorial Birdbath, the happy group bade farewell to the busy metropolis of Fort Mudge.

And as our flatboat sinks slowly in the west, we too, must take leave of this picturesque city and its quaint inhabitant.

This has been a Hoffman-Willis production

October 1952

Whiskers

This production was “broadcast” over the hotel public address system as a “radio play” at CORONCON on the afternoon of Saturday 23 May 1953. The voice cast was as follows:

Announcer	Fred Brown
Reporter	Ted Carnell
Bert Campbell	Bert Campbell
President of the Royal Society	Frank Arnold
Prime Minister (Winston Churchill)	Bill Temple

ANNOUNCER: This is the BBC’s Emergency Service. Here is a special report by Radio Newsreel of the fateful events of the past week. It opens with a recording made by one of our reporters who was present on the scene of the original catastrophe.

REPORTER: Well, here we are at the H.J. Campbell Research Laboratories. There is a general hum of excitement and expectancy as we wait for Mr Campbell to appear. Ah, here he is now... No, I beg your pardon, it was only a man carrying a horsehair mattress. I think most of you will be familiar from the talks in Science Survey with the importance of this occasion. It represents not only the culmination of seven years’ work by one of our foremost research chemists, but also an important demonstration of a new scientific method which Mr Campbell has developed and perfected.

ANNOUNCER: This important new principle was first mentioned, some fifteen years ago, in an article in the learned medical journal *Operation Fantast* where in a brief account of Mr Campbell’s career to date, it was disclosed that at one time Mr Campbell had been employed by a research foundation to discover a cure for tuberculosis. In due course Mr Campbell produced *seven* new drugs which were obviously of the greatest merit.

REPORTER: Unfortunately none of them had the slightest effect on tuberculosis, and public faith in Mr Campbell might have been shaken had it not been shortly discovered that one of the drugs was an excellent cure for leprosy. Mr Campbell was immediately given the task of producing a cure for

leprosy, and sure enough came up with a cure for tuberculosis.

ANNOUNCER: The principle was clear. Henceforth Mr Campbell was employed merely to produce cures for diseases chosen at random from the medical dictionary. When he produced the drug, a team of medical research workers endeavoured to find a disease it would cure. In this way Mr Campbell slowly but unsurely produced cures for every known disease, and has in addition accumulated a stockpile of several thousand drugs for which no disease has yet been found.

REPORTER: These drugs have been carefully stored by the Government against the development of space flight and the importation of new diseases from other planets. Some three years ago, however, the president of the Board of Trade, Brigadier Sir Kenneth Slater, OBE, OF, decided that the supply of drugs was sufficient for all the diseases likely to be encountered in this solar system.

ANNOUNCER: He also said he had been assured by the minister of Transport, Sir Norman Wansborough, that there was no likelihood of an interstellar drive being discovered for many years, at least not until Sir Norman got a treasury appropriation of another 15/- per week.

REPORTER: In the circumstances, it was decided to ask Mr Campbell to stop producing new drugs and to turn his attention to the production of other useful chemicals. Mr Campbell obliged, and in the last few years he has produced such invaluable items as a furniture polish which made an excellent sandwich spread, a sandwich spread which proved to be an excellent furniture polish, a glue which made an excellent lubricant for sewing machines, and a soldering flux which turned out to have several times the explosive power of TNT.

ANNOUNCER: For the last six months Mr Campbell has been working... but here he is now to tell you about it himself. At least I think it's him. His beard came into the room a few moments ago. Yes, here comes Mr Campbell himself.

REPORTER: He strides to the rostrum and looks round the room. The Chairman hurries forward and asks him not to move his head, and the ladies in the audience put their hats back on. Mr Campbell, nods... that was the noise like the crack of a whip... and begins to speak.

MR CAMPBELL: Ladies and gentlemen. As you know I have for the past six months been working on a new formula, more complicated than anything I have produced before. In this phial is the result of my work. I had actually been asked to produce a depilatory, for those people who will persist in removing the hair which providence intended to grow on their faces, but of course tests will be required to find out what the substance actually does. Some of the tests will be carried out now, and I'm sure you will find them of great interest. For instance, on my right is the well known publisher, Sir Derek Pickles, who hopes it will be a cheap substitute for water, and outside is Sir Arthur Clarke with the BIS spaceship in case I happen to have invented a new rocket fuel. However, before we start I'd better make sure [*he laughs ruefully*] that I haven't actually invented a depilatory. I'll just dab a little on the corner of my beard..... AAAAGGGGHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!

ANNOUNCER: At this point the recording apparatus broke down, and none of the people in the room were ever heard of again. Only prompt action by the Civil Defence Services saved the majority of the people of Woolwich from a horrible death. As it was, several rows of streets in the immediate vicinity were obliterated before the area could be evacuated. Now here is a recording of a part of a talk given after the nine o'clock news that day by the President of the Royal Society.

PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY: The calamity which has befallen our country to-day is one for which no human agency is to blame, and no blame can be attached to Mr Campbell. His work has been of inestimable benefit to the country, and until now the only casualties involved in any of the research projects have been a few radio engineers who were testing the soldering flux. No one could have anticipated that the mysterious and potent liquid produced by Mr Campbell could have proved to be, of all things, a hair restorer. Or that it would have proved a hair restorer of such power that, in the special circumstances of its use, it produced the greatest menace to attack this country since the Black Death. No one is alive today to describe what went on in that room while they fought in panic towards the exits. In the space of a few seconds it burst through the windows and began to flow down Harden Street, trapping many people in their houses before they had time to flee, and rapidly spreading over the Borough of Woolwich. Fortunately organised action was quickly instituted by the authorities and loss of life has so far been small. However the Emergency Scientific Council of Scientists,

who are working day and night on a means of defeating the menace, have asked me to warn the public that the beard will continue to grow in accordance with an exponential law, each hair increasing in length according to the square of its root, and that co-operation with the authorities by every citizen is necessary if the menace is to be defeated. Thank you.

ANNOUNCER: Now here is a recording of a message to the nation by the Prime Minister, broadcast over all BBC stations the following day.

PRIME MINISTER: In this time of national danger the Government calls on all citizens to remain calm. Stay where you are until arrangements are made for the evacuation of your area. The beard is under constant reconnaissance not only from mobile units on the fringe area, but by radar from the air, and ample notice will be given if your area becomes endangered. In the meantime panic must at all costs be avoided. The Government is taking every possible notion pending the discovery by the Emergency Council of Scientists of a way to finally dispose of the menace. The spread of the beard eastwards has been temporarily halted by the courageous explosion of Woolwich Arsenal by its commander, Colonel Buckmaster. On other fronts a delaying action is being fought by a fleet of combine harvesters patrolling the fringe area. The Thames has so far been kept free for navigation by the importation of several thousand swordfish and their release in the portions of the river occupied by the beard. Paddle steamers have been rushed from various seaside resorts and equipped with knives attached to their paddle wheels on the lines of Boadicea's chariots. Help in the form of several thousand circular saws and harvesters is being rushed from America and the continent. Nevertheless the situation remains grave. A wall erected by the Royal Engineers round the South London Area was overgrown early this morning and the beard continued its advance into the metropolis. The seat of Government is being moved to Manchester. Martial law has been declared over the entire area of South East England. In view of the gravity of the situation the Government has conscripted the entire population for beard control work. In accordance with directions to be given later over the BBC all able bodied males between the ages of 16 and 60 must parade at the nearest police barracks with garden shears. Women will report to the nearest WVS headquarters with scissors. All stocks of these implements are requisitioned. The same applies to lawn-mowers, and a special flying corps of gardeners is being formed for their use. Finally, the Government urges everyone to remain calm. Keep tuned to this

station for special BBC notices.

May 1953

Afterword

I didn't hurry my flock back from the [afternoon] tea interval.... I'd noticed something called Whiskers in the program and I didn't want to be in at the death. This was a Thing I'd started while recovering from pneumonia, been too weak to finish, and had passed on to the London Circle to show that at least I'd tried. When I realised they were going to put it on just as it was, my only consolation was that people never listen to plays done over the PA system, when there are no actors visible to receive either applause or tomatoes. But when we did arrive, about half way through, I was astonished to find that they were not only listening, but laughing in some of the right places. I stood savouring this entirely new form of egoboo and realising I'd overlooked two things: the fact that audience reaction time is slower than that of readers, so that poor jokes go over well, and the fact that there are some very talented actors in the London Circle. The piece was done superbly well, especially by Bill Temple as Winston Churchill and by Bert Campbell as Bert Campbell, this last a particularly fine piece of type casting.

January 1954

The convention report in Astroneer (Summer 1953) suggests that the unfinished script was given an ad-lib punchline in the actual tape recording: "...the beard grows and grows, reaches Woolwich Arsenal, flows into the Thames and out into the Channel. The world is saved when Campbell invents a hair-restorer." [Ed.]

The Alien Arrives

(Plus American commentary by Don McKay)

Foreword

Here we present, for the vast majority of fans who could not attend the Supermancon, the play that was enacted by the Liverpool S-F Society. Those of you who were in attendance now have the opportunity for a second laugh.

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ANNOUNCER 1: This is the Light Programme and Overseas Service of the BBC. Here is a summary of the news. Communication has now been established with the visitors from Outer Space whose ships landed at various points in the United Kingdom and America early this morning. In a few moments we hope to bring you a special report from our commentator on the spot in Radio Newsreel. Meanwhile, here is a summary of the rest of the news.

Senator McCarthy was removed to a mental home late yesterday evening. Officials of the State Department say that through an error on the part of his filing clerks he investigated his own activities. Finding that all the evidence seemed to point to his being in the pay of the Communist Party, the Senator developed a form of schizophrenia, or split personality.

In the House of Commons today, the Secretary of State for War announced that owing to the necessity of releasing two divisions for service overseas, the British Army had resigned from Operation Fantast. Moving a vote of censure, the Leader of the Opposition asked if they did not realise the danger that Colonel Slater's organisation might go over to the Russians with results that could only be described as disastrous to the British paper and string industry.

And now here is the special report from Radio Newsreel on the visitors from Outer Space.

ANNOUNCER 2: As you all know, several mysterious craft, which experts identified as unidentified objects, landed at various points in Britain and America early yesterday morning. Having dropped an enormous quantity of

small metal objects onto some of our principal cities, the ships settled to the ground and remained motionless. Specimens of these metal objects were immediately rushed to Government Research Laboratories and were found to be metal scrolls covered with writings and drawings, the purport of which baffled the experts.

Attempts at communication with the aliens were delayed by disagreements as to which was the appropriate Government Department to deal with them. The Police pointed out that the aliens, as long as they stayed within their ships, would be regarded as ambassadors of a foreign power with diplomatic immunity and therefore not subject to British Law. This decision has been made known to the Foreign Office.

The Foreign Secretary, on the other hand, pointed out that they could only deal with Foreign States with which Britain had diplomatic relations, and since no one knew where the visitors came from, their government could not be recognised either de facto or de jure. Furthermore, the visitors were aliens who had entered the country without passports and should therefore be dealt with by the Aliens Registration Department of the Home Office.

A spokesman of the Home Office denied this, pointing out that they were concerned only with human immigrants and there was no reason to assume that the visitors were human; in fact there was good reason to think that they were not. In the course of the recent investigations into obscene and indecent literature, Home Office Inspectors had acquired considerable familiarity with other publications known as science fiction magazines. This was the only source of information available about visitors from Outer Space, and in the absence of any precedent, must be regarded as authoritative. According to these publications, visitors from Outer Space were almost always either insects of some sort or a species of intelligent vegetable. The matter had been referred to the Ministry of Agriculture.

After several Cabinet meetings it was agreed that each of the four Departments should send a team of experts to try to communicate with the aliens. We now bring you a recorded report from our on-the-spot commentator on the results of their efforts.

REPORTER 1: Well, here we are at Deansgate, Manchester, not 50 yards away from the Alien Spacecraft. The experts from four Government Departments arrived some hours ago, and have been working steadily ever since. The Chief Constable ordered a summons to be served on the aliens for obstructing the traffic. The Foreign Office have sent them a note. The Home

Office have written them a letter. The Ministry of Agriculture have delivered several hundredweight of forms for them to complete. However none of these overtures has met with any success. The Aliens continue to ignore all attempts to communicate with them. The only sign of activity is a revolving flexible antenna on the top of the ship. It appears to be some sort of detector.

Wait a minute! Something seems to be happening. There is a flurry among the crowd. A youth has broken through the police cordon and is running towards the spaceship. He waves one of the mysterious scrolls dropped by the aliens. Now he steps by the side of the ship and appears to read the scroll. He laughs and rubs his hands together. The antenna moves towards him. It stops just above his head. Now the youth produces a sheaf of paper from his pocket and thrusts it at the antenna. It is some sort of pamphlet or magazine; he seems to be turning over the pages and – the door of the spaceship is opening! It's half open now! I can't see anything inside yet. The youth is running towards the door. He disappears inside the spaceship. The door closes again.

Well! This is most extraordinary! Now we are back where we started. However, we'll be able to see the moment the door opens again. I wonder what is happening to that rash young man? A Police Inspector tells me that he has been identified as a member of a hitherto unknown religious sect known as "Completists"; some of whom have already caused trouble today. This afternoon the Police received orders to requisition all science-fiction magazines, many of which were in possession of Completists, and severe fighting broke out in some instances when attempts were made to confiscate their collections. They...

The door of the spaceship is opening again. It's fully open now, and I can see one of the aliens. He is stepping out of the ship. No! Look out! (SPLASH.) We lose a lot of visitors to Manchester that way. It was raining cats and dogs here today and he stepped into a poodle.

But here are two more of the aliens, and between them the youth who entered the ship a moment ago. They are quite human in form, but much taller and have noble sensitive faces. The most startling feature about them is the golden helmets on their heads, which have something like propellers on top. Yes, they are propellers. Instead of walking out of the airlock, they press a sort of switch and the propellers begin to whirl around lifting them into the air. They are floating in this direction, carrying the young man between them. They are landing by my side. One of them is taking my microphone-I-now-

hand-you-over-to...

ALIEN 1: Greetings from the Galactic Fan Federation, People of Earth! We come in peace. We have no plans for colonisation or conquest. We come to restore to the lost children of our race their Galactic heritage. We are not hideous monsters, insects or vegetables. We are, as this young man here guessed, science-fiction fans, as are all the leaders of our Galaxy. A moment's thought will show you that this must be so. As in your own world, the only people who believe in space flight are the lovers of science-fiction. Who but a science-fiction fan will be ready to volunteer for your first flight to the Moon? Thus, when space-flight becomes a reality, s-f fans will control it. And, in a civilisation based on space-flight, science-fiction fans will be the key men.

So it has been in our Galaxy for thousands of years. A whole Galaxy full of fans, all writing and publishing, feuding and organising, coming and going in fannish friendship. But let my colleague explain why we are here.

ALIEN 2: Many years ago a great space-ship, manned by Neo-fen and carrying a group of Big Name Fans to a Galactic Convention, crashed on an obscure planet. The drive could not be repaired. The sub-space radio was smashed. They were lost. With true fannish courage they tried to build their life anew on this savage world. Bravely they struggled with the hostile environment to preserve their fannish way of life. But the odds were too great. As time went on the carefully hoarded stocks of duplicating ink became exhausted. The duplicators themselves rusted and fell to pieces. The old Fannish traditions began to die out. The files of Sacred Fanzines decayed and were forgotten. Intermarriage took place with the brutish natives. After many thousands of years the great fannish culture had disappeared.

But no! Not completely. Preserved in the genes and chromosomes the fannish mind lives on, and every now and then comes to the surface in the form of a viable mutation known as a science-fiction fan. With subconscious racial memory he knows that he is different from the crass nonfans around him. His ancestral memory even leads him to an imitation of our helmets, in the form of what you call the helicopter beanie. Through ridicule and persecution he keeps alive the sacred flame handed down to him from his god-like ancestors. Knowing deep inside him that he is star begotten he lifts his eyes to the heavens, waiting for his brothers to rejoin him.

And that is why we are here. Until recently it was impossible for us to

track down these lost children of our race. Then one of our scientists invented the fanactivity detector you see on our ships, and the great search began. Sweeping through this sector of your Galaxy we detected fan-activity on your planet and landed, first dropping several thousand copies of our fanzines to make ourselves known to your fans. Now we offer them one of two choices. They can come with us and settle on one of our planets, or they can stay here. If they stay here they will still enjoy the benefits of Galactic Civilisation for we shall give you all our advanced technology. Atomic power, anti-gravity, interstellar drive, untearable stencils, all shall be yours. We make only one stipulation. This information will be given only to science-fiction fans. Nonfans have shown that they are not to be trusted with it. That is our final decision.

ANNOUNCER 1: That is the end of our special recording of Radio Newsreel. Since the beginning of this bulletin the following message has been received from Reuters correspondent in Moscow.

REPORTER 2: Speaking to a mass meeting in Red Square a few minutes ago, Mr Malenkov announced that the leaders of the Soviet Union had for years been keen science-fiction fans. The fan, Mr Malenkov said, is a true proletarian, reflecting the class struggle in his bitter hatred of the vile pro's and filthy capitalistic hucksters. The True Fans of the Bolshevik Party had long been in secret contact with other groups of active fans throughout the world. He instanced the New York Futurians, and alleged also, that a member of the party was one of the loudest voices in the councils of the London Circle.

Mr Malenkov went on to say that for many years the Soviet Government had been secretly subsidising needy faneditors all over the world. This was, he alleged, the reason why so many faneditors had so many subscribers who never seemed to write in and comment on the magazine. These silent subscribers were actually Soviet Agents. By the time the fanzine was conveyed to Russia, translated and passed around the Kremlin Fan Group it was too late to comment on it.

All this, Mr Malenkov claimed, was ample evidence that the Russian Government was fit to be trusted with the scientific secrets mentioned by the visitors from Outer Space. But if further proof was needed he called on the Soviet People in the names of the great BNF's Lenin and Stalin, to demonstrate by the quality of their fanac that they were more active fans than

anyone in the decadent capitalistic world. The Stalingrad Tractor Factory was being converted immediately to the manufacture of duplicators.

ANNOUNCER 1: Reports of the speed of BNF Malenkov, or No.1. Fan Face as he now wishes to be called, are still coming in. Some ten minutes ago the Prime Minister called an emergency meeting of the Cabinet to consider it, and a statement is expected at any moment.

From America today came the following news items; we give the recording in full and are indebted to the National Broadcasting Network for their permission to do so:

US ANNOUNCER: This is the N.B.N. nooz cast brought to you by the makers of SOMNAFAN! And this is your No. 1 reporter Herman Q. Finklebaum reading it. In his address to the Nation on the state of fandom today, the president stated, quote: "We of the Americas, tho' somewhat remote from the European theater of fanac, cannot lose sight of the fact that we are indissolubly bound by ties of blood and friendship to the peoples who daily face the threat of militaristic bureaucratic Soviet pseudo-fan fanaticism. Our friends have asked for deeds, not words, they have asked us for stencils... and stilos... and mimeographs.... So that they can carry the fight to the common enemy... and we pledge our word that they will get those stencils... and stilos... and mimeographs for which they have asked." Unquote.

FLLLLASH!

Which little blue-eyed blonde well-known hereabouts for her talented torso has placed an order with the Hoboken Tin Can and Battleship Building Corporation for a brass bra so that she can pose for Bergey??? And which well-known Senator from wayback Wisconsin created a scene when his henchmen told him that Beetlejuice (or Betelgeuse as it says here) could not be banned from the night sky simply because it is a red star????

May we remind you that this Program is brought to you by the makers of SOMNAFAN! The Wonder Drug! Do you have sleepless nights? Is your appetite going?... Has life lost its ZIP? Stop worrying, friend, just pump a syringe full of SOMNAFAN into your bedtime steak and... ZINGO!... eight hours of healthful, dreamless sleep will hit you like a sock full of sand. Remember! SOMNAFAN comes in three sizes: the 'one slug' or itzi bitzi snoozum size at fifty cents the kick, the Family or Blackjack pack at a dollar seventy-five, and the large state-size or mass hypnosis dose, delivery made only under Federal supervision, at eight hundred dollars the dose.

FLLLLASH!

Wise-cracking movie star Bob Faith, questioned on the lot of Paramount's mammoth new movie *Son of Klaatu*, answered the question, "Are your supra sola sensitivities negatived by the interpolative peregrinations of quasi-humanoid morons?" put to him by Federal agents from the Bureau of Un-Fannish Activities, with a snappy "Duh... Yuh." He begins a thirty year stretch up river next week for being found guilty of hypermoronic neo-sympathies.

FLLLLASH!

In a recent Gallup poll conducted in Van Vogt County, California, 99.5% of the population voted in favor of a magazine devoted entirely to Bergey Covers. When questioned later in the day, at a dinner given by the MacWabash American Scotch Whiskey Distilling Company, as to what was at the bottom of all this, the Governor was heard to mutter that as Bergey's bottoms were the best in the business, the question did not arise.... And that ends our nooz cast folks. Remember to tune in in three hours' time.... To keep a line on the March of Time.

ANNOUNCER 1: That ends the recording from America, but news has just come in that the President of the United States has flown to Bloomington, Illinois to confer with Mr Robert Tucker, and his plane will shortly take off again for Los Angeles where he will have an audience with Mr Forrest J Ackerman.

The following statement has just been issued from No.10. Downing Street. "Bearing in mind the possibility that the visitors from Outer Space may be deceived by the unscrupulous pretence of the so-called BNF Malenkov, and desiring to safeguard the interests of the British Commonwealth, Her Majesty's Government has tendered its resignation, with the suggestion that it be immediately replaced by a Government of British SF Fans."

It has just been announced from Buckingham Palace that Her Majesty has accepted the retiring Government's suggestion. The House of Lords and the House of Commons have been dissolved and replaced by the persons listed in Sir Vincent Clarke's *Directory of Anglofandom*. The active fans are to form the new House of Commons and the inactive ones the House of Lords. Some minutes ago the new Prime Minister left the Palace for Broadcasting House, after announcing to reporters that he believed a new era of peace, prosperity and tranquillity to be imminent, under the enlightened

and intelligent administration of science-fiction Fandom. He has now arrived at Broadcasting House from where he will speak to the nation. Ladies and Gentlemen, the Prime Minister, The Rt Hon. Sir Norman Wansborough!

Bzzz... beep... schhhhhh... zuzzzz... zurrp... chachacha...
WhOOOOOOOOO....

I must apologise for this breakdown in transmission. We are izzzzz investigating the trouble and will have it rectified as soon zzzz as possible. Meanwhile here is a record of “33 Variations on an Unknown Theme”....

ENGINEER: This is the chief Engineer at Droitwich. Communication with London has now broken down, but I assure everyone that there is no cause for alarm. Fighting broke out among the Aliens some ten minutes ago, and although most of their space-ships have now crashed in flames, the only damage appears to have been to telephone wires. Latest reports indicate that the Alien Fleet has now destroyed itself completely. Two of the last to crash fell near the station here and two survivors, one from each ship, are being brought to my office. Here they are now. I shall leave the microphones switched on.

[The Engineer addresses the Aliens:] “I know you are injured, but while you are waiting for the doctor perhaps you could tell us the reason for this sudden outbreak of fighting?”

ALIEN 1: “It’s only too simple – those swine want to hold the Convention on Venus next year!”

ALIEN 2: “What’s wrong with our planet? Do you want to have the Convention yourself every year?”

ALIEN 1: “Who wants to go to Venus? It’s always raining there, and you’re only a lot of bloody Venusians anyway! Bloody Venusians? I’ll teach you!”

ALIEN 2: “Put down that Bomb!”

WHAAAM!!!

1954

Bob Shaw and the Budgerigar

Bob Shaw is not a deeply religious person, confessing when pressed to being little more than what he calls an “enlightened Shavian”, but there is one belief which he holds with a religious fervour. It is that budgerigars cannot talk. It is not that he doesn’t believe budgerigars can talk – no, he holds it to be self-evident that they cannot. It is rather like the difference between an atheist and an agnostic. The latter is merely not convinced of the existence of God, whereas the atheist is firmly convinced of his non-existence. In just such a way Bob Shaw is firmly convinced that budgerigars cannot talk; not only does he hold this belief with an almost fanatical devotion, but he is prepared to crusade and undergo martyrdom on its behalf.

We all have our little foibles and it seemed unlikely that one as harmless as this could disrupt the happy unity of Irish Fandom. In fact we didn’t even know about this belief of Bob’s; somehow the subject had never arisen at our bi-weekly gatherings. But one night the Old Guard of Irish Fandom went to visit John Berry’s house....

We had been sitting chatting amicably for about twenty minutes when the Voice of Doom emitted a strangled squeak from the corner. We all looked round. There was a birdcage with a little bird in it. We mentally marked it “Noted” and were about to proceed with our conversation when we noticed John Berry had his hand raised.

“Wait!” he said. “It’s going to say something.”

The respectful silence was broken by Bob Shaw.

“Huh,” he said.

“What do you mean, huh?” said John Berry.

“Budgerigars cannot talk,” said Bob Shaw.

“Of course they can talk,” said John Berry. He went on, not realising the depth of the cleavage between his school of thought and Bob Shaw’s, “They can talk just as well as parrots.”

“Parrots cannot talk,” said Bob Shaw, “and neither can budgerigars.”

I knew then that there was going to be trouble. People who own budgerigars are quite as convinced that they can talk as Bob Shaw is that they can’t. Furthermore, the matter of personal pride is involved and more than counterweighs any altruistic devotion to truth.

“Our budgerigar can talk,” said John Berry.

“No budgerigars can talk,” said Bob. “Budgerigars cannot talk.”

“I have heard it,” said Diane Berry.

“People who own budgerigars always say that,” said Bob, “but their budgerigars never say anything.”

“I tell you our budgerigar can talk,” said Diane. “It can say lots of things as plain as plain.”

“People who have budgerigars,” explained Bob patiently, “like to think they can talk, but they are just deluding themselves.”

I tried desperately to change the subject, but it was too late. The fact that Bob Shaw was willing to insult his hostess before he had got his tea was in itself evidence of the depth of the emotions involved.

“Are you calling me a liar?” said Diane.

“No,” said Bob Shaw, “I realise you think your budgerigar can talk. You are suffering from a common delusion which afflicts people who own budgerigars.”

Diane disdained to answer him. Instead she went up to the cage and began to address the budgerigar. “Pretty budgy. Pretty budgy. Pretty budgy. Pretty budgy,” she said. We all crowded round the cage.

After a few minutes the bird emitted a few un-birdlike sounds.

“There!” said the Berrys triumphantly.

“There what?” said Bob. “It just made a noise. It didn’t say anything.”

“It said ‘Pretty budgy’ as plain as anything!”

“That was what you said,” said Bob. “The bird didn’t say anything. The power of speech is a prerogative of the human race, not to be usurped by any mere bird. The idea that budgerigars can talk is a superstitious myth.”

Diane flounced out to make the tea and after a short silence the rest of us tried desperately to talk of something else. John Berry seemed lost in meditation and Bob Shaw preserved a proud demeanour, even when he was served last with his tea.

We heard nothing more of the subject for several weeks, and I began to hope it had been forgotten. The only difference was that John Berry arrived later at our meetings and left earlier, and began to look pale and thin, as if he hadn’t been getting enough sleep. He also began to play what he called “restrained ghoddminton”... i.e. he inflicted only flesh wounds on himself.

Then one night he invited us to his house again. Diane opened the door and showed us into the living room. We were shocked at the change in her

appearance too – she was pale and tired-looking.

There was a small table in the middle of the room with a large object on it covered by a cloth. After a few moments John staggered in and locked the door behind him. He put the key in his pocket and went to the table. Then he pulled the cloth away. It was the budgerigar cage. As soon as the light struck it the bird straightened on its perch. It looked at John. He nodded.

“Once upon a time in the village of Prosaic in the Country of Mundane there lived a youth called Jophan,” said the budgerigar.

Startled, I looked at John. He motioned me to silence. The bird went on, “Now this youth was unhappy, because in all the length and breadth of Mundane there was no other person with whom he could talk as he would like...”

After it had come to the end of Chapter Two I opened my mouth to speak again, but once more John motioned me to silence. There was a fanatical gleam in his eye.

I thought after Chapter Seven that the bird was looking tired, but again John put his finger to his mouth. The bird went bravely on, John crouching over the cage making gestures of encouragement.

Towards the end of Chapter Nine the bird began to falter, but John redoubled his own efforts, mouthing the words silently at the cage.

After two hours we were nearing the end. Both John and the budgerigar were on the verge of collapse. It was a wonderful feat of endurance.

Finally the budgerigar gasped, “...And Jophan found that it was so.” It then flopped limply off its perch and tottered to the side of the cage. John opened a little package marked “Balkan Sobranie Birdseed” and poured the entire contents into and over the little trough.

Then we all turned and looked at Bob. He had gone white and his eyes were glazed. His gaze was fixed on some point in the middle distance.

“Well?” said John, feebly.

Bob did not seem to hear him.

“WELL?” said John, with his last reserves of energy.

Bob seemed to come to. “Well what?” he asked.

“The budgerigar,” said John, gritting his teeth and indicating the little bird, which now suspended its pecking. “It talked.”

“No,” said Bob mechanically. “Budgerigars cannot talk. Budgerigars cannot talk. Budgerigars...”

The budgerigar keeled slowly over on to its back and lay there, legs

motionless in the air. After a few moments Diane reverently replaced the cover. John got up and unlocked the door.

We have never been invited there again, but I understand the Berrys have now bought a goldfish.

June 1955

The Case of the Disappearing Fan

Hercule Poirot arranged his letters in a neat pile in front of him. Then he picked up the little jewelled paper-knife given to him by a grateful Butlers' Union and slit the first one open.

"Hastings, *mon vieux*," he said, "Have the goodness to regard this."

I picked up the letter. "Dear M. Poirot," it began, "I am in dreadful trouble, twenty years ago my uncle stole a ruby from the eye of a statue of John Wesley in the Methodist Mission Hall at Stoke Newington, and ever since then he has been troubled, by his guilt and by mysterious strangers lurking behind the rhododendrons. Last evening he was found beheaded in the front garden with six bullet-holes in his chest and a knife in his back. I suspect foul play. Come at once."

I tossed the letter back. "Nothing unusual in it that I can see," I said.

"*Zut alors*," said Poirot, "that is just *ze* trouble. Why can't I get some interesting mail?"

Before I could answer, the telephone rang. I have noticed that the phone frequently rings before I can answer it; people are so *impatiant*. Poirot seized it. "Poirot?" said a gruff voice which I recognised as that of Detective Inspector Japp, "Can you come to Hillingdon, Middlesex, right away? There is a case here on which I would like your advice. If I can solve it it will make a smashing instalment for my memoirs on TV."

"Very well," said Poirot, "I shall make the haste."

Arriving at Uxbridge Station, Poirot and I were met by Inspector Japp and driven in a police car to a semi-detached suburban villa in the neighbouring village of Hillingdon. "This crime," said Japp, as the car drove up to the door, "presents some unusual features. In the first place the body has not yet been found and in the second the time of death cannot be established."

"*Nom d'un chien!*" exclaimed Poirot, putting down the newspaper he had been reading.

"How many letters?" asked Japp interestedly. "How about Rover?"

"I was not doing the crossword," replied Poirot coldly, "I was expressing astonishment in my typical Gallic way. It is not my fault if Miss Christie doesn't know any French dirty words."

“I beg your pardon,” said Japp stiffly. “The crime was only discovered when the postman found it impossible to deliver letters to the house because the letterbox was obstructed and he had no answer to his knock. He reported the matter to the local police who forced open the door and found that the porch was some four feet deep in unopened mail.”

“Perhaps the occupant has merely gone away?” suggested Poirot.

“What makes you suspect violence?”

“The condition of the living-room,” replied Japp, throwing open the door.

Poirot recoiled in astonishment. The floor of the room was covered with a layer of what looked like gravel.

“We have had this substance analysed,” said Japp, “and the Forensic Laboratory reports that it consists of fine particles of wood, metal, cloth and glass. Spectroscopic analysis reveals that it is the remains of a three-piece suite in uncut moquette, a divan, two fireside chairs, an occasional table, three bookcases, 4532 books and magazines, a television set, a Gestetner 260, a 16mm movie projector, a radio gramophone, and various smaller items of domestic furniture, including 36 feet of barbed wire.”

Poirot was impressed. “*Incroyable!*” he exclaimed, “the poor fellow must have offered some resistance. Anything else unusual in the house? Some other little deviation from the normal which, though superficially irrelevant and of no importance, might have significance to a trained observer?”

“Only that trapdoor in the ceiling,” said Japp. “It leads to an unfurnished room above, the floor of which is sprinkled with little drops of blood and which has the window blocked up.”

“Nevertheless it may be important,” said Poirot. “Not even the utmost triviality should be overlooked.” He began to roam about the house, peering into every corner with a portable microscope. “Japp,” he said finally, “the mail. The unopened mail. What did you do with it?”

“In those bags,” said Japp, indicating a heap of bags in the scullery.

“I shall take them home with me,” said Poirot. “There is nothing more to be learned here. One must now exercise the little grey cells.”

Back at his flat, Poirot began methodically to read through the mail. Three days later he looked up. “The name of the victim,” he declared, “was a Monsieur Paul Enever, and the foul deed was committed between 9am and 2pm on Monday, 11th April, 1955.”

“Masterly,” I exclaimed in admiration. “How do you do it?” “Simple,” said Poirot. “The police are, how you say, ze fuggheads. Virtually every item of mail is addressed to Paul Enever, except a few to persons called Claude E. Boye and James L. Keeping, who must be regarded as prime suspects. As for the time of death, the earliest letter here is a gas bill posted in Uxbridge at 9am on the 11th of April, which must have been delivered by the afternoon post. We can assume from this enormous quantity of mail that the deceased got at least one item by every post, so he must have met his death between the first and second postal deliveries of the day.”

“Remarkable,” I said. “What now?”

Poirot handed me a piece of paper. I read it, but could make nothing of it. “It appears to be an account from a typewriter firm for replacing the fraction key with a number and dollar sign. What bearing can this have on the case?”

“Bah!” said Poirot. “No typewriter was found in the house, and there is no mention of one in the analyst’s report of the detritus found in the living room. Are we not entitled to assume that the murderer took it with him?”

“My God, Poirot,” I said, “It seems plausible. But how are we going to trace that typewriter?”

“Even that is not beyond the powers of the Great Poirot,” said the little man, pacing up and down the room excitedly. “The unfortunate victim seems to have become involved with a strange movement called science fiction fandom, and I suspect that the murderer was a member of this sinister international conspiracy. I propose to join it myself and track him down through his typewriter.” “My God, Poirot,” I cried, “do you realise what you may be letting yourself in for? Who can tell what will happen to you should you pursue this reckless course?”

“Nonsense,” said Poirot confidently, “Have the kindness to run down to the local Post Office and buy me twelve Postal Orders for 9d and one for 2/-. I shall start by subscribing to some of these ‘fanzines’!”

It was six weeks before Poirot sent for me again. I was horrified at the change that had come over him. His once neat dress was dishevelled, his hair was not properly combed, his moustache and beard were untrimmed, and on his head he was wearing a peculiarly shaped hat with a propellor on it. There was a strange light in his eyes and his fingers had turned black. The room was in most uncharacteristic disorder, and the tables and chairs were heaped with papers. I could only assume that he had been stricken by some dreadful

malady.

“My God, Poirot,” I exclaimed, “what has happened to you?” He apparently did not even hear me, but dashed across the room, brandishing a collection of mimeographed sheets.

“Hi, Hastings,” he shouted, “Seen the latest *Alpha*? I have an article in it. Not as good as I can do, but better than some of the crud the neos are churning out. I think I’ll try for *Hyphen* next. Did you see the last ish? Look.”

Numbed with shock I glanced mechanically at the page he indicated. It was completely incomprehensible. “What is this?” I cried. “Some code you are deciphering?”

“Why, that’s a fanzine,” he said. He showed me the other one. “I started by joining Belgian fandom, you know, and Jan showed me the ropes. Then I joined OMPA; I’m thinking of joining SAPS and FAPA next.”

“I don’t understand a word you’re saying,” I cried, “What about the murder?”

“The... murder?” said Poirot. “*Mon Dieu*, I remember.”

He buried his head in his hands.

“You were to track down the murderer by finding out who was using Enever’s typewriter – a new Olivetti Portable with elite type.”

“Yes, yes,” said Poirot, “it all comes back to me now. But,” he went on indignantly, “I haven’t time for that stuff now. Why, the OMPA deadline...”

“Poirot,” I said, “You promised Japp. Besides there is your duty to society. Are you going to let this fiend go unapprehended?” “You are right,” said Poirot humbly. “Enever was a true fan and his blood cries aloud to be revenged. Let’s get it over with.” He started to examine with a magnifying glass the typing in the magazines he was holding. Suddenly, he went white and the glass slipped from his nerveless fingers. He had fainted.

“Poirot!” I shouted. I rushed into the kitchen, filled a glass of water and threw it in his face. He moaned something incomprehensible that sounded like “zap gun” and slowly regained his senses. Then he fell back in his chair again, shuddering and whimpering. “No! No! Not Willis!”

I snatched up the magazine he had been looking at. It was called *Hyphen* and after a mere five minutes search I found that it was part-edited by a person called Walter Willis in Belfast. The type used in the editorial was obviously that of an Olivetti Portable with elite type. Poirot had now come round. “We shall have to drop the case,” he announced firmly.

“Why?” I shouted. “Who is this Willis that he should be above the law?”

I shall report this to Inspector Japp at once.”

“You don’t understand,” said Poirot, “Harris would never accept my article.”

The trial of Walter Alexander Willis for the murder of Paul Enever opened at the Old Bailey in the first week in August. The case for the prosecution lasted three days. They proved that Willis had been in the vicinity of Churchill Avenue on the morning of the 11th April, that Paul Enever had not been seen since then, and that his Olivetti portable had been found in Willis’s possession. The case against him seemed watertight, and the atmosphere was grim as the defending counsel rose.

“I admit everything the prosecution have stated,” he said. There was a startled murmur which was rapidly stilled as he went on, “I propose to put the prisoner in the witness-box.”

Willis was quickly sworn in and turned to face his counsel. “You admit that you called on Paul Enever on the forenoon of 10th of April last?” “I do,” said Willis. “There was no answer to my knock so I went in and opened the living room door.”

“Tell the court what you found.”

“In the middle of the room,” said Willis, “there was a luxurious divan on which lay three half-naked girls in abandoned postures. Around the divan were bowls of fruit, sweets and other delicacies, decanters of wines and spirits and phials of perfume. Also in the room, I noticed, were a radiogram, a television set, a movie projector, a Gestetner 260 and a portable typewriter. The walls were lined with books except where a log fire blazed in a big open fireplace.”

“Tell the court what happened then,” said his counsel.

“I went up stairs,” continued Willis, “still looking for Enever. I found him in what had been the back bedroom. He was lying on the floor on a roll of barbed wire, half-naked and shivering with cold, his body terribly emaciated and covered with scratches. There was no furniture in the room and the window was bricked up; the only light came through the door I had just opened.”

“‘My Ghod, Enever,’ I exclaimed. ‘What are you doing this to yourself for? I know you didn’t comment on the last *Hyphen*, but you don’t have to punish yourself like this.’

“‘Don’t be a fool, Willis,’ said Enever. ‘This is not any fannish nonsense, this is a sercon scientific experiment.’

“‘It is?’ I said. ‘On what?’

“‘Time Travel,’ said Enever.

“‘But time travel is impossible,’ I demurred.

“‘Nonsense,’ said Enever. ‘Aren’t there stories about it in *Authentic*?’

“‘True,’ I admitted. ‘And they don’t seem half as fantastic as the fanzine reviews.’

“‘Besides,’ pointed out Enever, ‘we all travel through time at the rate of one second per second. It’s just a matter of speeding up the rate.’

“‘How do you propose to do that?’ I asked curiously.

“‘Simple,’ said Enever. ‘Haven’t you noticed that when one is enjoying oneself the time passes quickly? Conversely, when one is miserable and bored, it passes very slowly. I call this the Law of Variable Time Flow. I have also discovered that it is possible to set up eddy currents in time by abrupt variation in rates, and this is my apparatus. Here in these wretched surroundings the time flow is very slow; downstairs it will be correspondingly fast, a sudden change from one to the other will set up a local stress in the time field which will propel me rapidly into the future. The transition has to be abrupt, hence this bolt here. He indicated, something by his side and I now noticed that he was lying on a trapdoor secured by a small bolt.’

“‘At the correct moment,’ continued Enever, ‘I shall pull this bolt and be precipitated into the room below, which contains every appurtenance of human pleasure. The psychological moment is that at which I have attained the lowest rate of time flow – when my boredom and misery are most acute. With your visit, Willis, I judge the moment to have arrived. Goodbye!’

“‘With these words he pulled the bolt from the socket and vanished from view. I could hear a soft thud as he landed on the divan below. When I had recovered from my astonishment I went over to the trapdoor and looked down. I withdrew hastily.’”

“‘Can you tell the court what you saw?’” asked counsel. The *News of the World* reporters craned forward.

“‘I would rather not,’ said Willis, “but it was rather like a London Circle party.’”

“‘We understand,’ said Counsel, shocked, “What did you do then?’”

“‘I went downstairs, waited a minute, and then knocked on the door of the room below. There was no answer, so I turned the handle and went in. The girls were still on the divan, but this time wearing only astonished

expressions. There was no sign of Enever. The girls turned to me questioningly. I satisfied them as best I could and then gave them the amount of their train fare to London and a letter of introduction to Ted Tubb. I understand they have never been seen again.”

“What else did you do?”

“I took the portable typewriter, as a souvenir of my dear friend. I felt it was the least I could do. Then I rang up a few friends who had been at a science fiction convention at Kettering until they were thrown out of the hotel and invited them down.”

“This explains the condition of the living room?” asked counsel keenly.

“Yes,” said Willis, “I’m afraid they were a little exuberant.”

“M’lud,” said counsel, “I will, if necessary, produce evidence from hotel keepers that the condition of the room was such as is normal after science fiction conventions.”

“That will not be necessary,” said the Lord Chief Justice, “I remember the last Judges’ convention.” He chuckled reminiscently.

“Thank you, M’lud,” said counsel. “I shall proceed with my case.” He produced a small magazine and showed it to the prisoner. “Have you seen this before?”

“Yes,” said Willis, “it was delivered to my house on the 9th June in the afternoon postal delivery.” Counsel flung the magazine down dramatically on the table before Him. “This,” he said, “is Exhibit A for the defence. It is a copy of *Orion 10!*”

An excited murmur went round the court.

“Yes,” went on counsel, “I will produce statements by alienists and literary critics that this magazine was edited by Paul Enever. Since it was published almost two months after the alleged crime, it is clear that Enever was alive after that date and that my client is innocent. I rest my case.”

The prosecuting counsel rose slowly to his feet. “I do not think,” he began contemptuously, “that we need waste the time of this court by discussing this ridiculous fantasy of time travel. However, to avoid all possible doubt, the police themselves – one detective sergeant and three women constables – carried out an experiment similar to that described and, of course, found no evidence to support the absurd theory. I will now deal with the rest of the defence’s flimsy case.” He addressed the prisoner with deceptive geniality. “I am right, Mr Willis,” he began, “in assuming that Mr Enever was renowned for the regularity of his publishing schedule?”

“Yes,” said Willis.

“In fact he took so much pride in it that he was a legend in this slipshod ‘fandom’ of yours.”

“Yes,” admitted Willis.

“And you yourself have received copies of *Orion* before the publishing date, a thing quite unheard of in fandom before?”

“Yes,” admitted Willis.

“Then!” thundered the prosecutor, “is it not possible, even likely, that Enever had this issue of *Orion*, and probably others, printed up months beforehand and had entrusted them to a reliable firm to mail for him lest he be struck down by some accident and unable to meet his publishing date himself?”

“It... it is possible,” muttered Willis.

“Gentlemen of the jury,” said the prosecutor, “I can produce evidence that the deceased was so devoted to his publishing schedule that he was quite likely to resort to such an insurance against accident.”

The Judge’s summing-up was fair, but told heavily against Willis. The jury was out only half an hour, and when they returned they avoided looking at the prisoner – an ominous sign, even taking into account the prisoner’s personal appearance.

“Gentlemen of the Jury,” asked the Clerk. “Have you considered your verdict?”

“Yes,” said the foreman. “We find the prisoner guilty—”

He was interrupted by a commotion in the body of the Court. A small plump figure was seen making his way through the crowd towards the defence counsel. A hurried consultation took place and then the counsel rose to his feet. “M’Lud,” he said, “I should like to introduce fresh evidence which will entirely change the complexion of the case.”

The Judge nodded and Hercule Poirot went into the witness box. “First,” he said, “I should like to put in evidence this statement by Mr Forrest J Ackerman of California – Exhibit B for the defence. The witness affirms on oath that Paul Enever was known to him in 1935, that he then disappeared from his ken until 1952, when he reappeared in fandom unchanged in youth and vigour. It has already been mentioned that Mr Enever looked at least seventeen years younger than he was supposed to be. The only conclusion we can come to is *that this is not the first time that Mr Enever has travelled forward in time*. Mr Ackerman also testifies that there are numerous similar

unexplained disappearances and appearances in fandom, instancing in particular the case of one Robert Tucker who actually ‘died’ twice and returned to life. Nearer home there are the cases of Harry Turner, Mike Rosenblum, Nigel Lindsay and others. Evidence can also be produced by persons who attended the 1954 ‘Supermancon’ Convention and claim they ‘lost’ a day there, that is that they travelled forward one day in time.

“It is clear that some form of time travel is common among science fiction fans, partly because of their mental familiarity with the concept, but mainly because their high sensitivity makes time rate fluctuations greater for them. Neither of these attributes are possessed by nonfans, which explains why the police experiments were unsuccessful. Only with sensitive fannish minds do the effects of the Law of Variable Time-Flow become great enough to be noticeable. From my investigations it seems that time travel among fans takes two forms – either sudden jumps in time, as in the case of Mr Enever and others, or acceleration of the normal time flow in the case of other fans. Those active fans, for instance, who complain that time is too short for all they want to do are quite correct; they are travelling through time so fast that it is foreshortened for them and everything they do takes longer than they expect. That is why so many fan projects are not completed, and so many fan editors miss their deadlines.

“It was this last great problem that Paul Enever solved in his second experiment. I put in evidence Exhibit C for the defence – *Orion 11!*”

A gasp went round the court as Poirot produced a shimmering thing which glowed like a rainbow, and threw it gently on the table before him. Luminescent and beautiful, it glowed in the drab court like some strange flower.

“It should be obvious from the very appearance of this magazine, even without looking at the clarity and beauty of the text,” went on Poirot, “that it could not be produced by twentieth century techniques. This is a fanzine of the future. But if further proof is needed, note that it contains quotations from letters of comment on the previous issue, which have not been out of the custody of the police, since they were delivered to Mr Enever’s house. It is clear that Mr Enever has solved the problems that have afflicted fans since time immemorial. He has journeyed into the future to a period when he can produce his ideal fanzine in a few hours, reading the readers’ comments in police archives or museums, and using future technology to send his mailings back through time to the pillar boxes of today. I may also say that since this is

only the 7th of the month, Mr Enever has obviously published this issue a day early to vindicate his comrade Willis. Knowing that he will be reading the report of the trial, in a dusty newspaper in some museum, I say to him in admiration and gratitude – Thank you, Paul Enever.”

In a few hectic moments the jury brought in an acquittal. Poirot came over to Willis.

“What can I ever do to repay you?” asked Willis, still unable to believe his good fortune.

“Well,” said Poirot diffidently, “I have an article here I thought might do for *Hyphen*.”

“A masterpiece,” said Willis, glancing at it hurriedly.

“Thank you,” said Poirot. “Would you like to look at *Orion 11*?”

Willis took the beautiful thing and leafed through it reverently. “I don’t know why he put my name to that article,” he said, “I never wrote anything like that. But apart from that it’s a wonderful job. Look at those three dimensional photographs of femfans.”

“You don’t have to be so envious,” said Poirot. “With the money you get from the Sunday papers you should be able to buy an electric typer, a Gestetner 260, a car and another trip to America.”

“What?” exclaimed Willis.

“Of course,” said Poirot, “and –” he broke off in alarm. Willis had vanished.

Poirot’s article, however, was in the iridescent *Hyphen* that arrived next morning.

September 1955

Mike Hammer at the Clevention

Most of the great discoveries of history seem obvious once they are made. For instance it seems incredible now, doesn't it, how publishers used to behave. How year after year they went on in their own little ruts – science fiction magazines printing science fiction stories, western magazines printing westerns, detective magazines printing detective stories. How could they have been so blind, so lacking in imagination? And yet it needed an intellect of the stature of Howard Browne's to point out their error. He showed that science fiction magazines could increase their circulation merely by printing detective stories. Now that the true path has been pointed out, other publishers are bound to follow it. We shall have *Fantastic Sexy Detective Westerns*, *Sexy Detective Western Fantasy*, *Western Detective Fantasy Sex Stories*, *Detective Sexy Western Fantasies* and dozens of similar magazines, all exactly alike and all appealing to the great majority instead of just a snobbish clique. This is True Democracy. This is the Century of the Common Man.

But what are we fans doing to further this great movement? Are we to lag behind the prozines? I say to you, NO! We must make our fanzines appeal to a wider, thicker audience. Even if for a start we only slant them at the detective story fans, what a difference it could make to us. Think of it, a million fans! What lovely big conventions we could have! As a small and humble contribution to this great work, I now offer the first example of the new-type fanfiction:

I screeched my Caddy to a halt in front of the Manger and parked beside a fire hydrant. Stepping on the face of an old woman who hadn't gotten out of the way quick enough, I strolled into the hotel. As I came into the lobby I saw a bunch of queer-looking whacks standing around talking, but they didn't pay any attention to me. I shot a few of them in the legs to teach them manners and went up to the desk.

The clerk was talking on one of the phones. I cuffed him on the side of the head with my Luger to attract his attention. "Wake up, Mac," I said, "and

listen while I'm talking. Where's the boss?" He picked himself up and started looking through a book for the room number. "You should keep numbers in your head," I snapped. "See what you can do with these." I put a couple of .303s in the fleshy part of his skull and strolled to the elevator.

The operator was quite a dish. I gave her the eye as I stepped into the elevator. She took me up on it. There was a big crowd waiting by the time we got to the second floor. I blasted my way through them and tried the first door along the corridor. It was open, but I blasted the lock off it anyway to let them know I was coming in. I never enter a strange room without blasting the lock; and yet people say I got no manners.

There was nobody in the room. I was sore. I don't feel comfortable in a room with no body in it. I put a couple of slugs through the clothes closet on the off chance there might be somebody there, and went on into the bathroom. There was an old guy in the bath with a cigar in his mouth. A card left on the floor said his name was Evans. I drew a bead on him with my Luger. "Say your prayers, Pop," I said. He couldn't see me properly without his glasses but he went white. The cigar nearly dropped out of his mouth. "Are you Laney?" he shivered. "No," I said. "I'm Hammer." "Thank Ghod," he said.

I was sore. "What mob does this Laney work with?" I snapped. "He ain't no tougher than me. Why I'd shoot you as soon as look at you." I took a good look at his face. "Sooner," I added.

"A man called Burbee in L.A.," said the man.

"I ain't afraid of no West Coast hoods," I sneered. "I'm looking for the boss. Where is he?"

He didn't answer quick enough so I walked up to the bath and kicked his teeth in.

"Oh you beast," said the old man, scrabbling about in the bath. "Now I'll never find them."

"You shouldn't have left them on the edge of the bath," I said. I reached into the water and picked them up.

"Where's the boss?" I asked again, gnashing his teeth at him.

"I don't know," he pleaded, "I just checked in. Try the next floor."

I felt mean. I didn't want to just shoot him, I wanted to do something real mean.

I shot the cigar out of his mouth.

It was the same elevator girl. I didn't have to say anything. The elevator

went up half a floor and stopped. We didn't.

There was the usual crowd waiting for the elevator when I got out, some of them wearing bandages. I finished them off and tried a door along the corridor. The door wasn't locked, but there was a guy and a dame on the bed.

"Necking?" I leered.

"No," said the guy, "We were talking about FAPA."

They were, too. The bed was covered with papers with writing and stuff on them. I don't understand these fans.

"Out!" I told him.

He started to make for the door, but I figured the window was quicker. I threw him through it. The girl screamed. I picked her up and threw her into the corner. Her blouse came away in my hand. I picked her up again and threw her into another corner. Her skirt got torn off. Pretty soon I was out of corners, but it didn't matter. She got to her feet and stood there blushing, all over. "Never mind, sister," I leered at her, "I've got you covered with my Luger."

But she wasn't looking at me any more; she was looking at herself in the mirror. Suddenly she lets out a peep.

"That's it!" she hollers. "What an idea! I'm bound to win the Fancy Dress prize with *this* costume. I'll show that Karen Anderson!"

I figured she was going to show everybody. I backed out of the room. I don't want to have nothing to do with no crazy dames. I didn't even shoot her in the belly.

I went back to the elevator. It was the same girl again. She'd gotten hold of a mattress from somewhere and laid it on the floor of the elevator. I don't know what dames are coming to these days.

There was a lot of yammering coming from one of the rooms on the fourth floor, so I went in and stood in the corner watching. There was a bunch of guys shouting and talking and working at some kind of a machine. After a while, one of them noticed me.

"Don't mind me," I said, "I only lurk here. What are you doing?"

"A one shot," he says.

"Jeeze," I replied, "all that fuss over one shot. Why I've shot 97 people today already and I'd hardly any breakfast." I sneered at them. "Who's this guy here?"

"That's Redd Boggs," he said.

"A Commie, huh?" I said, and shot him. "Me and McCarthy know how

to handle that scum.”

“He wasn’t a communist,” shouted some fresh guy. I don’t like these fellow-travellers. Dirty cryptos I call them.

“Can he prove it?” I asked, smiling to myself.

“How can he? He’s dead!”

“So are you,” I laughed, and shot him too. I got a wonderful sense of humour.

The others didn’t laugh so I shot a few of them to help them see the joke. “Where’s the boss?” I asked.

“Try the next floor,” says one of them. “The elevator’s just down the corridor.”

“I know it,” I said. I took the stairs.

There was a party going on in one of the rooms and the boss was sitting on the bed with a bottle and a couple of dames. He goes under some phoney name like Robert Bloch or Edgar A. Poe in these places, so I whispers in his ear that I want to see him private. He takes his bottle into the room next door. There was nobody there but some people playing poker.

“What’s the trouble, Mike?” he inquired.

“Look, Mr. Spillane,” I said, “I’m tired of the things you make me do, like shooting people alla time. Pretty soon I’ll be running out of people and then where’ll we be. Could you not figure out some way of using people over again or sump’in?”

He thought for a bit. “You know, Mike,” he says, “I think you’ve got something there. Maybe the detective story fans are getting tired of it too. Tell you what, we’ll follow Howard Browne’s example and try to make the detective story appeal to s-f fans.”

He holds out his hand. “Give me your Luger,” he says. I hand him the gat. “Anything else?” he asks. I give him the guns from the holsters in my armpits, on my hips and legs, my sub-machine gun, my bazooka, my knives, the hand grenades in my pockets, my little automatics disguised as a fountain pen and a cigarette lighter, the miniature atom bombs I carried concealed in my hollow heels, and my brass knucks, blackjack and catapult. I was glad to get rid of them. That cigarette lighter was spoiling the cut of my suit.

He puts them all away carefully and takes out a funny-looking gadget. “What’s that?” I said. “This,” he said, “is a zap-gun. You can still shoot it at people and it’ll make a lovely noise, but it won’t use the people up, unless of course they’re very old.”

“Gee, thanks Mr. Spil– Bloch!” I grinned. I pointed the zap-gun at one of the people playing poker and squeezed the trigger. It went zap! zap! It was swell. The guy playing poker looked up and grinned and took a gun out of his pocket and went zap! zap! at me. It felt wonderful. I rushed out into the corridor and went zap! at all the people I met and they went zap! right back at me.

Gee, I thought, this is more fun than anything. When I used to shoot people with my Luger they didn’t do anything afterwards and I couldn’t shoot them again, at least not very much. Now I can shoot them as often as I want and they like me for doing it, which they never did before. Gee, it’s great to be a science fiction fan.

Zap! zap! zap! I went along the corridor, looking for someone to introduce me to Peter Vorzimer.

written 1954; 1958

Background Ted White

The foregoing piece was written by Walt Willis in 1954, for Harlan Ellison’s *Dimensions*. At the Clevention itself, in 1955, Harlan was touting the piece as he collected subs to his zine. Unfortunately, *Dimensions* never saw another issue, although one entire issue was stencilled – *Dimensions* #16, of song and legend – and ready to go. When Harlan was forced to give up the zine, he offered it to several other then active fans, among them Ron Smith (of *Inside*) and Charles Lee Riddle (of *Peon*). Both rifled the *Dimensions* material files, printing pieces and art from it in their own zines without ever making any attempt to fulfil *Dimensions*’ obligations to its subscribers (the real reason Harlan wanted to turn the zine over rather than simply kill it). Harlan then offered the zine to George Spencer and myself, and I collected a part of it at the 1956 Nycon II. George grew disenchanted with the thing, and subsequently only made use of one or two items in his own *Outre*. In 1957, John Magnus recovered the rest of the file from Riddle (including about 60% of the stencils for *Dimensions* #16, the covers for which had already been used by Lee and Larry Shaw), and the subscription list. I combined *Dimensions* with my own *Stellar*, with issue #13, and began using the better material. Over 300 copies of *Stellars* #13 and #14 were printed and sent to

Dimensions subscribers as well as *Stellar*'s readership. There was little response, and *Stellar* c/w *Dimensions* #15 was never completed, although about half-printed. Instead, I began a letter-substitute, *Gafia*, which metamorphosed into *Stellar* when Redd Boggs complained about the use of his publishing title. Picking up where I'd left off, I published a series of 2, 4, and 6 page weekly *Stellar*'s, beginning with #15. Each used a bit of material from the scheduled large-size #15, and *Stellar* #18 featured "Mike Hammer at the Clevention". *Stellar* #18 had a very small circulation – about thirty copies – since it was mailed with John Magnus's *Rumble Newsletter*. For that reason, the much-delayed-in-appearance story actually reached very few. The story is vintage Willis, just post-6th Fandom, and the illos, by Naaman, are also of the same period, when he was appearing in top zines like *Dimensions* and *Psychotic*. Although I used the original illos, the stencils have been retyped from the *Dimensions* stencils – Harlan never had a very clean-looking typer – and are presented here as I cut them in 1957.

(The above is presented in the interests of fanhistory and complete timebinding.) – Ted White

The zap-gun or water pistol was highly popular at UK conventions of the early 1950s, though in his report on the 1955 Eastercon at Kettering (where squirting water at an expensive film projection screen had caused a fuss) Walt Willis declared that its time had passed: "...this incident could have ruined the Convention, and it seems to be the general opinion among the leaders of fannish thought that the zapgun should be outlawed. It had its uses in the dry-as-dust British Convention of a few years back, but we all know how to enjoy ourselves now without mechanical aids to informality. Many of the actifans left them behind in 1954 and hardly any BNFs toted them at Kettering. The trend will probably continue." [Ed.]

The Goon – Ireland’s Pekinese Drummond

To most of you the Goon must seem a majestic superhuman figure, appearing dramatically out of the blue whenever the forces of darkness and confusion are about to strike and giving his all to help. “Ghod,” gasp many at their first sight of him; “The Devil,” exclaim others incredulously. But no: all appearances to the contrary, the Goon *is* human. It is my purpose in this brief article to give you some of the background to the Goon legend, some inner light on the powerful figure who has left such a deep impression on Oblique House.

Normally, the Goon masquerades as a simple police constable... or, after working hours, as an even simpler neo-fan, content with such uncomplicated diversions as playing with my bricks. Until, that is, the call comes for his services – usually, as it happens, from me. Then he is transformed, like Clark Kent.* I should explain first that the Goon, noble dedicated character that he is, spurns financial reward for his work. All that the gallant fellow will accept is some work of an artistic nature pertaining to the fair sex. Once the details are settled, and the fee exhibited, the Goon becomes transfigured. His eyes gleam, his breathing deepens, his stature grows until he towers almost to normal height, and his moustaches stiffen and begin to vibrate faster and faster until eventually they bear him upwards and out of sight into the sky on his appointed mission.

* Now known as Clark Catford.

It would be of course impossible for one man to accomplish all the exploits that are related to the Goon. I am now able to reveal that, like Captain Future, he has the help of four loyal and devoted companions – Joey the Budgerigar, Kid Colin the Killer, his lady-love Diane and Cedric the Female Impersonator.

Joey, besides dictating most of the Goon’s articles, is the principal source of intelligence in the Goon organisation; he is the secret of the Goon’s uncanny knowledge of one’s most secret actions. For example, some time ago I had a builder in to see the hole in the attic wall. He poked his head into the jagged cavern curiously. “Rats?” he asked, swinging absently at what

looked like a large diseased housefly which had just fluttered in. “No,” I said, “Just one.” At that moment there was a knock downstairs. I hastily escorted the builder out of the back door and opened the front door to the Goon. He strode up to the attic, pulled out his hornrimmed 3D glasses which he uses for looking at the centre pages of Paris-Hollywood, and started examining the floor. Standing up again quickly, he screamed and clutched his face. Then, disentangling his moustache from his shoelaces, he spoke. “My powers of deduction tell me,” he announced, “that you have been recently visited by a middle-aged man with red hair and a tweed suit who looked at the hole in the wall that I made playing ghoodminton.”

“Ghad, Goon,” I marvelled, “How do you do it?”

“Simple,” he said, “I wear hobnail boots.”

“No, no” I said, “the deduction.”

He smirked mysteriously. “A little bird told me.”

It was some time before I realised that this was literally true. He has trained Joey to be a sort of peeping tomtit and sends him into places where he cannot go himself. Recently he sent the little bird, hung with pannier bags full of birdseed for refuelling in mid air, on a proving flight as far as Marilyn Monroe’s bedroom in Hollywood, and spent hours studying the aerial reconnaissance pictures it took with its miniature camera.

Colin the Killer Kid, sometimes known as Callous Colin, is the Goon’s strong-arm man. In spite of his youth – he is actually rumoured to be the Goon’s son – he is the terror of all who cross his path. Naturally, iron discipline prevails in the Goon’s semi-detached bijou fortress, hidden deep in the primaeval jungle, peopled only by lost tribes of postmen, sanitary inspectors, etc, but this cannot protect the Goon himself when Colin runs amok. An intelligent parent, the Goon seldom attempts to strike his children except in self defence. The only hoods that might dare to challenge Colin are the Turner boys, the dreaded Carlton Ave. mob.

The woman behind the Goon is of course his beautiful and talented wife Diane, a glamorous adventuress who uses her feminine wiles in many subtle and delicate intrigues involving stolen jewels, State secrets or copies of *Hyphen*. She also of course writes the rest of his articles and all his letters (hence the famous quotation “Great is Diane of the Effusions”), and when her man returns home from one of his dangerous and deadly missions, binds up his wounds and sweeps my plaster out of his shoes.

For activities too sordid and dangerous for a woman, such as consorting

with Eric Needham, the Goon enlists the services of the mysterious Cedric. A master of disguise, Cedric has been the Goon's secret weapon in his long struggle against Eric Needham. I am now able to reveal that all the femme fans visited by Eric Needham on his recent lecher tour of the British Isles have really been Cedric in disguise. Equipped with a special motor bike with auxiliary rockets designed by BIS member James White, Cedric has outdistanced Needham on his way to each victim, warned the innocent girl, and taken her place in time to meet Needham again. The Goon hopes by this incessant series of frustrations to break Needham's nerve and subvert him from his alliance with the terrorist organisation known as the Romiley Fan Dancers.

This undercover organisation is but a thread in a world-wide net of intrigue spread by the Goon's arch enemy, the sinister Greek criminal mastermind known as Antigoon, or, in his own language, Antigone. This evil figure plots against all that is fine and good in fandom. But against all these machinations the Goon and his trusty band fight bravely on, careless of danger. The Goon himself does not know the meaning of the word timidity. (He knows the meaning of very few four-syllable words.) Undaunted he fights on, with his back to the wall... and, in at least one case half way through it.

April 1956

More about John Berry's fanzine persona as bungling private eye Goon Bleary, head of the Goon Defective Agency, can be found in the TAFF ebook library collection The Goon Omnibus by Berry himself; there are also a few Goon tales in Slow Pint Glass by Bob Shaw. [Ed.]

Way of Life

The Psychiatrist handed back the bundle of fanzines. “Remarkable,” he said. “Remarkable.”

“You have read them all?” asked the Fan.

“Every word,” affirmed the Psychiatrist.

“And do you agree with the Russell Hypothesis?” asked the fan eagerly.

“On the whole, yes,” said the Psychiatrist. He got up from his desk and paced the room thoughtfully. “The Russell hypothesis,” he went on, “as expressed in *Hyphen* 10, was that fanning is a form of sexual perversion which might be defined as ‘deviation of aim’. That appears to me to be substantially correct. In more technical terms, it is a form of fetishism, or substitution. But what distinguishes it from all known forms of fetishism –” A gleam of enthusiasm lit his countenance. “– such as concentration on secondary sexual characteristics or inanimate objects such as shoes or clothes, is that here the fetishism is directed towards an abstraction. It is therefore an entirely new form of perversion. I have prepared some notes on it for my inaugural address to the Psychiatric Congress next month, and I would be most grateful if you could give me permission to use some of these ‘fan biographies’ as sample case histories.”

“Certainly,” said the Fan. “Perhaps you could let me know the gist of your address?”

“By all means,” said the Psychiatrist. “In fact I owe you at least that much for bringing to my attention this interesting and completely new field of research. I begin my address by describing the nature of ‘fanac’ and the relationship of the average fan to fandom as a whole. I point out that this relationship is psychologically a sexual one, in that fandom supplies a complete intellectual substitution for the physical sexual relationship. Take, for example,” he said, warming to his subject, “the neofan, or virgin. He learns about fandom from hints in magazines or from furtive conversations among his school-fellows. Nervously, he makes his first amorous overtures... a letter to a prozine, a guarded request for a copy of a fanzine. His desire for closer contact is heightened by this tentative loveplay. His courtship becomes more intimate and strenuous until he can contain his passion no longer. He Goes All The Way. He publishes a fanzine.”

“You regard this as the equivalent of the sex act?” asked the Fan.

“Of course,” said the Psychiatrist. “By publishing a fanzine he, as it were, inserts a portion of himself into the body of fandom, procuring thereby a sense of gratification and discharge of the tension which has been building up inside him. The period of preparation of the fanzine... soliciting contributions, preparing stencils, the rhythmic manipulation of the mimeograph... these constitute his period of tumescence. The phase of detumescence includes the final collation of the fanzine, the reading of the first finished copy, and culminates in the dispatch of the mailing.”

“Itself a symbolically suggestive act,” offered the Fan.

“Quite so,” agreed the Psychiatrist. “The mailing slot... I also drew attention here to the prevalence of the conventional phallic spaceship on covers and to the significance of the various methods of mailing... in open envelopes, in ‘clasp’ envelopes, in wrappers, rolled up, and... er... unclothed. These last types offer a particularly fascinating avenue of speculation – the difference between the carefree or exhibitionistic fanned who sends out his fanzine unfolded with just one securing staple, and the inhibited, fear and guilt-ridden multiple folder and stapler.”

“Then the actual act of mailing is the climax?” said the Fan.

“Yes,” said the Psychiatrist. “It is the final irrevocable step, the culmination of the fan’s act of love towards fandom. Obviously it will be accompanied by a sensation of discharge of vital forces, of relief of tension. This is followed by a feeling of lassitude which, if the energy expended on the fanzine has been excessive, may amount to the trauma known as ‘gafia’. The duration of this phase depends primarily on how satisfactory the relationship between the fan and fandom has been for both parties. In a well-adjusted relationship fandom readily responds to the fanned’s act of love by overtures of its own, in the form of the titillation of egoboo; this leads normally to the restimulation of the fan’s energies and thus to another act. If however the fan has been clumsy or inept, fandom becomes frigid and unresponsive. This in turn may induce frustration in the fan, leading eventually to impotence and sterility.”

“The same result may be produced by excessive effort on the part of the fanned,” commented the Fan.

“Quite,” agreed the Psychiatrist. “He may ‘burn himself out’. There are of course many such difficulties in the way of a satisfactory mutual adjustment between the fan and fandom. But on the other hand the rewards of

a full fan life are correspondingly great, comprising as they do not only the pleasures of intercourse but the joys of parenthood.”

“You mean,” said the Fan, “The relationship between the fan and his fanzine?”

“Yes,” said the Psychiatrist. “It is quite clear from the fanzines you leant me that the attitude of a normal fan towards criticism of his fanzine can be compared in Nature only to that of a lioness defending her cubs. Not only will the fan go without the necessities of life to provide for his fanzine, he will attack viciously any enemy that approaches it. In serious cases this excessive love of his fanzine can lead to a kind of auto-eroticism which one might term ‘self-defence’, in which the fan’s natural love towards fandom is twisted and turned inwards to his own fanzine exclusively. It may involve him succumbing to actual hallucinations about his fanzine, such as the well-known ‘Delusion of Legibility’. He may go to such lengths to preserve his illusions as to send his fanzines only to persons who he knows will praise it. This practice should however not be confused with what one may classify as group marriages, such as FAPA and OMPA and similar semi-incestuous relationships; though these too may lead to evil effects eventually through inbreeding.”

“Your conclusion, then, is that fanac is a form of sex substitution?” asked the Fan.

“Definitely,” said the Psychiatrist. “One might call it a sublimation, if the nature of it were not, as I have made clear, so quasi-sexual in character. Since, however, it is not in any way criminal or anti-social I hesitate to classify it as a perversion. Yes, on the whole I think ‘substitution’ is the correct term. I would venture to conclude that fans will normally have low power sex drives on the physical plane.”

“I thought you might come to that conclusion,” said the Fan, “and I took the liberty of bringing you a further batch of fanzines.” He handed them over.

The Psychiatrist took them doubtfully. “What is the difference between this lot and the first one?” he asked.

“These,” said the Fan, “contain convention reports.”

•

Next day the Fan again called on the Psychiatrist. He found him muttering at his desk, scribbling furiously on scraps of paper.

“I take it you have read the second lot of fanzines,” said the Fan.

“Yes,” said the Psychiatrist ruefully. “They have certainly upset my

theories. I cannot understand it. Here is a sexual perversion which appears not at all to detract from the subject's normal libido. In fact," he added, looking at one of the convention reports again, "quite the reverse."

"If I may make a suggestion," said the Fan.

"By all means," said the Psychiatrist. "Please do. I must confess I am rather at a loss."

"Mankind," said the Fan, "is motivated by two main drives – self-preservation and the preservation of the species. Both are allied and interdependent, since an animal must be alive to perpetuate his kind."

"Granted," said the Psychiatrist.

"Mankind is a social animal," went on the Fan, "and the most important part of his environment, especially now that civilization has largely conquered the forces of Nature, is his fellow men. The ability to get along with people is therefore the principle survival characteristic of civilized man."

"Adjustment of, or to, environment," muttered the Psychiatrist. "Yes."

"Fanac," continued the Fan, "offers, I suggest, a unique and efficient training and exercise in this ability, a field in which the effect of any particular aspect of one's behavior is more clearly and rapidly perceived than in the more complex and less candid world of mundane relationships.

Fandom is, essentially, a correspondence course in getting along with people, with yearly *viva voce* examinations. It is therefore, like sex, an expression of a basic survival drive; towards communication and intercourse."

"Your hypothesis is, then," said the Psychiatrist, "that fanac is not a substitute for sex, but a complementary and allied activity?"

"Exactly," said the Fan. "I might also add that fanac helps not only in the understanding of one's fellow men, but in that of oneself. Being a medium of frank self-expression, and mutual criticism, it offers immense potentialities for curing mental maladjustments of various kinds. For instance..."

•

Next month the Psychiatrist delivered his address. His commendation of fandom as a means of treating mild personality disorders such as introversion, inferiority and superiority complexes, paranoiac personality, etc., was widely reported in the Press and caused a major sensation in medical circles. Questions were asked in the House. Two months later the Ministry of Health announced the official recognition of fanac as a

therapeutic measure in suitable cases, and it was included in the National Health Service. Typewriters, duplicators, stencils and paper were supplied free by stationers' shops on production of a medical prescription. The Post Office delivered fanzines free of charge. Chairs of fanac were established at some of the more progressive universities. Finally, at the beginning of the following year, the Government announced that hotels had been taken over in all the major cities as permanent convention sites.

Unfortunately, their luxury was enjoyed only by neofen. The Fan who started it all found to his chagrin that he and his friends still had to pay for their own publishing supplies and conventions. The doctors they went to refused to certify that they needed fanac on medical grounds; obviously, they were in fandom only for fun.

The Fan's noble attempt had, however, one successful aspect. It solved fandom's recruitment problem for all time....

December 1956

A Modest Proposal

“Order!” said Moskowitz.

The room fell silent, except for a slight rustling as several of those present replaced the fuses on their hearing aids.

Moskowitz nodded to Korshak, who rose and fixed the gathering with a glassy stare. “This Extraordinary Meeting of Elder Fans” he said, “has been called by the Policy Committee of the Secret League of Old BNFs. To those of you visitors from abroad who are not already members I should explain that the League was founded to enable us members of the Old Guard to keep in touch with current fandom without the indignity of actually having to publish or write to fanzines. The method we adopted was to choose two of our members to undertake those unpleasant chores on our behalf. The short straws were drawn by Tucker and Enever. To the remainder of us these two circulate every quarter a report on current fandom. Armed with these intelligence reports we were able to intervene at conventions, easily outmanoeuvre those modern simpletons, and assume our proper place at the centre of affairs. Recently, however, the situation has become difficult.”

He pressed a button on the table before him and a bell could be heard ringing distantly in the bar. Shortly Tucker entered and walked to the speakers’ table. Putting down his glass he began: “The trouble is simply that we can’t keep up with modern fandom, it’s too confusing. This present trend started as far back as 1951, when Lee Hoffman deceived me and the rest of fandom. Since then it’s going from bad to worse. In the last two years some fifty fans, starting with Multog, Raeburn, Edwards and Joan Carr, have been found to be imaginary, others have been alleged to be imaginary and turned out to be real. And that’s not counting fans who change their names and pop up again under new ones, and femfans getting married. But even that wouldn’t be so bad if it wasn’t for all these fen who keep appearing and disappearing all over. There are hordes of them, virtually indistinguishable, and they keep springing up all over the place. Often the first you hear about one is that he’s about to retire from fandom. I tell you, we can’t follow it all ourselves, still less explain it to you. It’s enough to drive me to drink... if I couldn’t still walk.” He picked up his glass again and left the room.

Korshak rose again and the buzzing subsided. “Well, there’s the

situation. Obviously something has to be done if we are to preserve our rightful place in fandom without actual effort. Now, it seemed to your committee that this present South Gate Convention is the ideal opportunity for a new and radical approach to all the age-old problems of fandom. Having had ten years to make their plans, every single fan in the world is here at this convention. All the questions which have been inconclusively debated in fanzines for years can now be settled once and for all by a simple vote. To this end we have arranged to put all the issues that have ever divided fandom on the agenda for this morning's Business Session."

There were excited murmurs and a rustling of beards, instantly quelled as Korshak held up his hand. "By now," he went on, "the convention will have finally settled the exact status of Yngvi, and the culpability in the Matter of Courtney's Boat. They should have proceeded to the motion sponsored by this committee for dealing with the neofan problem. Our special corps of wily fan politicians, led by Dave Kyle, will railroad through our simple, tidy, and effective solution. With the political experience and intriguing ability of these Machiavellian veterans of countless smoke-filled rooms there is no doubt at all that it will be accepted by the convention. I am awaiting word from Kyle at any moment of our success."

"But what is the solution?" asked Carnell.

"Basically, the plan is this," said Korshak "Since neofans are in effect interchangeable units and indistinguishable from one another, we propose to deal with them as such. As soon as a new fan writes to a fanzine he will be visited by a posse of Old Fans and branded on the forehead with a code number. This code number will indicate the neofan's geographical location, age group, sex, interests – bheer, sports cars, women, jazz, men, photography, guns, hi-fi, stamps, science fiction etc – and intended apa. (There'll be much less trouble with people jumping on and off waiting lists if it means another session with the branding iron.) He would have to use this code number in all his fanac instead of his real name."

"That seems pretty drastic," said Bill Temple.

"Perhaps," said Korshak, "but think of the advantages. It would not only put a stop to all these hoaxes but it would make things easier for everyone in the ordinary course of fanac. Say you get a letter from TE2BJF; you know right away that this is a Texas teenager who likes jazz and bheer, and you can answer him without bothering to work out which one it is, if indeed there is more than one. Fanac should at once be reduced to manageable proportions.

Relieved from worry, the ordinary BNF, as well as our agents, would be able to indulge once more in carefree easy fanac. Finally, think of the money Convention Committees would save in identity badges!”

“Is not this branding idea rather cruel?” quavered gentle old George Charters.

“Nonsense!” rejoined Korshak. “Everyone knows neofans have no feelings. Look at the way they behave to one another. Personally, I’d much rather be branded quickly and neatly than be forced to drink a bottle of haircream. Besides, brutal initiation rites are natural to teenagers and they’ll be able to look forward to the Ceremony of Recognition which will be a marvellous incentive for their fanac. It will be like this; a BNF will begin to notice that some letters and fanzines from TE2BJF are subtly different from others. He compares notes with other BNFs in due course. There is no doubt about it, signs of originality are appearing. Eventually the lordly ones are unanimous, one of the TE2BJF class is ready. A group of local BNFs seek him out and break the good news. In a simple but touching ceremony the neofan, breathless with joy, kneels to receive the accolade from the symbolic gold mimeo crank and be invested with the beanie of True Individual Fandom. Then he is borne away amid scenes of wild rejoicing to have his brand removed by plastic surgery by Doc Barrett. Henceforth he is no longer merely a member of the Class TE2BJF but may proudly use his own name. News of the Award is –”

Korshak broke off at the sound of running feet in the corridor. Dave Kyle burst into the room and stood panting for breath.

“Ah, Dave,” beamed Korshak, peering short-sightedly, “did the convention accept our idea all right?”

“Yes,” gasped Kyle. “But some neofan got up and pointed out how hard it was for them to tell one of us old BNFs from another –”

“Bolt the door!” screamed Eshbach, quick to see the danger.

“No use,” groaned Kyle. “They’ve got Harmon with them.” The sound of trampling feet was heard in the corridor.

“They’ve stolen E.E. Evans’ cigar,” groaned Kyle.

Korshak was white. “You mean –”

“Yes!” screamed Kyle. “They’ve *lit* it!”

Winter 1956-1957

The old-time fan and author E. Everett Evans was fond of cigars

and is shown holding one in at least two contemporary photos; see also the Evans/cigar reference in [Mike Hammer at the Clevention](#) above. [Ed.]

Fendetta

Last Christmas we were all invited to spend an evening with the Goon at his private residence. It's only about a mile from Oblique House so the others all came here first so I could show them the way. They had all been there before, of course, but I should explain that the Goon has cunningly taken up residence in a suburb with a street pattern as complicated as the plots of his stories, a maze impenetrable to anyone not armed with a secret chart and compass. The pavements are littered with the skeletons of enemies of the Goon – bill collectors, process servers, etc. – who have perished miserably from exposure. I should also make it clear that the Great Man lives very democratically; there is nothing about the house or its surroundings to indicate that anyone extraordinary lives there. In fact the Goon has cleverly contrived it so that his garden somehow conveys the impression that no one lives there at all.

However I eventually found my way to the mysterious semi-detached villa from which the tentacles of the Goon organisation slither all over the world. I pushed open the gate and let the others file past as I tried to shut it again. By the time I had found the other hinge the Goon had opened the door, and I followed the others into the darkened living room. After his appearance on the BBC's programme *Saturday Night Out*, the Goon had bought a television set of his own, the prices of them having dropped considerably about that time. We sat down and watched to see what the resources of the BBC had conjured up for our enjoyment.

Unfortunately, I had seen the film before, in the thirties. I wouldn't say it was the worst film I had ever seen, but I do remember that half way through the second reel the Manager had come round handing out free razors. It didn't seem to me to have improved much since then and while the fens were of course far too civilised to slash the seats of the Berry chesterfield suite, they were accustomed to the excitement and violence of ghoominton on a fan night; they were getting restive. I wondered if I might suggest that the TV be turned off.

.And then, as my eyes became accustomed to the dimness, I noticed that there had been changes made since my last visit. The TV set was surrounded by a small barbed wire entanglement, with a length of heavy duty flex

connected to it and a sign: DANGER 250 VOLTS. Following the flex, I found it terminated in a glass-fronted box screwed to the wall with another notice. TV SWITCH. BREAK GLASS IN CASE OF EMERGENCY. PENALTY FOR IMPROPER USE INFLAMMATION OF THE MUCOUS MEMBRANE.

“Goon,” I said, “somehow I get the impression that you want the television kept on.”

“That’s right,” said the Goon, “I’m studying the market.”

“You’re hoping to infiltrate the cinematograph industry?” I said, startled.

“No,” said the Goon, “just to break into films. As a matter of fact I’ve already done it. I got an advance from a big movie producer just the other day.”

“You did?” I exclaimed. “Could I see it?”

“Sure,” said the Goon, starting to consult his filing system. He eventually found the document in the “Pending” file under the sofa and handed it to me. I read it carefully. It appeared to be a one dollar subscription to *Retribution* from a fan called Richard Warner.

“Warner,” I said, “the name is vaguely familiar.”

“Tch tch,” said the Goon. “I’m surprised at you, Walt. Of course you couldn’t be expected to have my vast knowledge of the film industry but this fellow Warner is a big time movie producer, along with his brother.”

“Are you sure it’s the same one?” I asked humbly.

“Of course,” said the Goon, “didn’t you notice he lives in America?”

“Pretty conclusive, eh?” I said.

“Yes,” said the Goon. “I sent him copies of all the Goon stories yet published and I’m expecting any day now to get a cable from Hollywood asking me to play the lead. I expect you noticed that in all my recent stories I’ve been writing parts suitable for Marilyn Monroe?”

“Well, the best of luck,” I said resignedly. “Give my best wishes to Rick and Perry and everyone out there if you can spare the time. But don’t bank on anything too much. Those big time movie producers are unpredictable.”

“Don’t worry,” said the Goon. “I won’t let them put anything over on me.”

Nothing more happened for some time, except that the Goon put GB labels on his motor-assisted pedal cycle and began to go to the films three times a week. In fact, I had forgotten all about the conversation until he rang

me up at the office yesterday.

“Walt,” he said, “could you borrow your father-in-law’s car and help me carry up some stuff from town this evening?”

“Goon,” I said sternly, “I seem to remember an article by you in *Camber* about my driving. It was highly derogatory.”

“Gosh, thanks,” said the Goon, “I thought it was pretty good myself. Six o’clock this evening, then, at the Shankill Road Dye Works.”

Curious, I borrowed the car and met the Goon as arranged. He was waiting on the pavement outside the Dye Works with two enormous carboys of some dark liquid, a grim and vicious look on his face. He motioned brusquely at the carboys and we manhandled them into the boot of the car and set off for his home.

“What’s that stuff for?” I asked, changing into top gear carefully. The last time I had changed gear in the Goon’s presence it had lasted him five thousand words.

“It’s for a campaign in the cause of justice,” said the Goon darkly. “You remember I sent Warner copies of all the Goon stories? Well, I took Diane to the pictures last night to show her what they were like before I took over, and guess what?” His moustache stiffened with indignation and a car behind braked abruptly and skidded into a lamp-post, thinking we were going to turn left. “What?” I said.

“They’ve stolen *This Goon for Hire*,” throbbed the Goon. “They’ve changed the title a bit and put Alan Ladd in the name part and made a hideous travesty of the plot, and they didn’t even mention me in the credits. I tell you, I was furious. If I hadn’t paid for the seats I wouldn’t have been able to sit through the whole programme. I complained to the manager, but he wouldn’t even give me my jam jars back. So I’m going to strike at the Warner Brothers direct.”

“How” I asked fearfully.

“With my trusty zap,” gritted the Goon. “I have had the barrel specially machined to emit a jet in the form of the words UNFAIR TO THE GOON. I am going to spend the next year visiting all the cinemas showing Warner Brothers films.”

“But Goon,” I expostulated desperately, “that film was made long before you wrote your story. That’s where I got the title from.”

“Nonsense,” said the Goon firmly, “I know you wouldn’t fob me off with a second hand title, Walt. You’re just trying to protect your Los Angeles

friends. I don't blame you, but I am determined on revenge."

So there it is. I did my best to argue him out of it, but I don't know if I've succeeded. The Goon is very single-minded. Anyhow, I beg the Worldcon Programme Committee not to book any Warner Brothers films. Those screens are expensive, and I happen to know that that zapgun jet is in *Cinemascope*.

March 1957

The Only Way

with Madeleine Willis

“You’re sure they’re all right?” asked Madeleine, shovelling the pile of uneaten coffee kisses into a crate supplied by Canadian Pacific Railways.

“Yes, of course,” said George. “Well up to your old standards. No, it’s definitely not your cooking, Madeleine.”

“It must be really serious,” said James. “We’ll have to try something even more stronger in the way of inducements. But what’s a more powerful stimulus than food?”

“I know,” said George. “We’ll have the next meeting at my house in Bangor, in the room overlooking Pickie Bathing Pool, and we’ll tell him James is bringing his telescope.”

“You know, George, this place of yours is getting untidy with all those buckets of money,” said Madeleine. “Why don’t you keep them under the bed?”

“I used to,” said George, “but I’m a bit absent minded sometimes and the bank were quite nasty about it. Hey Walt, any sign of him yet?”

“Him? Oh, you mean John,” said Walt, swivelling the telescope round. “No, nobody on the road. He doesn’t know what he’s missing. James, I wish you’d get a terrestrial lens for this instrument of yours. All those girls upside down are giving me a stiff neck.”

“That’s a new twist,” said Madeleine. “You’re suffering from Peeping Ptomaine poisoning, that’s what it is. But give over now, this is serious. It’s the first defection in the ten years of Irish Fandom and we’ll have to do something about it. Maybe these crude enticements just offend his sensitive fannish soul. Let’s try something more subtle, some sort of delicate intimation that we care.”

The following Thursday evening the quietude of Campbell Park Avenue was shattered by the clump of several hundred pairs of hobnailed boots as the Harland and Wolff Male Voice Choir marched from the direction of Upper Newtownards Road, led by George on a horse left over from Lee Hoffman and wearing his full cowboy set. The procession drew up outside No 31 and,

at a signal given by George firing his silver-plated cap pistol, launched into a spirited rendition of “Will ye no come back again”. Towards the end of the fourteenth verse Madeleine, accompanied by an excited crowd of small boys, pushed a bunch of rosemary through the letterbox of the Berry residence.

“Madeleine!” called Diane through the letterbox, spitting out a few fronds, “I’m afraid it’s no good. He’s up there in the boxroom typing furiously, and I doubt if he can even hear you above the noise of the baked bean tins. I pushed Q a note under his door telling him you were here, but it came back unopened with a scrawl to the effect that he’d got enough material for the next RET and I was to send it to Arthur.”

Madeleine shook her head sadly at George, who fired his pistol again. Eventually silence spread to the fringes of the choir. “All right boys,” shouted George, “You can go back to work now. I’ll credit this on your time cards as riveting, as usual.”

“Trite as a rivet,” muttered Walt.

“I tell you this is serious,” expostulated Madeleine as they moved away. “We will have to try something desperate next.”

Behind them the curtains of the boxroom parted and the face of John Berry peered through, a sneer contorting his noble features. “Try what they like,” he hissed, – the strain of hissing a sentence without a sibilant in it making his moustache crack like a whip. The breeze fluttered the crepe hung round a manuscript impaled to the wall on a knife driven into the masonry with maniacal force.

Beside it there fluttered in sympathetic agony the pictures of the rest of Irish Fandom, their faces turned to the wall. With a muttered reference to the suffering of catfish the great fan writer returned to his solitary labours.

“As I see it,” said George, “the main thing is to get John to Oblique House under some pretext or other. Then with all the magic of the place, with all its aura of happy fanning, John is bound to break down and tell us what’s wrong. The trouble is that away from the atmosphere of this house he is a policeman, with all the coldness and proud reserve of a member of the Force.”

“A policeman,” mused James. “Now there’s an idea. If a crime were committed here John would have to call in the line of duty as a fingerprint expert.”

“I could report the Monroe Calendar stolen,” suggested Walt hopefully. “Then there’d be a double inducement.”

“No,” said George. “Petty larceny wouldn’t be important enough for

them to send the leading fingerprint expert in the country. It would have to be a major crime. The major crime. ”

“You mean –” Madeleine gasped.

“Yes,” said George grimly. “Murder.”

There was a long silence as they examined the implications.

“We’ll need to get a corpse,” said James at last, flatly.

“I’m sure Terry Jeeves would be happy to donate the services of the rest of Sheffield Fandom,” said Walt.

“No,” said Madeleine. “I’m not having Peter Reaney in my house alive, dead, or in his usual condition. What would the neighbours think?”

“We might come to some arrangement with Eric Bentcliffe or Sandy Sanderson?” suggested George.

“No,” said Walt. “They wouldn’t bother with fingerprints then.”

There was another long silence.

“I’ve got it!” shouted James. “Steve Schultheis!”

Hurriedly the group drafted an airmail special delivery letter to Steve explaining the situation and appealing to him as a friend of Irish Fandom and GDA operative. Three days later the letter arrived in Cleveland. Urged by his double loyalty, Steve hesitated not an instant and within an hour was on a plane for Shannon Airport. A hired car brought him straight to Oblique House. After some hours of renewing old acquaintance Steve retired to bed with a sleeping draught and rapidly assumed the condition remarked on by James White in his London Worldcon Report. Walt telephoned a doctor and the police.

“Yes?” barked the Chief of Police impatiently.

The Commissioner quavered. “It’s this Upper Newtownards Road case,” he said. “Ah yes,” said the Chief. “Odd business that. American citizen found dead in bed, fully clothed. Apparently suffocated. Five suspects. Usual procedure I take it. What’s the difficulty?”

“Disciplinary trouble,” said the Commissioner nervously.

“What the devil do you mean?” roared the Chief.

“We promised the American Embassy to put our best fingerprint expert on the job,” blurted the Commissioner, “but he... er, refuses to go. He has some crazy story about knowing the victim isn’t dead at all, from some weird magazine nobody ever heard of.”

“The man *is* dead, I suppose?” asked the Chief, showing the intuition which had put him at the head of the Police Force.

“Oh yes,” said the Commissioner. “No doubt about that – we have certificates by three doctors and as a further check I had the body re-examined yesterday by a specialist in catatonic states. We didn’t need an exhumation, – the suspect Willis informs us that the deceased belonged to some obscure American sect called Ghuism, the tenets of which prohibit any interference with the body. It is to be left on the roof to be devoured by vultures, like in that Hindu cult, and Willis has put it in his attic. It’s his problem.”

“Seems clear enough,” said the Chief grimly. “Send in Berry.”

A few minutes later Constable John Berry was standing before his Chief, a look of mingled pride and anguish on his manly countenance. In a few curt words his superior set out the situation as he saw it. He concluded, “What have you to say, Berry?”

“I tried to explain about Schultheis,” said John, “but of course nobody will believe me.”

“I should think not,” said the Chief patiently. “Furthermore, even if what you say were true, it is no reason for you to disobey orders. You were instructed merely to proceed to the scene of the crime and take fingerprints.”

“I know,” said John quietly, “but I made a solemn vow never to set foot in that house again when they rejected – For private reasons.”

“What did you say?” asked the Chief keenly.

“Private reasons,” repeated John firmly. “I have nothing to add.”

“You know what this means?”

John Berry made no reply, but one side of his moustache quivered, fluttering the curtains.

Next evening the sensational development of the dismissal of the detective assigned to the Belfast murder case attracted worldwide comment, and the town was invaded by further hordes of American reporters and cameramen. Ex-Constable Berry remained closeted in his boxroom, refusing to make any statement, and the radio commentators had to be satisfied with transmitting the rattle of his baked bean tins to American radio listeners on a coast to coast hook-up. Meanwhile newsreel photographers covered the removal in police tenders of items of his uniform from the ghoddminton room at Oblique House. There, Irish Fandom conferred behind locked doors.

“This is terrible,” moaned Walt. “I never dreamt his obstinacy would go so far. What *can* be behind it?”

“It’s no use wondering about that now,” groaned James. “The problem is

how to get him reinstated in the Police and repair the later wrong we have done him – at least we know what *that* is.”

They all sat in silence with their remorseful thoughts. Unnoticed, George Charters crept from the room.

There was an earsplitting roar from outside. “My Ghod, what’s that?” shouted Walt, leaping to the window. There, in the middle of a horde of excited reporters, was George. He was talking earnestly into a battery of microphones. “Quick, turn on the wireless,” cried Madeleine. As they waited for the set to warm up they saw George being led away by the police.

“...this sensational news,” said the AFN announcer. “As you heard, Charters revealed that he was forced into his confession by the masterly detective work of the dismissed Constable Berry, who had been working in secret and had engineered his own dismissal from the Northern Ireland police in a selfless resolve that any possible failure in his plans should not endanger the reputation of his force or the international prestige of his country. A statement about the reinstatement of the master sleuth is expected momentarily from police headquarters and speculation is rife as to what other honour will be conferred on the hero of the hour. Meanwhile...”

The heavy steel door of the condemned cell in Crumlin Road Gaol dragged shut behind the visitors, and George looked up. There was perhaps a little more gray in his grizzled locks, but his eyes twinkled as merrily as ever.

“Oh George,” sobbed Madeleine, handing over the bag of coffee kisses. “Why did you do it?”

“It was the only way,” said George simply. “Besides, as John has pointed out so often, I can’t have long to go anyway, and I may as well do something for Irish Fandom.”

“But you stencilled *The Enchanted Duplicator*,” cried Walt.

“Yes,” said George proudly, “and I understood its message. This is the Trufan Way.”

The simple nobility of his demeanour left them with nothing more to say. They felt awed, as if in the presence of one who had already passed to a higher plane of fanac, and after a few brief words of friendship they withdrew. George settled once again to the Max Brand book he had found in the prison library.

Outside the evening shadows lengthened round the sombre hulk of the old prison and the brooding darkness began to soften its harsh outlines. As the last glimmers of light waned in the western sky a silent figure in a shabby

raincoat approached the side door of the prison. A few words with the warder and he was ushered up deferentially to the condemned cell.

George dropped the Max Brand book, omitting in his emotion to mark his place.

“John,” he cried.

John Berry was for a while unable to speak. His moustache drooped pathetically towards the floor as he fought for Words.

“George,” he said at last. “George... you... you can’t do it. We were friends once, before... I can’t let you...”

“There is nothing you can do, John,” said George serenely, “Except one thing. Steve Schultheis lies in the Oblique House attic in a mild hypnotic trance, from which he can be awakened only by the key words, spoken as only you can speak them.”

He was still speaking quietly to John when the Head Warder entered. “Compliments of the Governor,” he said to George, “and is there anything special you’d like for breakfast in the morning?”

From under the world-famous moustache there came a noise strangely like a muffled sob, and District Inspector Sir John Berry O.B.E. crept from the cell.

In the gloom of the Oblique House attic the body of Steve Schultheis lay in state on the ghoominton table, a pale ray of light from the street lamp outside silhouetting his sensitive fannish features, majestic in repose. Far down below the deathly silence was broken as a door opened slowly and halting footsteps mounted the stairs. The attic door opened and at last, at long last, John Berry entered once again to the very heart of Oblique House. His proud features contorted by a wild mixture of emotions, he slowly came near to the body of his Operative and firm friend of Irish Fandom. With a last effort of will he steadied himself by the ghoominton table and uttered the fateful words, words which had not been heard in that attic room since the happier carefree days of long ago. Fraught with significance, the syllables seemed to hang in the air.

“Suffering catfish!”

Stephen Schultheis stirred, and awoke.

“John,” he said, quietly and happily. “You came. I knew you would.”

“Yes, Steve,” said John. “I came. It was hard for me, but I couldn’t see both of you give up your lives for Irish Fandom, however great the wrong they did me –” And then at last the proud steel that was John Berry softened

and he broke down and sobbed.

“Tell me about it,” said Steve gently. “Tell me, John.”

And after all that time John Berry finally told his secret. At no one can tell what cost to himself, but thankfully.

“Yes,” said Steve at length. “Yes, I think I can understand. It was a terrible shock for you. But John, you must realise, editors must do that sort of thing sometimes. Don’t you realise... You know, it might have been better if Arthur had not kept some things from you. Don’t you realise that he rejects material submitted for *Retribution* sometimes?”

John averted his head.

“You must face these things,” urged Steve. “Life is like that. Look now, everything is sorted out. George will be reprieved because there was no murder and your reinstatement and promotion will stand because everyone thought there was. About... the other thing... how would it be if Walt sent a manuscript to you and you rejected it?”

John’s eyes brightened as if a new horizon had opened up before him.

“Right,” said Steve cheerfully. “I’ll get Walt and Madeleine to write up this affair for *Ret* and you can reject it, and they’ll have to send it to Chuck. Imagine, a *Ret* reject in *Hyphen*.”

John smiled.

“Of course,” said Steve, and a worried look began to creep over his face, “I’ll have to figure out what to do about Walt and Madeleine then...”

But John wasn’t listening. He had flung himself across the table and seized a square of cardboard.

“Ghoodminton anyone?” he shouted, hitting the wall a terrible blow.

October 1958

The Raybin Story

MEYER PRODUCTIONS: DEPARTMENTAL MEMO

Scenario to Production: 1 November 1961

Reference your request for new science fiction subjects. Zoology Research reports all possible monsters now exhausted. I suggest we open new field on lines of backstage and circus subjects – viz, science fiction itself. Literary Research reports this evidently rivals monsters for horror – three Readers removed to hospital in hysterics before finishing Moskowitz’s *Immortal Storm*. Sample rough treatment of subject *The Raybin Story* below. Sequel *Raybin Sues Again* could follow.

OPENING SHOT, present-day Manhattan from the air. DISSOLVE to Fifth Avenue ticker-tape procession. CUT to close-up of Raybin (Spencer Tracy) in Cadillac convertible acknowledging cheers. PAN to banners hung from windows reading WE LIKE GEORGE, GEORGE NIMS RAYBIN IS THE NAME, ALL THE WAY WITH GEORGE.

DISSOLVE back to air view of Manhattan.

NARRATOR: “Today, George Nims Raybin is the idol of the Empire State. But thirty years ago (background music of ‘Yankee Doodle’ slows to ‘Buddy Can You Spare a Dime’) only misery walked these streets.”

FADE OUT view of Manhattan. FADE IN shot of rainswept alley in Greenwich Village with row of garbage cans.

NARRATOR: “Depression. Hunger.”

CUT to close-up of rat dragging away a scrap of gristle.

NARRATOR: “Among those starving in the city tonight there are none more desperate (a human hand tears the gristle from the rat’s mouth) than the science fiction writers.”

A RAGGED FIGURE (Henry Fonda) stumbles with the scrap of gristle to a group of similar down-and-outs huddled in a doorway. He divides the gristle among them with a razor blade. They eat avidly. Fonda makes little slashing movements with the razor blade, staring into subspace. “If I could only get at him!” The others growl in agreement. One of them puts out his hand to see if the rain has stopped. They drift back to the garbage cans and continue foraging.

LOUD PIZZICATO CHORD. CLOSE-UP of Fonda holding an aluminium cigar capsule. “One of his!” The biggest of the wretches (William Bendix) upends the garbage can and they scabble through the contents. Fonda holds up a torn envelope and reads the address. He points. They dash off. Fonda retraces his steps, picks up the razor blade from the doorway, and runs after them.

DISSOLVE to Hugo Gernsback’s penthouse suite. Gernsback (Frank Edward Arnold with a toupee) is smoking a cigar and making footnotes on galley proofs. He looks up as angry shouts are heard outside. The door is broken open and the science fiction writers spill through.

GERNSBACK stands up and faces them, holding high in his right hand a copy of *Amazing Quarterly*. “STOP!” he says commandingly. They pause, undecided.

GERNSBACK, solemnly: “This is science fiction. I created it. Would you destroy it? Kill me and you kill science fiction, the hope of the world...” As Gernsback continues with his inspirational speech, to background of Bliss’s “March of Reconstruction”, cut in shots of jet airliners, Canaveral rocket take-offs (successful), 1962 Buicks, Nike interceptions, Bufferin commercials, atomic bombs, home perms, television sets, the Milky Way, ball point pens and the nebula in Andromeda. As music climaxes cut back to Gernsback penthouse.

GERNSBACK: “Go home, men, and *write!*”

THE WRITERS, now holding themselves straight and with expressions of exaltation on their faces, start to file out. Fonda hesitates and comes back. He moves close to Gernsback.

FONDA: “Mr. Gernsback sir, I had to hock my typewriter when you didn’t pay me for that novelette. Could you let me have something to help out?”

GERNSBACK pats him on the shoulder affectionately, his eyes moist with sympathy. “Sure, son,” he says, handing him a pencil.

DISSOLVE to publishing house. CUT to close-ups of magazines being wrapped for consignment to newsstands.

NARRATOR: “Undaunted by adversity, the Great Gernsback struggles on...”

SHOTS of *Amazing* month by month, speeding up until only the year is held long enough to be read. HOLD the September 1937 issue in close-up. It begins to smoulder round the edges. Camera tracks back to reveal the

magazine burning in the fireplace of an Ozark Mountain hut. A father and son are glaring at one another while a white-haired mother weeps in the corner. The son bends to retrieve the magazine from the fire.

NARRATOR: "...supported only by a small band of dedicated visionaries, the fans."

CLOSE-UP of sensitive fannish face of Claude Degler (Elvis Presley), the firelight showing the stars in his eyes. Father (Walter Huston) strikes Degler, who stalks into the night clutching the charred copy of *Amazing*.

NARRATOR: "Persecuted by bigotry and ignorance, they fight on..."

SEQUENCES illustrating nationwide campaign by Degler, forming fan clubs in various cities, and singing theme song, "Got a Cosmic Mind". Intersperse shots of train-wheels with names of various cities superimposed, mimeographs turning, etc.

NARRATOR: "...until they can fight no more."

SEQUENCE to be shot on location in Battle Creek, Michigan, in March, showing exhausted Degler being thrown out by Al Ashley, wandering around and collapsing in gutter. Themesong continues but fainter and in minor key. CLOSE-UP of Degler's hand unclenching and releasing charred fragment of cover of September 1937 *Amazing*. Camera follows it floating down gutter in melted snow and disappearing down drain. Degler murmurs, "Rosebud..."

NARRATOR: "But the battle is being won!"

CUT back to publishing house. Rapid shots of *Amazing* month by month, interspersed now with *Astoundings*, *Startlings*, *Thrilling Wonders*, *Dynamics*, *Marvels*, etc. Rhythm of cutting increases in speed with tempo of background music (suggest "Troll Dance" from *Peer Gynt*). For visual technique see cream separator sequence in Eisenstein's *The General Line*. Simultaneously the close-ups become larger and larger. HOLD the January 1942 *Astounding* filling the screen. MUSIC STOPS abruptly and with the sound of an explosion the cover is ripped open by a bullet, revealing the bombardment of Pearl Harbor.

NARRATOR: "Science fiction goes to war!"

SHOTS of scientists, technicians, etc., holding up test-tubes and twiddling rheostats, with copies of *Astounding* in their pockets or on bench. BACKGROUND: the Presley number in march time. SEQUENCE of Campbell and Cartmill (Bendix and Fonda) showing a copy of *Astounding* to FBI men and later explaining the atomic bomb to Fermi and Oppenheimer, who nod respectfully. DISSOLVE to shot of mushroom cloud, which blows

slowly away to reveal rack of newspapers headlining PEACE. PAN to rest of newsstand, showing rows of new science fiction magazines.

NARRATOR: "Science fiction has come into its own. But success brings new responsibilities, and of these the most difficult is the annual science fiction convention." SEQUENCE showing convention disturbances, with years superimposed. Milling crowds, tear gas, baton charges, lines of refugees, machine guns. Suggest use of appropriate newsreel shots of Stavisky riots in Paris, East Berlin uprising, U.S. labour disputes. Shots under 1939 to show Dave Kyle (Richard Widmark) being ejected from the New York convention hall.

NARRATOR: "Where is the man who will bring the rule of law to science fiction fandom?"

SEQUENCE showing the young Raybin (Mickey Rooney II) studying law books, graduating, making his way to top of legal profession, terminating with appearance of mature Raybin (Tracey) before Supreme Court.

CLOSE-UP of Supreme Court judges reduced to tears by power of Raybin's advocacy. PAN to old lady and crippled boy on their knees to him in gratitude. Raybin helps them to their feet with, "It was nothing. Here, son, take your dog licence."

NARRATOR: "But behind Raybin lurks the shadow of malice and envy."

PAN to bowed back of defeated attorney and dissolve to flashback of scene of Kyle's ejection from the New York convention. He is picked out of gutter by shifty-eyed hoodlums wearing CP badges. Further shots illustrate the embittered Kyle turning against society. His father (Otto Kruger) is also embittered by inability to compete with brilliant new lawyer. DISSOLVE back to Supreme Court. The lawyer Raybin has defeated turns round and is seen to be Kyle Senior. Raybin offers him his hand but he spurns it and stalks out with a look of hatred. Raybin looks troubled for a moment, then leaves the building himself and takes a cab to the airport. DISSOLVE to another cab drawing up outside the palatial offices of the WSFS. Raybin gets out and enters the building, the uniformed doorman saluting respectfully.

NARRATOR: "The Supreme Court of fandom, the World Science Fiction Society. The dedicated organisation which has brought peace and order to a troubled fandom. George Raybin, Legal Officer. To him, fans throughout the world look for guidance in their problems. To him they entrust their hard-earned money. To him they look for help."

During above speech, SEQUENCE showing dustbowl farmers, Canadian lumberjacks, Midwest spinsters, European peasants, Chinese coolies, etc., ripping up mattresses, breaking piggybanks, digging up boxes, etc., and sending money to WSFS. DISSOLVE to shot of thatched cottage in rural England. CUT to scene of Vince and Joy Clarke (David Niven and Deborah Kerr, respectively) and their old soldier guest Sandy Sanderson (Sir Cedric Hardwicke) writing a letter to the WSFS. CLOSEUP of copy of *SFN* on the table with headline reading LONDON WORLDCON LOSES MONEY.

LAP DISSOLVE to same headline on copy of *Fantasy Times* on table in WSFS Boardroom.

NEXT FOUR REELS show events of following year in strict chronological order. Tense clash of personalities in USES Directorship over English claim, culminating in Raybin calling on Kyle to account for million dollars withdrawn by him for phone calls, helicopter beanies and WSFS banner.

Kyle affects to regard this as an insult and there is an angry scene during which he insults Belle Dietz (June Allyson). Frank Dietz (James Stewart) and Kyle fight with water carafes and paper knives until separated by Raybin with aid of two wastebaskets. Kyle retires, bleeding from a flesh wound, swearing vengeance and trying to pry the wastebasket off his head. While Belle is extricating Frank, Raybin gazes out of picture window facing crucial decision of his career. Repeat portions of soundtrack of Gernsback speech with echo chamber and Presley number sung by celestial choir. Finally Raybin announces intention to sue Kyle. Belle and Frank point out this is a cunning Kyle trap, that fandom will never stand for a fan bringing another fan to court. Raybin feels he must make stand to keep faith with starving English fans and in defense of the rule of law in fandom. The money is nothing to the WSFS but principles must be upheld at whatever cost to himself. The writ is issued and Kyle becomes a hunted fugitive. (SHOTS of him shooting his way through police cordon and hiding in cellar in Riverside Drive.)

With Kyle Senior fronting, the two proceed with their diabolical plan to ruin Raybin. The Kyle-controlled radio network opens up a propaganda barrage. A gang of hoods imported from the Ohio underworld, the Falascafandom mob, plant bombs under the foundations of the WSFS building. SEQUENCES showing disturbances in fan clubs throughout the

country. As South Gate approaches, they realise this will be the showdown. SHOTS of fans making their way west by car, bus, train, plane, bicycle, and boat. The last being Ron Bennett (Dirk Bogarde).

BIG CONVENTION SCENE, De Mille type. Crowds, searchlights, banners, processions, chants, pitched battles between opposing factions. Just before the business session Kyle senior and bodyguard seize microphone to announce that Kyle wound has turned septic and he is suing the WSFS for ten million dollars and a new shirt. The Convention Committee disowns Raybin and the hysterical conventioners, led by Kyle agitators, turn on him. He is shouted down and thrown out of the convention hall, and a motion is passed to dissolve the WSFS. Discredited, ruined and embittered, Raybin and the Dietzes make their slow journey back to New York in their trailer caravan, reduced to begging for food. But the WSFS banner, which they bought back from an unknown sympathiser at the Convention with their last \$2.00, still flies proudly on the roof of their caravan. In the Ozark Mountains it is recognised by a group of fans who are too poor to attend conventions, and have not yet heard what has happened. They welcome the refugees with open arms and the night passes in fannish good cheer round a campfire. In the morning, as the caravan is moving off, they press a little parcel into Raybin's hand. He opens it when they are out of sight and finds it is \$3.55, all in buffalo nickels.

RAYBIN: "And to think I was almost disenchanted with fandom. This must be their life savings." He averts his head. After a pause Frank says, "They were pitifully glad to see us. You remember one of them said it was just like what they thought a convention would be." They smile.

BELLE, reflectively: "You know, we could have tried to give them a better idea of a convention, Frank, your tape recorder – you have the whole program there. We could play them bits of it."

FRANK, doubtfully: "It might get a bit dull, just sitting listening to a tape."

BELLE: "Well, we could act it out for them a bit; you know, mime to the tape. Like the Bernard Brothers. I vote we try it if we run into another fan group."

TWO DAYS LATER, at another Ozark Mountain hamlet, they are greeted by another group of isolated fans asking for news of the convention. They volunteer to try and reproduce it for them. Word goes round to all the neighbouring homesteads and by evening quite a crowd has collected. Raybin

and the Dietzes put on a hastily rehearsed show, with Belle Dietz taking the parts of Anna Moffatt and Bjo Wells. Frank plays Bloch, Boucher and Matheson, while Raybin is John W. Campbell, Sam Moskowitz (auctioning a few old prozines they happen to have in the caravan), the hotel detective and the Mayor of South Gate. The show is a tremendous success, particularly the auction, an old farmer (Walter Huston with more make-up) having paid a fantastic price for a September 1937 *Amazing*. A collection is taken up for the performers.

IN THEIR CARAVAN that night, Belle and Frank and Raybin count the take and marvel at the success of the evening, “If only we could do this all the time,” sighs Belle. George has been sunk in thought, but now he speaks out firmly.

RAYBIN: “We can. I’ve been working it out. That vote at South Gate was *ultra vires* so we are still the WSFS. Let’s... let’s put on a *travelling convention*! We can tour the country bringing all the romance and thrills of a convention to poor and lonely fan groups. With all Frank’s records and tapes... Look, I visualise something like this....”

DISSOLVE to a view of the caravan, now freshly painted and with pennants and bunting festooning the WSFS banner, bowling along a road. On big letters on the side is WORLD SCIENCE FICTION TRAVELLING CONVENTION REPERTORY SEASON.

CLOSE IN on poster reading LEE HOFFMAN AND BOB TUCKER AT THE NOLACON. SUPERIMPOSE in succession names of small towns in Missouri. DISSOLVE to another poster, PLAYING TONIGHT THE LONDON GOONFIGHT. PAN to wagon behind fitted with speakers’ dais and public address equipment. PAN back to poster, which now reads TONIGHT CHICON II SEE HOW SAN FRANCISCO LOST THE NOMINATION. SUPERIMPOSE names of small towns in Ohio. PAN past wagon to show another caravan with chimney and poster SMOKE FILLED ROOM – INTRIGUE WITH THE EXPERTS. PAN back to poster which now reads HARMON VS. ELLISON AT CLEVELAND. SUPERIMPOSE names of small towns in West Virginia, but slower as caravan slows down. STOP at Fairmont. The poster is obliterated by an overripe tomato.

DISSOLVE to Belle Dietz making convention closing speech. PAN to rows of empty seats, and one small boy blowing bubble gum. As he leaves Belle abandons her speech and bursts into tears. Frank tries to comfort her. PAN to Raybin walking through the rows of seats carrying a fanzine.

RAYBIN: “As I thought, it’s Kyle again.” He holds out the fanzine. “He’s telling fandom we’re sabotaging the true Worldcons and urging all true fans to boycott us.”

BELLE, sobbing: “Have we no friends left?”

DISSOLVE to SEQUENCE SHOT on location in England showing Clarkes and Sanderson hearing from Bennett of events at South Gate and reacting with characteristic British grit and loyalty. They sell their picturesque rose-covered cottage in the olde worlde village of Catford and move into a tenement in the slums of Peckham, where they all get jobs. With the money they’ve thus scraped together they toil nights publishing fanzines putting the case for their friends. Intersperse CUTS showing the Dietz-Raybins, now reduced to the original battered caravan and a secondhand tent, struggling on against adversity in the show-must-go-on tradition. First no audiences, then hostile demonstrations, stone-throwing, fights. LATER SHOTS show larger and more friendly audiences.

DISSOLVE to WSFS Boardroom, where the Kyles are leafing through reports from their agents. Dave Kyle throws one down in disgust and stands looking out of the picture window.

KYLE: “They had an audience of 65 last night, and our men were thrown out. That English stuff is clever, and now they’re getting it into *Hyphen*.”

KYLE SENIOR: “yes... The only thing to do is stop this travelling convention of theirs before they get too much support.”

DAVE KYLE: “How?”

KYLE SENIOR: “I’ve been thinking we might be able to get an injunction. They claim to be putting on these conventions as the WSFS, and with WSFS tapes and records. But the WSFS constitution requires convention sites to be rotated consecutively from the west to east coasts with only one stop between. I don’t think that old car of theirs could make it.”

CLOSE-UP of Kyle grinning wolfishly. PAN to *Yandro* calendar on wall. A month drops off. PAN back to Kyle, pacing the room alone. Kyle Senior enters with large legal-looking document, which he throws on the table. “Well, I got it. The injunction.”

KYLE: “Good. They’re playing a matinee for neofans in Trenton today.” He flicks the dictaphone switch. “Have my car brought round and get me a process server. I’m going to be in at the death.”

CUT between the travelling convention site at Trenton and Kyle car

speeding South. Rhythmic alternation, speeding up. Finally HOLD SCENE in convention tent as Raybin is doing his John W. Campbell act to rapt young audience. Kyle and process server enter at rear. Raybin looks up, sees them, falters momentarily but carries on bravely. SHOT of row after row of intent neofen. CLOSE-UPS of sensitive young fannish faces hanging on Raybin's every word. CUT back to Kyle, also looking at neofen. CUT to bigger close-ups of innocent childish faces, showing starry eyes. Presley theme song begins softly in background. CUT back to close-up of Kyle, a strained look on his face. Presley is joined by mixed choir. CUT to medium shot of process server moving hesitantly forward. Kyle motions him back. "No... wait." FADE OUT.

PRESLEY THEME taken up by military band, full volume. FADE IN first scene of triumphal procession in New York. PAN to show long line of caravans, wagons, etc., behind Raybin car, all covered with streamers and WSFS banners. DISSOLVE to original close-up of Raybin in Cadillac. Camera tracks sideways as he turns to smile to friend on his left. It is Kyle. FADE OUT

December 1959

The Spanish Main

“Fantastic Universe was sold at a recent US Tax Auction... the new owner has no immediate plans for publication.” – SF Times #352.

“Going, going, gone,” said the auctioneer, hitting his desk a perfunctory blow with his gavel. “Sold to the gentleman at the back. Now, Lot 378, six dozen pairs of Zsa Zsa Gabor’s panties, unused...”

Harry Kreutz made his way through the fringes of the crowd to the office. “Lot 377,” he said.

“Ah, yes,” said the clerk, “that’s the miscellaneous lot just sold. Let me see.” He ran his pencil down a list. “Here we are,” he said, “one zinc bath, two bags of cement, 2,000 balloons, 80 sheets of corrugated iron, one fantastic universe. \$17.50, including commission. Sign here. Do you want them wrapped?”

“No thanks,” said Harry, “I have a car. I only wanted the bath, but I suppose I have to take the lot. What was that last item again? I didn’t see anything else.”

The clerk consulted his list again. “It’s only a science fiction magazine. Look in the bath under the cement.”

Eventually Harry arrived at his home in Long Island, with the cement propped up among the balloons in the back seat, the corrugated iron strapped to the roof, the zinc bath wedged in the trunk and a parking ticket tucked under the windshield wiper. His wife Edna rushed out to help him unload.

“It’s a fine bath, Harry,” she said, “and I’m sure Horace will love it. But what’s all this other stuff?”

“I had to take it too,” said Harry. “It was all in the one lot. But maybe it’ll come in useful.”

They laid the bags of cement and the balloons along the side of the house, with the corrugated iron over them to keep the rain off, and dragged the bath round to the back yard. There Edna swept the loose cement into the garbage can, and Harry filled the bath with water and brought out the goldfish bowl and emptied the contents gently in.

Harry and Edna watched tensely as the goldfish twitched to and fro, bemused by the sudden expansion of the universe. Then it straightened out and with a long graceful undulation of its tail, darted towards the end of the

bath. It circumnavigated it in a graceful curve under the faucets and sped back along the long straight. Little bubbles danced in its wake.

Edna sighed happily. "See, he's better already," she said. "The psychiatrist was right. Look at the colour coming back into his scales."

"So that's what he meant by a guilt complex," said Harry. "Well, it sure looks like he knew what he was talking about. It was just that I never heard of a goldfish with claustrophobia before."

"Horace isn't an ordinary fish," said Edna proudly. "He's sensitive. Besides this is New York. But look at the little fellow now." They watched Horace start on another world cruise, and then went in to supper.

On the morning of the day after next, Harry came down for breakfast, stealing a look at the goldfish through the landing window on the way. "Any mail?" he asked cheerfully as he entered the kitchen.

Edna pointed mutely to a sack propped up against the ironing board. Harry undid the Post Office seal and pulled out a handful of letters. "They're not for us," he said, "they're all addressed to The Publishers, *Fantastic Universe*."

"What's *Fantastic Universe*?" asked Edna.

"Dunno," said Harry. "Wait a minute, though. It's a science fiction magazine. There was a copy in the bath. Has the garbage been collected yet?"

He rushed out into the back yard and poked around in the garbage can, eventually unearthing a dirty brown envelope from among the tomato skins. Scraping off the tomato-flavoured concrete, he carried it into the kitchen, and opened it.

"There's no magazine here," he said, "just a lot of papers." He read through them, and began paling.

"What's the matter?" asked Edna anxiously.

"We've bought a science fiction magazine," said Harry.

"That's what you said the first time," said Edna. "So what?"

"No," said Harry. "I mean we've bought the magazine itself, the whole thing. Look." He handed over a sheet of paper. It was headed "List of Assets", and it read:

- 500,000 copies of *Fantastic Universe*.
- One bundle of rejection slips, unopened.
- 9,900 copies of *Fantastic Universe Omnibus*.
- 100 fanzines.

- 843 photographs of flying saucers and little green men.
- One clay image of Isaac Asimov impaled by a bolt.
- 75¢ in uncanceled stamps torn off envelopes.

Harry didn't hear any comments Edna had to offer on this, for at that moment there was a loud knock on the door. A burly truckdriver stood on the doorstep, holding out a clip-board.

"Sign here, Mac," he said. "Where d'you want the stuff?"

"What stuff?" asked Harry weakly.

The truckdriver stood aside, revealing a ten ton truck and trailer, both laden with brown paper parcels labelled *Fantastic Universe*.

"Oh," said Harry helplessly. "Oh. In the back yard, I guess. There's no room in the house."

Two hours later his little home was walled in by great stacks of brown paper parcels, except for a small clearing round the garbage can and the goldfish bath.

"I can't stand it any more," cried Edna, when Harry came home from work the next day. "I feel just the way Horace felt."

Harry felt his way through the unnatural darkness of the living room. "Why don't you switch the light on?"

"At five o'clock on a summer afternoon?" wept Edna. "Besides I can't stand to see those great walls of brown paper – I keep thinking they're going to fall on me. I must be going out of my mind...they seem to be closing in on me!"

"We could go and see the psychiatrist again," suggested Harry.

"And buy me a zinc bath?" sneered Edna. "I told you, he's a fish specialist; he doesn't know anything about human beings. Besides, what we want is to get rid of the stuff, blow it up or something."

"The only thing we could blow up would be the balloons," said Harry ruefully.

"Hey, *there's* an idea. Wait."

He grabbed the old goldfish bowl and went outside. Through the kitchen door Edna watched him scoop out Horace carefully and empty the bags of concrete into the bath. Then he cut out a large square of corrugated iron with a hacksaw, put one of the brown paper parcels on it, rolled up the corrugated iron into a cylinder, tied it with string, and rammed wet cement into the ends. This done, he leapt into the car and tore off down the street, returning a few

minutes later with a cylinder of compressed gas. He filled one of the balloons and tied it to the string. The bundle rose slowly into the air and began to drift over the roof of the house.

“There,” said Harry. “That takes care of it.”

“I’m proud of you,” said Edna. “Only suppose it falls? What will the police say?”

“Oh,” said Harry. “I hadn’t thought of that!” He ran upstairs and came down with his son’s airgun. On the front porch he took careful aim as the balloon came drifting overhead. His first shot got it. From a height of fifty feet the corrugated iron cylinder plunged to the sidewalk. The string broke, there was an earsplitting twang as the corrugated iron straightened out, and copies of *Fantastic Universe* were sprayed over a radius of several hundred yards.

“Hm,” said Harry. “You’re right, it is dangerous. But maybe the wind will carry them out to sea.” He wet a finger and held it up. “Yes,” he said, “it’s blowing from the south west. Once they get past the shore there’s no land until Greenland.”

“I suppose it’s all right,” said Edna doubtfully, “but if one of them did happen to get blown into some foreign country, it might cause an international incident.”

“It would still be all right,” said Harry confidently. “Didn’t you notice those balloons were all marked VOTE FOR NIXON? If anything happens Ike will get the blame again and Jack can apologize for him.”

Harry and Edna worked all evening and night making up the parcels and blowing up the balloons, and by dawn the yard was cleared. All the corrugated iron, magazines, books, fanzines, photographs, balloons and cement were drifting out into the North Atlantic. Happily, they restored Horace to his bath.

During the next two months the incident faded from their minds, and what with the improvement in Horace’s mental health and the recent reductions in taxes, they settled into a life of quiet contentment. Then one evening there was a knock on the door and when Harry opened it he found a small group of men looking at him curiously, all prosperously but conservatively dressed.

“Good evening,” said the youngest one, “my name is Dean Rusk, and this is the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. We’ve come to present you with the Congressional Medal of Honor.”

“On condition,” added one of the others, “that you don’t tell anyone

what it's for."

"That's easy," said Harry, dazed, "because I don't even know, myself."

"Well, it was those balloons of yours," said Rusk. "The FBI traced them to you. Most of them drifted right over the Arctic Circle into Russia, where they were shot down by small boys with slingshots. Within a month nearly everyone in Russia had read the stuff you sent with them, passing it from hand to hand. You know they teach English in Russian schools."

"I still don't understand," said Harry helplessly.

"That stuff was dynamite," said Rusk. "They'd never been exposed to anything like it in forty years of dialectical materialism. They've no advertisements or sensational newspapers, so they had no resistance and they fell for it like a ton of bricks. They've been importing hundreds of tons of old science fiction magazines ever since. Half of them have joined the Rosicrucians or the N3F and the rest are studying dianetics or building psionic machines. The entire Politburo is on the FAPA waiting list. Krushchev is coming to the Seattle Convention for a summit talk with Jack Speer. They've dismantled all their missile bases in the Urals, and their submarines are all out looking for Atlantis. The cold war is over!"

The Chairman pinned a medal on Harry's chest while he was still struggling for breath. "A grateful country would like to accord you some more tangible award," he said. "Is there anything you would like?"

Harry thought for a while. "Well," he finally said, "we're quite happy as we are, but maybe you could do something for Horace. Really, it's all due to him."

"Horace?" asked the Chairman.

"Our goldfish," explained Harry. "We got him a new bath, but he still doesn't seem quite right. I think it must be the chlorine in the water."

The Chairman had a whispered consultation with the Senator from Texas. "We'll have some better water piped in," he promised.

And that's how there happens to be a goldfish that lives in New York but swims all day in the warm clear waters of the Caribbean.

June 1961

Afterword: Thickening Plots

"All right," said Bob Shaw, "we'll take the most basic situation we can think

of and develop it.”

“Boy meets girl?” suggested James White.

“No,” said Bob, “it’s been done. Take a man sitting on a rock. That’s basic.”

While our professional authors trained the batteries of their massive intellects on this little target, watching for a plot to scurry out from behind it, my frivolous fannish mind was examining it for puns. There wasn’t much to go on. Types of rock... pleistocene, basalt, no... gneiss, purely visual... Igneous? Igneous is a louse? Hmm, it was a lousy pun so the sooner I got rid of it the better. If you suppress them they sort of fester at the back of your mind. I started to push the conversation round. “Suppose it isn’t really a rock at all,” I suggested, “but some sort of big hibernating creature, a chrysalis or egg?” “Boy meets rock!” exclaimed James, and before I could head them on to the concept of giant lice he had postulated this planet where the inhabitants turned periodically into rocks. The man was actually sitting on his girl friend waiting for the next spaceship. He wrote it up and sold it to *Nebula*.

Which just goes to show that one of the ways of thinking up plots is to examine some situation, that any situation will do, and that you never know what you’ll end up with. Another example is my “The Spanish Main” in the last *Void*. But before I go any further I’d better say I’m not presuming to tell anyone how to write fiction... that would indeed be brash from someone whose professional earnings from the sale of fiction have so far amounted to approximately \$5.00 (though mind you I have a 100% record of professional acceptances)... just how I try to do it. It’s the sort of thing that interests me and I only hope it interests you. I don’t know what the reaction to the last instalment of this column was like and I would have held this bit over to see, only for the fact that “The Spanish Main” was published recently. It may have been no great example of the results of the creative process, but it was a good example of how the technique of free association channeled by logic can produce a reasonably well constructed story.

It started with a copy of *SF Times* in which I had ringed an item in pencil. Weeks later I dug it out of the tray where I throw such things until I have to write something, and looked at it again. It was a brief news item to the effect that *Fantastic Universe* had been sold at an auction and that the new owner had no plans for publication. I’d never heard of a promag being auctioned before, but even more peculiar, now I came to think of it, was why anyone would buy one and not want to do anything with it. Maybe he bought

it by mistake? No, not the old gag of someone nodding his head at the wrong time, but suppose he bought it along with some other items, a job lot? OK, what other items then?

Now the office where I work is some five miles outside the city and when anyone is going down town to buy something at lunchtime they ask the other people in the room if they want anything. The ritual reply is, “Yes, thanks. Two bags of cement and a sheet of corrugated iron.” The concept of carrying this epitome of awkwardness through the rush hour is a satirical comment on the lack of consideration from which they themselves may have suffered in the past. All right, we’ll try that. Someone has bought two bags of cement, a sheet of corrugated iron and *Fantastic Universe*, what now? Well why doesn’t he just put *Fantastic Universe* back into the auction if he doesn’t want it? Maybe he doesn’t know he’s bought it. Let’s have him buy something else in which *Fantastic Universe* might have been concealed, some sort of receptacle. I visualized the bags of cement and the corrugated iron. I saw them amid the other junk of a builder’s yard, like old baths. OK, let’s have the purchaser buy an old bath too.

Now to think of a reason for him buying this lot. Nobody would go to an auction to buy cement and corrugated iron: the bath seemed more plausible. OK, so he wanted a cheap bath. To keep fish in perhaps. Gold fish. Gold. Horace Gold. Horace Gold’s well known agoraphobia. The opposite, claustrophobia. A goldfish with claustrophobia, that was a nice idea, and obviously the poor creature would need a good big bath to swim in. But how would its owners know it had claustrophobia? Who could tell them but a psychiatrist. They had taken it to a specialist in neurotic goldfish, a fish psychiatrist. So now I had my characters. Not rich people, or they would have bought a swimming pool, yet they took their pet to an expensive psychiatrist. I saw them as a quiet middle-aged couple whose uneventful lives centered round their pet goldfish.

So now I had characters and a promising situation, a pair of goldfish lovers who have bought a science fiction magazine and don’t know it. But I didn’t like that cement and corrugated iron. I would have to either take them out again (though I needed something to cover up *Fantastic Universe* in the bath) or work them into the plot. I couldn’t just leave them lying there like Dumas’s umbrella. (Dumas’s son wrote a play and his father pointed out he had ruined the whole thing by having a character come in in the first act with an umbrella and lean it in a corner. For the rest of the play, he pointed out,

the audience were watching that umbrella suspiciously.)

It would be nice, I thought, if I could use the cement and corrugated iron to resolve the conflict between the goldfish and *Fantastic Universe*. Sort of economical and well rounded – thesis, antithesis and synthesis again. But all I could think of was that they might use the building materials to make newsstands to sell *Fantastic Universe* from and I couldn't see any profit for them in that. I decided to continue the third draft as it was going, get my characters deeper into trouble, and see whether my benevolent instincts could figure a way to get them out of it. (I like happy endings because I always identify.) What trouble would they get into? Well since magazines don't have their own printing presses all they would really buy would be a lot of back issues, and the only trouble with them would be their sheer bulk. I tried exaggerating that to make the problem clearer. I had so many back issues delivered that the house was surrounded with them. I liked this because it repeated the claustrophobia motif and having brought this out and reported the dialogue of my characters as I imagined it under the strain, I saw them more clearly. These simple people wouldn't want to make money selling those old copies of *Fantastic Universe*, they'd just want to get rid of them and go back to their quiet contented lives with their goldfish.

Being mildly eccentric they might plausibly do it in some fantastic way. It would be nice too if they got some unexpected good out of it. Where could they get rid of old copies of *Fantastic Universe* where they might be unexpectedly appreciated? Somewhere the magazine was not obtainable. Behind the iron curtain. But it would cost them money to mail it or ship it. How else were books got into Russia? Propaganda balloons. I started the fourth draft, adding 2,000 VOTE FOR NIXON balloons to the auction lot, and took it to the end of the cold war. But it still didn't seem complete. The goldfish wasn't in the synthesis. The plot had really started with him, it should go back to him. I thought about my characters again. I'd wanted something nice to happen to them but I saw now they wouldn't want anything for themselves, they'd want it for their goldfish: so it was a question of making the goldfish happy. Well, what would he want: he had a bath. Water, of course: not chlorinated New York water, but warm fresh water from his native Caribbean flowing through the taps in the old bath which had started the story. The title then supplied itself from a pun I'd made months before in a different connection. So all I had to do now was write out the final version, polishing here and there, clearing up the political angle and introducing a

Senator from Texas for the pipeline, and adding faucets to the bath.

Easy, wasn't it. But it didn't seem that way when I started. If you've got the kind of mind I have you've just got to start writing in the faith that something will occur to you, and help it by continually asking yourself questions. If you'd like to try it yourself here's another item from that tray of mine, a copy of the Seacon Progress Report mentioning that closed circuit television is installed in all the hotel rooms. Suppose some mundane hotel guest who doesn't know what's going on turns on the tv to watch his favourite programme?

October 1961

Superfan!

In a tarpaper shack in the middle of Romney Marsh a fan called Harry Kreutz whom nobody had heard of was trying to publish the first issue of his fanzine, *Gunge*. It was not going well. His fourth-hand duplicator was badly worn and he lacked the mechanical expertise needed to make it produce passable results. Moreover his stencils were defective, having been cut on a typewriter with blunt keys. So while the material was witty and original, it was virtually illegible. *I can just imagine what D. West would say about it*, he thought to himself: *maybe I should take up stamp collecting instead....*

At that moment there was a flash in the sky and a noise like thunder, and a masked stranger appeared as if from nowhere. He was conservatively dressed in a red cape, over blue shorts and a T-shirt with the initials SF superimposed on a red lightning flash. He raised one hand and a beam of light from it bathed the fan, his duplicator, and the stencils. Then he disappeared again as instantaneously as he had arrived. Humbly, Harry Kreutz moved towards the duplicator, every aspect of its functions for the first time crystal clear in his mind, as clear as the transfigured stencils before him.

Within a year *Gunge* had topped all the fan polls. The year's anthology of the best of fan writing consisted entirely of extracts from it. It even came second for a Best Fanzine Hugo, the first time this had happened since 1965 to a fanzine with a circulation of less than 250. It lost only narrowly to *Spocks Frocks*, the journal of the Eastern Oklahoma Transvestite Fancy Dress Federation.

On that same evening, in Oxford, there was an atmosphere of crisis in the Bodleian Library, where the Twentyfirst Century Edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was being prepared. The Editor-in-Chief threw up his hands in despair. "We've tried Kingsley Amis, Robert Conquest, Damon Knight, everyone we can think of. Nobody has the breadth of vision, the depth of knowledge, the sheer literary ability to produce a contribution to rival that damned Nicholls, Roberts, Edwards thing. I'm thinking seriously of having no entry at all in the *Britannica* on science fiction and fandom, though...."

The great windows of the library flew open to admit a masked and caped

figure. He laid on the table some pages typed in double spacing and left as he had come. In the room there was now a strange feeling, as of... accomplishment.

Later that evening, on the 82nd Floor of the Gestetner Building in downtown Stoke Newington, Professor Lucius Gestetner stood gazing at the magnificent panorama before him of the illuminations of Stoke Newington, his dictating machine in his right hand. With a sigh he pressed the playback button – “...so the unaccountable failure of the prototype 2601 Word Processor and Duplicator means ruin for the Corporation, and the responsibility is mine.” He laid the machine down gently, opened the window onto the balcony, and climbing the low wall jumped to his death.

But what is this masked and caped figure that swoops out of the night and bears him up? Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No. Who but that figure of power and mystery who has been helping fans everywhere – SUPERFAN. Superfan, the righter of wrongs, the friend of neofen, the fearless foe of the evil D. West. Now Superfan speeds unerringly to the Gestetner laboratories where the 2601 Prototype sits uselessly. He puts the Professor down gently and examines the machine. A quarter turn to a tiny screw, a few deft key presses, a faint cry of pain as a bug expires deep in the software... and the 2601 springs to life, the screen glowing eagerly. Superfan feeds in a disc, and types a few words. On the screen appears a command unheard in fandom since a wealthy businessman, H.C. Koenig, became a member of FAPA and produced his activity requirements in his office – namely, TAKE A FANZINE. And below that Superfan typed 240. Instantly, perfectly stencilled and duplicated sheets began emerging into 240 separate slots. As the run was completed each issue was simultaneously stapled, wrapped, addressed, and stamped. It only took a few minutes. Superfan gathered the mailing up so swiftly that the Professor had only time to read “*Hyphen 37*” before he was alone again, his life transformed.

•

“Well,” said Dave Langford, “you asked Chris Priest and me to devise a computer program which would help to discover the identity of Superfan from the information available”. The members of The Worldcon Committee nodded. “Well,” continued Dave, “the first thing we did was plot his various appearances on the map. Superfan, though powerful, cannot be in two places at once. Yet one evening he was in Romney Marsh, Oxford and Stoke

Newington all within two hours. On another busy evening it seems he flew John Jarrold to New York, dealt with Teresa Nielsen Hayden's dust bunny problem, and flew Jarrold back to London when he changed his mind. Obviously his speed is more than Concorde's and less than light. The computer could determine it exactly and work out approximately where Superfan's base must be. All that remained was to feed in a list of fans with encyclopaedic knowledge of fandom, science fiction, and duplicators. The computer came up with one name and one locality." He held up the computer print-out. There was a murmur of admiring congratulation.

"No," Dave went on. "Congratulations are not in order. Rather we should lament our stupidity. The whole operation was pointless because anyone of us could have recognised Superfan's identity merely by examining our list of fans' surnames and the counties in which they reside." Without further explanation he handed over the print-out. There were just two words on it: CLARKE KENT.

November 1986

*A friend of Walt Willis since the early 1950s, long-time fan A. Vincent Clarke was famously adept at mimeography – indeed he wrote the book on it, Duplicating Without Tears (1956) – and was on the rotating editorial board of Pulp (where this piece appeared), editing one in every three issues. Needless to say, he lived in Kent.
[Ed.]*

The Colossal Enchanted Duplicator Adventure

Fiawol Interactive Computer Games Present –

THE COLOSSAL ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR ADVENTURE

This version allows you to take back wrong answers by the command OOPS. The command SAVE will record your position in the adventure for later resumption.

Your name is Jophan. You are lying in a cornfield reading a magazine when a beautiful girl appears before you. What now?

HIYA GORGEIOUS. WANNA FUCK?

The girl says “That’s no way to talk to a Good Fairy”. She slaps your face and disappears. You never see her again. Eventually you may learn manners and grow up to be a useful member of society, but you are always conscious that there is something missing. Your friends seem dull, and lacking in the fierce loyalty you seem to expect. You travel a lot, but you are a stranger everywhere you go. Your score was 0 out of 1100. Goodbye. It was not particularly nice knowing you.

OOPS.

...a beautiful girl appears before you. What now?

UP.

You are standing up. The girl touches you with a wand and you have a wonderful vision of a land called Trufandom, centred round a tower containing the Magic Mimeograph which can produce The Perfect Fanzine. She points to the West and momentarily you hear again that faint but joyous singing you once heard borne by the Western wind of Autumn from beyond the Mountains of Inertia. Then there is a flash of intolerable radiance and you fall unconscious.

You awake to find yourself alone. There is a shield here. There is a tin of metal polish. There is a soft cloth. There is a copy of *Planet Stories*. There is a meat pie. What now?

TAKE ALL.

You can carry only four things at a time. What now?

EXAMINE SHIELD.

The shield is beautifully wrought in bronze, with lettering and intricate designs. On the inside it says *SHIELD OF UMOR*. And in smaller letters, *THIS SHIELD MUST BE KEPT POLISHED AT ALL TIMES*. What now?
TAKE SHIELD, POLISH AND CLOTH.

Taken. What now?

TAKE THE MEAT PIE.

I am afraid you are a fake fan. A true fan would rather read sf than eat. You scored 50 out of 1100. You grow up to be a useful member of society but you are always conscious of something missing in your life. Your friends seem dull –

OOPS.

...There is a copy of *Planet Stories*. There is a meat pie. What now?

EXAMINE THE PLANET STORIES.

It contains stories about an invasion from Mars; about faster-than-light travel; about the end of the Universe; about universes which are molecules in another universe; and about time travel: all scientifically authentic. Among the truss advertisements at the end are fanzine reviews and a letter section containing letters from Bob Tucker and others about the First Staple War. What now?

TAKE THE PLANET STORIES.

I am sorry but even a fan must eat to live. You have a long journey ahead which you will not be able to make without food. Your score was 75 out of 1100. You grow up to become –

OOPS.

...There is a copy of *Planet Stories*. There is a meat –

EXAMINE THE MEAT PIE.

It is a substantial pie of high quality, made with shortcrust pastry, in a foil dish with knife and fork attached. Along the rim is the legend *BY APPOINTMENT TO BRIAN BURGESS*. Amazingly enough it is still hot.
EAT THE PIE.

It was delicious, just what you needed. Your score is 125. What now?
TAKE THE PLANET STORIES.

Taken. What now?
WEST.

You are marching westwards along a pretty country road that leads from your village of Prosaic to the border of Mundane. Do you want to go back home for something you have forgotten?

NO.

You are trudging westwards along a rough and dreary country road. Don't you want to go back home for a more comfortable pair of shoes and a nice rest? You can go to Trufandom tomorrow.

WEST.

You have arrived at the border of Mundane. An eight-lane turnpike stretches North and South as far as the eye can see. Immediately in front of you is a bus station. A few yards to the South a bus is about to leave for a place called Fame. What now?.

SOUTH.

You are on the bus, bowling South at a great speed. The conductor announces, "Fares please. The minimum fare is one golden Talent. Have your fares ready please." You cannot find a golden Talent among your possessions and are put off the bus. You can walk south after the bus, whose tail lights are dwindling in the far distance, or walk North back to the bus station.

NORTH.

You have arrived at a junction with a minor road to the East. A signpost says it leads to Quotidian, Commonplace and Prosaic. You could sleep in your own bed tonight. What now?

NORTH.

You have arrived back at the bus station. A bus marked Respectability is standing facing North. Its engine is running and your feet hurt. There is no conductor but you can ask the driver the fare. What now?

IN.

As soon as you get in, the bus starts off and accelerates rapidly into the fast lane. The driver looks to you for your fare, and you hold out your small change. He takes some of it and then looks at you more closely. "Ditch the

junk,” he says. “No litter, no fancy dress, no rags.” He opens the automatic door to facilitate your disposal of these items. You can indicate yes or no. What now?

NO.

The bus pulls over abruptly to the hard shoulder and stops. “Out,” says the driver, “you and your junk.” You scramble out and he throws your money after you. By coincidence you are at another minor road junction leading east to Ordinary, Prosaic, Quotidian and Commonplace. What now?

SOUTH.

You have arrived back at the bus station. You buy a take-out pot of hot soup and a salad roll from the snack bar and go into the bus parking lot behind it to get away from the traffic noise. After you have finished your soup and salad roll, you feel a little better. What now?

EXAMINE PARKING LOT.

It is about one third full of empty buses. What now?

EXAMINE BUSES.

They are just buses, mostly single-decker. Their last destinations are given as Fame, Success, Wealth, Respectability, Lower Dullness, Monotony, Upper Torpor, Tedium, Accidie, Ordinary and Commonplace. There is none for Trufandom. But here is one about to pull out to the North. Its destination window is lit; it says Prosaic via Quotidian. What now?

EXAMINE EDGES OF PARKING LOT.

To the east are various shops, services, offices, workshops etc. To the North and South are exits to the turnpike. Everywhere else there appears to be a solid wall of trees. The bus for Prosaic is about to leave the parking lot, to your north. What now?

EXAMINE THE TREES.

They are very close together and apparently impenetrable, except for a narrow almost entirely overgrown opening opposite you. A bus company employee to your North is calling, “Last bus for Prosaic.”

WEST.

You have reached the opening. It is badly overgrown. There are thorns. The bus is loading passengers to your North. You recognise your parents. What now?

WEST.

You are in the Forest of Stupidity, which shelters Mundane from the searching winds that blow out of fandom. A narrow path leads through the trees in a generally Westward direction. What now?

WEST.

You are deep in the forest. The traffic noise is inaudible. All is peaceful, except for a faint drone in the west. The trees have held the warmth of the day. The ground is dry, and soft with fallen leaves. What now?

DOWN.

You lie down and almost immediately fall into a restful sleep, pleased to be on your way to Trufandom.

SAVE.

File name?

CHAPTER.ONE

Your progress has been recorded. Your score is 200 out of 1100. You are now a Neofan. Sleep well. You have a hard day tomorrow.

To resume, type LOCPULP4.YES

June 1987

Apparently I inspired this by fudging up a demonstration Adventure game with perhaps a dozen locations that would run on the Amstrad PCW word processor/computer then used by Walt Willis, Vince Clarke and many other fans. One of the few movable objects was a pork pie (as famously sold by Brian Burgess to hungry fans at conventions), which Walt appropriated with thanks. There is no other resemblance between that mercifully forgotten gamelet and the above. [Ed.]

Original Appearances

All notes signed [Ed.] were written for this ebook by David Langford.

- “The Alien Arrives” – played at SUPERMANCON, Manchester, June 1954; published in *Triode* #1, September 1954, edited by Eric Bentcliffe and Terry Jeeves.
- “Autobiography” – *Quandry* #10, May 1951, edited by Lee Hoffman.
- “Bob Shaw and the Budgerigar” – *Hyphen* #14, June 1955, edited by Walt Willis and Chuck Harris.
- “The Case of the Disappearing Fan” – *BEM* #5, September 1955, edited by Mal Ashworth and Tom White.
- “The Colossal Enchanted Duplicator Adventure” – “The Prying Fan” column instalment in *Pulp* #4, June 1987, edited by A. Vincent Clarke.
- “Fendetta” – *Retribution* #6, March 1957, edited by John Berry and Arthur Thomson.
- “The Goon – Ireland’s Pekinese Drummond” – *Retribution* #2, April 1956, edited by John Berry and Arthur Thomson.
- “Mike Hammer at the Clevention” – written 1954; first published in *Stellar* #18, 1958, edited by Ted White; reprinted in *Void* #26, August 1961, edited by Greg Benford, Pete Graham, Terry Carr and Ted White, with the historical note “Background” by Ted White.
- “The Immoral Storm” – *Opus* #2, January 1952, edited by Max Keasler.
- “A Modest Proposal” – *Century Note*, Winter 1956-1957, edited by Dick Eney for OMPA mailing 12.
- “The Only Way” – *Hyphen* #21, October 1958, edited by Walt Willis and Chuck Harris.
- “The Raybin Story” – *Innuendo* #10, December 1959, edited by Terry Carr.
- “The Spanish Main” – *Void* #25, June 1961, edited by Greg Benford, Pete Graham, and Ted White. “Afterword: Thickening Plots” from “The Harp that Once or Twice” (instalment #31) in *Warhoon* #13, October 1961, edited by Richard Bergeron.
- “Superfan!” – “The Prying Fan” column instalment in *Pulp* #3, November 1986, edited by Avedon Carol and Rob Hansen.

- “Thru Fort Mudge with Gun and Typewriter” – *Quandry* #25, October 1952, edited by Lee Hoffman.
- “Way of Life” – *Hyphen* #17, December 1956, edited by Walt Willis and Chuck Harris.
- “Whiskers” – “broadcast” at CORONCON, London, 23 May 1953; published in *Space Times* #17, November 1953, edited by Eric Bentcliffe. Afterword from *Hyphen* #6, January 1954, edited by Walt Willis and Chuck Harris.
- *Willis Discovers America* – Chapter 1 in *Confusion* #8 edited by Shelby Vick, ?April 1952; Chapter 2 in *Quandry* #20, May 1952, edited by Lee Hoffman; Chapter 3 in *Confusion* #9, ?May 1952; Chapter 4 in *Quandry* #21, June 1952; Chapter 5 in *Confusion* #10, June 1952; Chapter 6 in *Mad* Special Issue, ?July 1952, edited by Dick Ryan; Chapter 7 in *Confusion* #11, August 1952; Chapter 8 in *Oopsla!* #6, July 1952, edited by Gregg Calkins; Chapter 9 in *Fantasias* Special Issue, ?July/August 1952, edited by Dave English; Chapter 10 in *Confusion* Special Pre-Chicon Issue, August 1952. Preface and annotations added for the 1955 collected version edited by Walt Willis. Additional notes in square brackets by Ted White (unsigned) and Terry Carr (signed tgc) from the reissue in *Void* #23 to #28, January 1961 to February 1962, edited by Greg Benford, Terry Carr (from #26), Pete Graham and Ted White.

The End

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