

MOSCON XV



September 17-19, 1993

Moscow, Idaho

MosCon XV

Barbara Hambly, David Martin, Steve Fahnstalk, Dr. Victor R. Baker

September 17-19, 1993 — Moscow, Idaho

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Cover © 1993 by David Martin.

Chairman's Message

by Donna Bailly

For the 15th time, we are gathered together in this small town in Idaho for a weekend of fun, fantasy, science, and science-fiction. It's hard to believe so much time has passed since that young guy, Steve Fahnstalk, first stated, "We've got to have our own science-fiction convention!" We did. And we had so much fun, we kept on doing it for another 14 years.

This year, we're following much the same formula for MosCon that we've always used: Great guests, good programming, and friends, both old and new, to enjoy them with.

Barbara Hambly, David Martin, and Dr. Victor Baker are our special guests this year; oh, and that guy, Steve Fahnstalk, too. Not only are they talented, interesting people who contribute greatly to the atmosphere of any convention they attend, but they are fun to be around. Say "hello" and make yourself acquainted.

The programming should be an entertaining mix of old favorites and new innovations, science fiction, fantasy, and pure science, entertainment and current issues. Enjoy yourselves at these and the other events: the two

dances, the Saturday night masquerade, the Art Show and Auction, the Dealer's room, and the delicious Sunday Brunch.

We think the 15th Anniversary of MosCon is a special event for those of us who put on this convention and we hope to make it just as special for you too!

**And a Message
From Ye Olde
(boy, ain't that the
truth!) Editor
by Jon Gustafson**

Well, here we are at MosCon XV. I can remember during MosCon I wondering whether or not there would be a MosCon II, because we didn't know whether or not we had made a profit on the first con. If you had asked me at that time if there would even *be* a MosCon XV, I probably would have said "no."

And this is either the fourteenth or fifteenth Program Book I've put together (it seems to me that somebody else put one of them together, but I can't be certain at this point) and once again MosCon leads the convention world into the next century. Once

again, MosCon is paying authors for their work featured in this book. It is a step, I believe, in the right direction to soothing some of the ruffled feathers that have developed in the past few years between authors and cons.

I was hoping to pioneer some new territory by being able to pay the artists as well, but that didn't work out. Perhaps next year.

Still, MosCon has gained the reputation as being one of the most innovative conventions in the country, with many firsts to its credit, so I guess we'll have to be satisfied with that.

As always, we look beyond our own group for ideas, so if you have any suggestions, any at all (even *those* kind), we would be interested in hearing them. Really. Even comments and/or suggestions about the Program Book (what I should include, exclude, or whatever.)

I hope you enjoy the convention, the Program Book, and the rest of whatever it was that you came to MosCon for. Hopefully, that included friends (both the ones you see daily and the ones you see on only a yearly basis).

P.S. I hope you volunteer to help out with the con; we couldn't make it without you!

Author Guest of Honor

Barbara Hambly

by Barbara Hambly

Barbara Hambly was born in the Naval Hospital of San Diego, California, on the 28th of August, 1951. From her earliest years she was drawn to fantasy and science fiction, finding it far more interesting than reality in the modest California town where she grew up; reading it or watching it on TV or the movies, and telling it as stories to her brother and sister, and alone among her contemporaries, always knew what she wanted to do when she grew up. Unfortunately, every one told her that becoming a writer a) was difficult to break in to and b) didn't pay.

She attended college at the University of California in Riverside, California, and spent one year at the University of Bordeaux in France. After obtaining a Master's Degree in medieval history, she held a variety of jobs: model, clerk, high school teacher, karate instructor (she holds a black belt in Shotokan Karate), technical writer, mostly in quest of a job that would leave her with enough time to write. During those years she continued to write, and in 1982 was finally published by Ballantine/Del Rey.

She discovered that the people who had been telling her not to be a writer all those

years were wrong.

She is of the Sedentary or Dirty-Bathrobe School of Writers, and, to the surprise of many writers of her acquaintance, actually enjoys writing. Her works are mostly sword-and-sorcery fantasy, many of which have been nominated for Nebula Awards, though she has also written a historical whodunnit and novels and novelizations from television shows, notably *Beauty and the Beast* and *Star Trek*. She has also made an excursion into vampire-literature with *Those Who Hunt the Night*, (British title: *Immortal Blood*) and at one time she wrote scripts for animated cartoon shows. Her latest work is *Dog-Wizard*, the third book of

the Windrose Chronicles; her next, *Stranger at the Wedding*, will be set in the universe of the Windrose Chronicles, but not about Antryg Windrose himself. She is also editing an anthology of original stories about lady vampires, entitled *Sisters of the Night*.

Besides her brother and sister, she is associated with the usual number of parents, and several very odd friends. Her interests besides writing include dancing, painting, historical and fantasy costuming, and occasional carpentry. She resides in a big, ugly house in Los Angeles with the two cutest Pekineses in the world.



Artist Quest of Honor

David Martin

by David Martin

When David was three years old, he saw lizards transformed through camera trickery into monsters in the movie *Jungle Jim* starring Johnny Weissmuller. From then on, he knew what he wanted to do in life.

David grew up in Wichita Falls, Texas, where schoolmates constantly pestered him for illustrations of gremlins and goblins. He says that Wichita Falls was the most boring place to live, so drawing was a way of amusing himself. By the time he was in high school, his comic strips were a hot item in the school paper.

Amazingly, David has had no formal training. He studied relevant texts and produced in Houston, Texas, until 1981, when he moved to Austin where he formed an advertising agency and worked in the "real world" of commercial art. By 1986, he had cultivated a solid reputation in art circles. He reunited in East Texas with an old pal, Ellisa Schob. The two were married soon after and settled into an old German family home along the railroad tracks in Wood-lawn. Both maintained their studios, Works of the Fantastic and Syzygy, in the home's lower floor (they has since gone their separate ways).

David has produced more than 120 covers in the fields of science fiction, fantasy and horror. He is best known for his work in the field of adventure gaming, and has worked with clients including West End Games, FASA, TSR, Game Designer's WorkShop, MicroProse Software, *Nibble Magazine*, Baen Software, *Grenadier Magazine*, Dark Horse Miniatures, Steve Jackson Games, and Iron Crown Enterprises. He has produced covers for

paperback books, record albums, magazines, posters, prints, videotapes, and miniatures. His work has appeared in the United States, Austria, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, Canada, France, Italy, England, Japan, Germany, and the Netherlands.

His artwork has graced the novels and short stories of Tanith Lee, Michael Resnick, Gordon R. Dickson, Algis Budrys, V.E. Mitchell (ask him about the aircraft carrier made of ice that he did for Vicki's story), and Fred Saberhagen.

Since 1974, David has won over 20 awards for the work he has shown at conventions. He was featured artist at the Origins 1987 show and designed the logo now used on the prestigious H.G. Wells Award. He is currently expanding his influence to the field of Fine Art. "After doing 120 paintings," David said, "I'm just realizing what I want to do. I feel like I'm

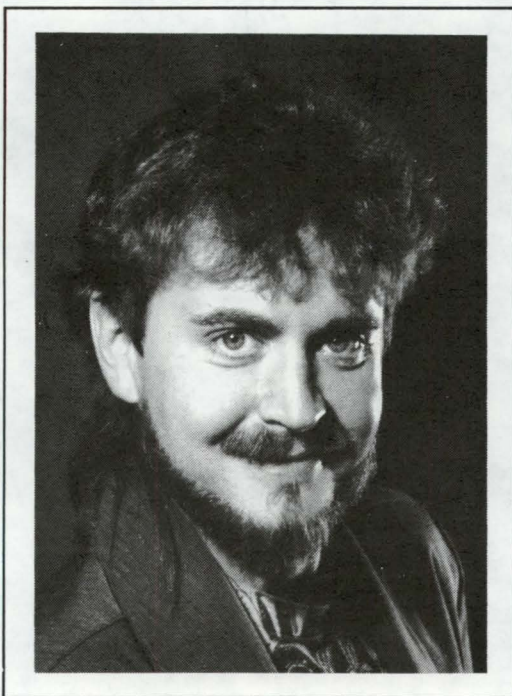
starting all over again."

Currently, David is working on a science fiction novel that deals with the intrusion of futuristic technology into a shamanist culture, titled *Dream Dances of the Fox God*. Along with the novel, he is creating a series of paintings exploring primitive tribal cultures, which he says reflects a work that is still evolving. "I'm always trying to come up with picture ideas while visiting a place. I just get absorbed in the atmosphere of a place, and whatever it suggests to me, I run with it."

David would be the first to admit that his works don't often draw such praises as "isn't that cute!" He notes that art is not always pretty; it's not just decoration. "I like to paint pretty things, but that's not all there is. There are darker moments, and sometimes those moments are the most profound. The most beautiful things in life are those that are balances between things." The methods and mediums of his work vary widely. They include oils, alkyds, acrylics, gouache, watercolor, ink, and colored pencils. Often an individual painting may employ as many as four of these media at once. Occasionally, David uses computer technology to manipulate or enhance a specific image.

In 1991, David's work appeared at Olympia and York's "Into the Future" exhibition in New York, one the first international science fiction shows in this country. In 1992, he was nominated for a Chesley Award, the science fiction art world's highest honor (given by ASFA), for a cover on *Amazing Stories*.

(He also happens to be a very interesting person to talk to and a nice guy to boot — Editor)



Fan Guest of Honor

Steve Fahnestalk

The Lovely and Talented Steve Fahnestalk: The Official Bio

by Lynne Taylor Fahnestalk

The Talented Parts

Winner of numerous ugly tie contests, Bulwer-Lytton competitions and Inter-Pub Dart tournaments, Steve Fahnestalk is a multitaled kind-o-guy.

A voracious reader since the age of 6, beginning with Dan Dare and H.P. Lovecraft, Steve often polishes off 2-5 books a day. He's deadly at pun wars (I have the mental scars to prove it) and has wagged his way around many a shaggy dog story.

Steve loves all kinds of music (Rap and Filk do not qualify), plays guitar and keyboard and will happily sing Beatle songs all night long with or without the slightest provocation.

In just 46 short years he's started sf groups, begun and run several cons (with a little help from his friends), begun writers groups and even published both sf-fiction and non-fiction. He had a play produced by CBC Radio and has written, directed, and acted in stage productions.

Steve currently spends way too many hours as a computer analyst for the Province of Alberta. He speaks several languages, makes a mean pecan pie and can juggle eggs — occasionally all at the same time.

The Lovely Parts

Steve is a friend to all animals and they respond to him immediately. Frogs follow him around. He loves to collect toys, movies and old grocery receipts. He has a passion for flea markets and garage sales. He has a complete set of Dr. Demento records and an entire wall of convention buttons and badges. He has a good parking spot fairy and wins free tickets on

the radio.

If you haven't met Steve Fahnestalk yet — he's the handsome, scalp-advantaged guy with the gray ponytail and beard, drinking a cup of coffee and having a conversation in hospitality or the quiet bar. Walk up and say "hi." Steve will enthusiastically talk with you on almost any subject — and more importantly, he will also listen.

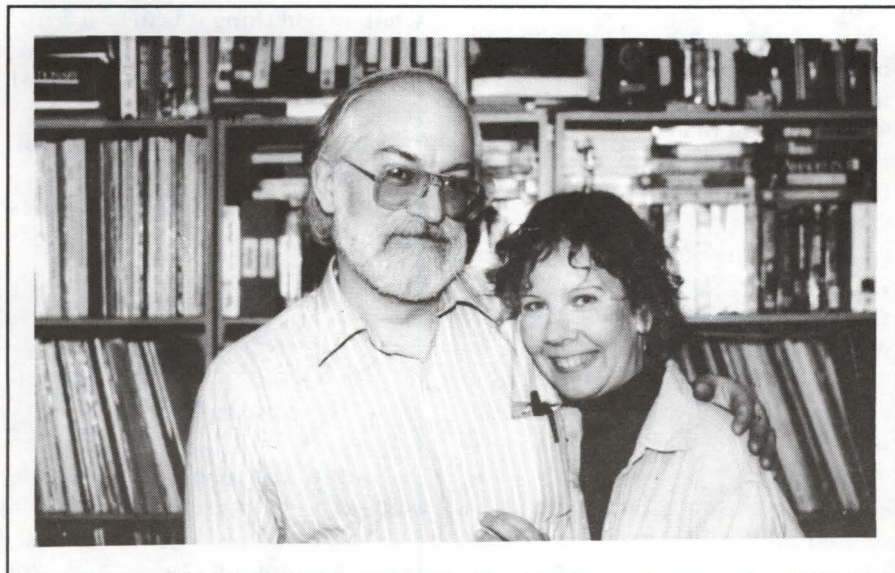
The Total All-Out Full-Blown Outright Steve Fahnestalk and How He Grew

by Jerry Sohl

Steve Fahnestalk can best be described as a Homo supersapiens who exists patiently waiting for our wits to grow sharper. If we ever reach parity, that exalted state, we might at last begin to understand just what it is he is saying. As Steve complains, wiping away a tear, Messiahs need love, too. Some persons, be they those self-apotheosized saints with dangerous visions or those who have a degree in Cyberpunk 101, make the mistake of belittling Steve. The truth is, he coolly understands them while they haven't the vaguest notion of what and who he is.

Although Steve Fahnestalk was created the way the rest of us were, he has the entire genome, instead of selected DNA, RNA and designated chromosomes, though he is definitely 46XY (let's watch those XXs and a word to the YYs).

The vague beginnings of Steve's advent (in His case with a capital A



for Advent for the event) are rumored to have been in the constellation Cepheus as one of the Cepheids, those yellow (it says here) supergiant variables. His fluctuations in luminosity (he does change, you know) are caused by an actual physical pulsation with attendant changes in surface temperature and size. This accounts for us remembering him in different ways, some seeing him in his big size and others as a midget. Steve, Cepheid variable that he is, can't ever make up his mind which is his own true size.

To comprehend the organism that is Fahnstalk takes prescience. If you are not born with prescience, then you will have to depend upon perseverance, but perseverance only after several ashrams and travels through altered states or, at the very least, serene reflection meditation in soto Zen tradition to lay the groundwork. Fahnstalk is mostly groundwork that has been carefully nurtured by sympathetic friends, of which there are many, and may their tribes increase. Any day now he will bloom, and what a splendiferous flower he will become, all stamen and no petals. Have you seen the size of his pollen? It is enormous; in fact, his pollen is an allergen which, once inhaled, can lead to many things, the worst being addiction.

Steve was born eons ago parthenogenetically as his spore essence drifted down through the troposphere. It is said his 46XY designation comes from the heat engendered as he went down. It was years before the spore that was his contumely was allowed through the ozone layer to reach ground level where it was carefully nurtured by science fiction buffs who mistook him for a human being. This was not at all uncomfortable for Steve, considering the love that was squandered upon him by those card-bearing members of the MosCon Marching and Chowder Society.

The truth is, nothing is too good for Steve, which is why, on balance, he gets less than nothing, except when he is unbalanced, in which case he becomes insufferable only to those in close proximity.

Steve's ancestors go back to Alpha Centauri and a couple star systems and clusters that are still coupling and clustering. They sent him to us as their only begotten son, so to speak, and one does not often speak unkindly to or of Steve because of the Draconian measures that might result, including sending the MosCon marchers after us, among other things.

Steve means well. He even reads well. Aloud, even. It is we who, as I say, misconstrue. We often run out of missing those construes which makes it difficult for us to comprehend macrocephalics, though not literally.

No one has told Steve how long he will live since it is better if the world doesn't know, for then, at the very least, we have hope. The truth is, Steve is immortal. Or is it immoral? What a difference a little tea makes, twenty-four little leaves. I have been looking forward to the first of those. So I now leave you. I'm not teasing.

The forgoing was written by an impostor and found in a bottle floating in the Red Sea (or was it the Dead Sea?). The truth is Steve was born in Djibouti in 400 A.D. and had to wait around all this time to come to Idaho and go through the motions. What motions? you might ask. You've seen them. He's always going through motions, and when he gets tired of these he starts E-motions, just like in E-mail. His father was a shepherd and his mother was a fine lady who had been an Ethiopian princess before being kidnapped and taken to Djibouti where she fell in love with the shepherd, and the shepherd was pleased to have a real woman around, or so the story goes.

It was while Steve was waiting in Djibouti [see: *Sheik Djibouti — Ed.*] that he wrote Lorentz and Fitzgerald and, from their letters, was able to create the Lorentz-Fitzgerald contraction theory, which he thought was the key to the universe. Steve was wrong.

Steve is the universe.

And only a few select among us have the key.

We will lock him up one of these days, provided there is not a theophony before that (when he reveals his true self which he has been trying to find all these years).

In the meantime, as Count Robert of Paris would say, One hour of life with Steve, crowded to the full with glorious action, and filled with noble risks, is worth whole years of those mean observances of paltry decorum otherwise known as the MosCon Hours (with Laughing Allegra, yet).

We should all drink to that.

William Gibson (in haste) on Steve Fahnstalk

I've just revised a screenplay in a total of four days, something that should rightly have required two weeks, and consequently I feel like hammered shit. In an hour and a half I leave for a three-week book tour, utterly at the mercy of the weasels of publicity. This is what can happen if you set out to become a writer.

When I was in the process of becoming a writer, though, I knew Steve Fahnstalk. I still know Steve Fahnstalk and, believe me, I'm grateful for it.

Steve Fahnstalk is one of the nicest, sanest, smartest, funniest men around, and has a highly developed sense of irony with regard to just what an odd thing it is to be a writer.

Knowing Steve Fahnstalk is a plus for sanity. Not to mention laughter.

But you'll find out; he's Fan GoH. Bask in it.

I wish I had time to tell you Steve Fahnstalk stories, but I've got a plane to catch.

Steve Fahnstalk by Spider Robinson

Most of the time I am reasonably content to be myself. I like me, my wife likes me, my kid likes me, and if the rest of 'em can't take a joke, well.

But from time to time a madness comes upon me. It goes back to adolescence, when nobody particularly liked me, and most important, no female particularly liked me except my Mom. (And even she had trouble. I was a difficult son.) Those things stay with you, I guess. Thirty years later, I'll be walking through the halls of a convention hotel, perfectly resigned to being Spider Robinson, successful writer, happiest husband alive —

— and suddenly I'll hear the sound of a guitar, and the years and my mind melt away, and I need to become John Lennon again.

He was the Beatle whose high notes I could reach, whose licks I could copy accurately, whose sensibility most closely matched my own. I liked all four — but it was John I wanted to be. I can play or sing pretty much anything he ever recorded with the Beatles, and a lot of the later stuff. Becoming his reincarnation was the first successful strategy I ever found for having fun.

The only problem was, I never found my Paul McCartney. The only male partner I ever worked with as a musician was a baritone who played twelve-string and didn't much like the Beatles.

And so for me, the best possible convention is one attended by Steve Fahnstalk — because he is the reincarnation of Paul McCartney.

Oh, it's not that rigid. We trade off personas on certain songs. It gets especially schizoid if Randy Reichardt or Tam or someone else who can really play guitar is in the room, for some reason when I hear them picking out George Harrison's lead guitar parts, I start singing Harrison's harmony lines. Early in the evening while my throat's still got lining on it I like to take a kamikaze pass at McCartney's "Oh, Darling," just for laughs. And Steve and I frequently do non-Beatle songs together — folk, jazz, rock, any kind of music that sounds good with acoustic guitars and we both know.

But whoever else may be in the room, whatever else gets sung, if Steve is there I know we're going to end up staggering through most of

the Beatles canon before the night is through. How he can hit those McCartney notes, and still have enough testosterone to grow a beard like that, is beyond me. And he knows all the right chords — not the ones in the damned sheet music. Also — and here is the sign of the true Beatlemaniac — like me he keeps his guitar tuned a half-step down, as they did on their early sessions. For me the high point of the evening is usually the recreation of ABBEY ROAD, from "Here come ol' Flattop —" straight through to "— someday I'm gonna make her mine." (Especially when my Jeanne comes in with the ethereal third harmony on "Because.") Younger fen gather to gape at these dinosaurs recreating Jurassic chants, Boomers get teary and sing along if they can carry a tune, older fen decide maybe that crap wasn't so bad, after all, filksingers gnash their teeth in frustration. Along about dawn we all embrace and crawl off to our various lairs to pass out, throats hoarse, fingers bleeding, totally happy, ready to reassume our mundane identities again when we awake it is what sainted Lord Buckley would have called, "The Bendin' End."

This has happened well over half a dozen times now, over the years, and the joy has not worn off yet. I'm sorry I can't be there to do it again at MosCon — but if by any chance you've ever fancied yourself a reincarnation of John Lennon, or even George Harrison, you could do worse than to walk up to Steve with a guitar this weekend, welcome him to the Woolton Fête, and ask him if he knows all the words to "Twenty Flight Rock." He might be willing to join your skiffle band....

Appreciation of Steve Fahnstalk

by Frank Kelly Freas

The name Steve Fahnstalk looms large among those in the know. This guy has an SF pedigree as long as some gorilla arms, and even longer

than Spiderman's web.

I've known Steve a long time. He's been extremely active and influential in science fiction in Canada and the US. In 1973 he established the Palouse (pronounced *Pay Lousy*) Empire SF Association (because he wanted to meet other fans). The following year he published his first fanzine (*New Venture*) with Jon Gustafson. He founded (or co-founded) many of the backbone events and institutions of our beloved science fiction including: PESFA; ConText (Canada's first "literary" con); SF Canada (Canadian equivalent of SFWA); and Art SF Canada (Canada's counterpart to ASFA).

Speaking of ASFA, Steve is a charter member, as well as an associate member of SFWA [Steve, I was asked to remind you that your renewal comes up this fall!!]. He published an article in the first *Starlog* yearbook. For nearly two years in the late '70s he was a columnist for *Amazing*. What's amazing to me (no pun intended) is how this low-profile giant does not even realize the luminary he has become in our field.

There seems to be no end to Steve's accomplishments. He's written stories which were published or sold to *Pulphouse*, *Rats in the Soufflé* 1 & 2 (anthologies), and *Splatterfairies* (anthology). As if that were not enough, he is currently working on a *Star Trek: The Next Generation* novel for Pocket Books (with the editor's blessing).

I could go on and on about this guy's achievements and his important contributions to the field of science fiction. But I won't, not because I've run out of things he's done, but because I don't want to embarrass Steve any more than I already have in the things I just said about him.

Yes, embarrass. Steve is the least snooty guy in the world about his accomplishments, even though he has every right to be as snooty as anybody in the business. *Au contraire, mon frere!* He is one heck of a nice guy: interesting to talk to, downright friendly, and an excellent judge of good whiskey. Seek him out. Go up and introduce yourself to him. You'll

have a wonderful conversation, and make a terrific new acquaintance. I certainly am glad that I did just that many years ago. You will discover why he is one of my favorite people!

A Paragraph or Two for Steve

by George Barr

Steve Fahnstalk is, among other things, a writer. There are a lot of motivations for writing. Some people do it compulsively — like dogs marking every tree in the neighborhood — to prove their existence. Some do it simply because they enjoy it. Others feel obligated, for social reasons, to be apparently involved in something constructive. For some it provides a basis for a kind of snobbery... enabling them to look down upon those less creative than themselves.

Those who judge quality by volume or, worse, by the dollars-and-

cents remuneration it has earned, cheat themselves if they deem a less-often-published writer as less deserving of their attention. Steve is the proof of that. (So's Harper Lee, as a matter of fact.)

I wouldn't presume to guess at the reasons for his writing, but those of us who've read and enjoyed it definitely feel he doesn't do enough of it.

I've known him for approximately eighteen years and can say with utter sincerity that he's among the most interesting people I know. Hey, he *likes* me. That makes him pretty damned interesting in *my* book.

He's sincere (though occasionally snide), creative, innovative, with talents so diverse that it's difficult for him to get them all focused in one direction. Like most people, he usually feels that what he does could have been a lot better if he'd tried a little harder... and, like most people, he's probably right.

He has published fanzines, chaired conventions, and written sto-

ries... all successfully. He's also been a good friend for a very long time... also successfully. I recommend him highly: as a publisher, a writer, a raconteur, and as a friend. You don't exactly ignore him at risk to your life, but a passed-up chance to know him will definitely leave your life a little less rich than it could have been.

EXTINCTION

The woolly mammoth quick froze —
mouths stuffed with buttercups.

We'll slide into history
jaws clamped on a Big Mac

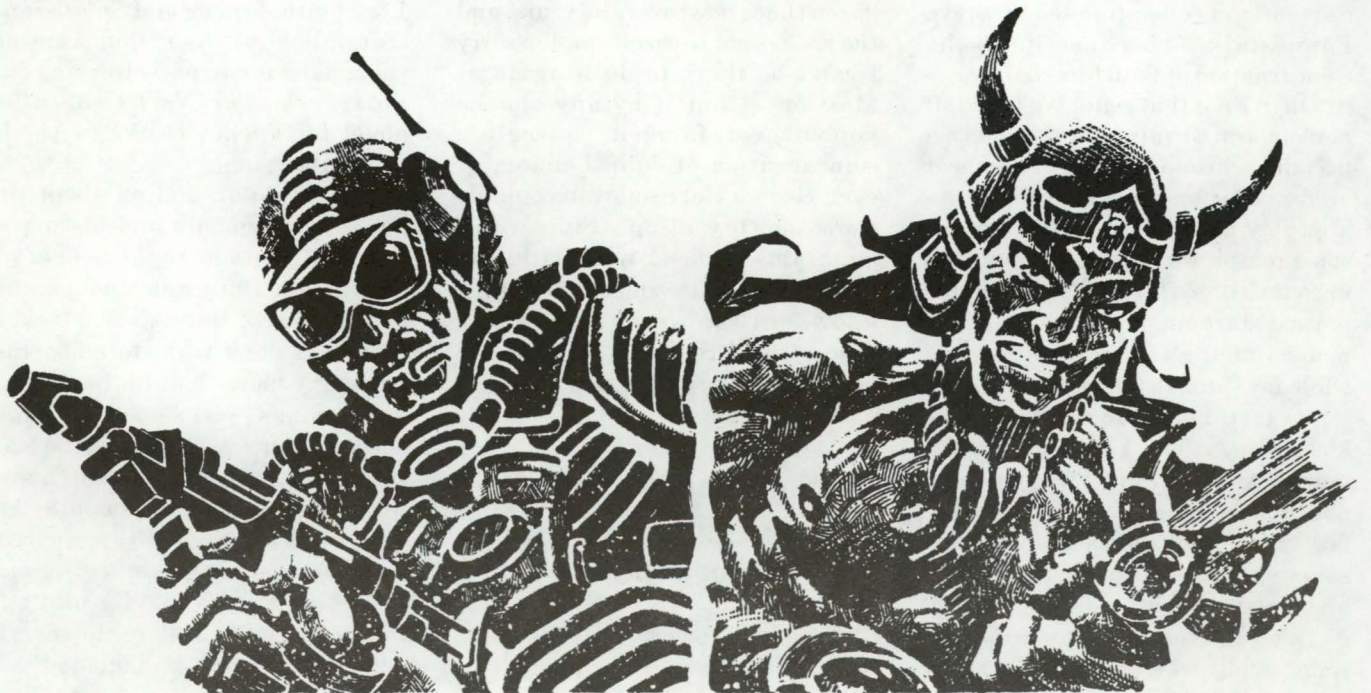
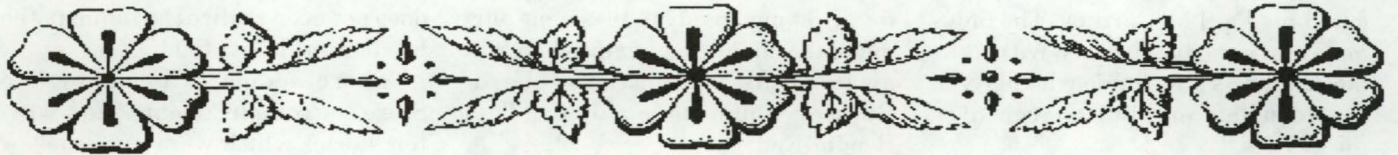
mumbling around mouthfuls
how hard it is to...

what's the use anyway,
when the millenia melts

we'll be found fat,
frozen, mouths full,

right hand clutching a TV remote,
left wrapped 'round a beer.

K.V. Skene



Scientist Guest of Honor

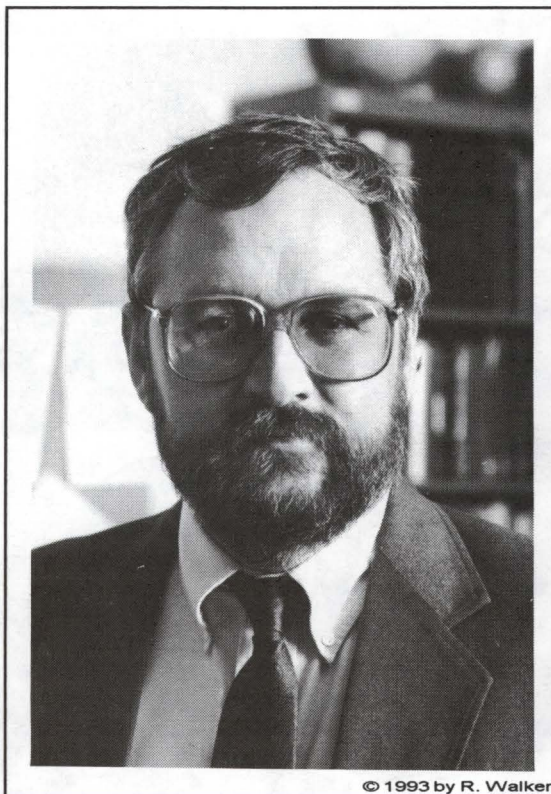
Dr. Victor R. Baker

by Victor R. Baker, Ph.D.

Dr. Victor R. Baker is a Regents Professor at the University of Arizona, Department of Geosciences, Tucson, Arizona. He is also Professor of Geosciences, Professor of Planetary Sciences, and Professor in the Lunar and Planetary Laboratory, University of Arizona. He received a B.S. in Geology from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1967 and a Ph.D. in Geology from the University of Colorado in 1971. He has worked as a hydrologist/geophysicist for the U.S. Geological Survey (1966-1969); as the City Geologist of Boulder, Colorado (1969-1971); and as a Research Scientist for the Bureau of Economic Geology, the University of Texas (1973). From 1971-1981 he was on the faculty of The University of Texas at Austin. In 1979-1980 he was a Visiting Fellow at Australian National University, Australia. He accepted his present position at the University of Arizona in 1981. In 1988 he was a Visiting Research Fellow at the National Institute of Hydrology in India and at the University of Adelaide, South Australia.

Dr. Baker has authored or co-authored more than 125 research papers, plus numerous reports, reviews, abstracts, and encyclopedia articles. His books include *The Channels of Mars*, *Catastrophic Flooding* (edited), *Surficial Geology* (co-authored with John E. Costa), *The Channeled Scabland* (co-edited with Dag Nummedal), and *Flood Geomorphology* (co-edited with R. Craig Kochel and Peter C. Patton).

Victor R. Baker is married to



© 1993 by R. Walker

Pauline M. Baker, artist and art educator. Mr. and Mrs. Baker have two sons, Trent and Theodore.

Dr. Baker has served on numerous technical and advisory committees, study groups and panels. These include several advisory groups to National Aeronautics and Space Administration programs, committees and panels of the National Research Council, and editorial advisory boards for the University of Arizona Press and various journals (*Geology*, *Geomorphology*, *Journal of Geophysical Research*, *Zeitschrift für Geomorphologie*). He has served as Councilor, as Chairman of the Planetary Geology Division, and as Chairman of the Quaternary Geology and Geomorphology Division of The Geo-

logical Society of America. He is presently Chair of the Section on Geology and Geography, American Association for the Advancement of Science. He chairs the U.S. National Committee for the international Union for Quaternary Research (INQUA), and he is Vice-President of the INQUA Commission on Global Continental Paleohydrology. His professional memberships include AAAS (Fellow), AGU, AMQUA, GSA (Fellow), NAGT, SEPM, and Sigma Xi.

Research projects have been funded by the National Science Foundation, N.A.S.A., U.S. Dept. of Interior, U.S. Geological Survey, the National Geographic Society, and the Smithsonian Institution. Specific projects have concerned paleoflood hydrologic studies in Texas, Utah, Arizona, northern Australia, Israel, and India; flood geomorphology; volcanoes in Hawaii; channels, valleys, and geomorphic features on Mars; the geomorphology of Venus; river morphology in South America; Quaternary geology in Texas and the Colorado Plateau; karst hydrology in New York; and catastrophic Pleistocene floods in the northwestern U.S. and central Asia.

Dr. Baker has lectured extensively at universities and research institutes in Australia, Israel, United Kingdom, Singapore, India, southern Africa, Russia, Poland, Japan, Canada, and the United States of America. He has served as a consultant to governmental agencies and private firms on problems of flood hydrology, river erosion, engineering geology, and geochronology.



Other Honored Guests

MICHAEL A. ARNZEN by Michael Arnzen

Michael Arnzen is a Colorado writer with many stories published in the small press and semi-prozine markets, and who has recently made it into the Big Time with the sale of a horror novel, *Grave Markings* (due out in the summer of 1993), to the Dell Abyss line. A section of that novel will appear in DAW's annual *Year's Best Horror Stories XX*. He has published over 100 pieces of fiction and poetry in such magazines as *New Blood*, *2 AM*, *Thin Ice*, *Midnight Zoo*, and many others, including Moscow's own *Figment*. He also runs his own small press, Mastication Publications, which recently published the acclaimed *Psychos* horror poetry anthology.

EILEEN BRADY by Eileen Brady

Eileen Brady had the enjoyable opportunity to do research for the second pilot (and the first season) of *Star Trek*, to which she also sold a treatment. Other television series she worked on included *The Invaders*, *Get Smart*, *Mission: Impossible*, *I Spy*, *The Fugitive*, *The Big Valley*, and *Mannix*. During her very first week on the job as a researcher, she answered the telephone, only to hear Rod Serling asking for help. (He hummed a tune which he wanted to include in a script, and until he knew its name, he could not go on. It was "Gaudeamus Igitur.")

Since leaving Los Angeles, Eileen continues to do occasional research for motion pictures and television and works at the Science and Engineering Library at Washington State University. During her free time, she writes screenplays, novels, and works on *American Television Series: 1935-1985*, a five-volume encyclopedia which is under contract to Facts on File, Inc.

KEVIN "KEV" BROCKSCHMIDT by Kevin Brockschmidt

KEV is best known for his cartooning and illustration work for *Starlog* magazine, with whom he has been working since 1991. His other genre work includes cartoons for *Comics Scene* and *Dragon Magazine*, as well as illustrations for *Wizards of the Coast* and *Garfield Games*. He has also contributed numerous cartoons for Northwest Gamer's Network and many convention program books. KEV also teaches drawing and recently served as president of Cartoonists Northwest.

KEV currently resides with his beautiful wife, Tami, in Tacoma, where he drinks too much coffee and watches too many cartoons.

ALGIS BUDRYS by Jon Gustafson

Algis Budrys is one of the giants of science fiction field, in spite of his relatively limited production of fiction. His novels include classics such as *Who?*, *The Falling Torch*, *Rogue Moon*, *Michaelmas*, *The Amsirs and the Iron Thorn*, *False Night*, *Man of Earth*, and *Some Will Not Die*. He has recently turned in a new novel, his first in several years. He has also had three short story collections published: *The Unexpected Dimension*, *Budrys' Inferno*, and *Blood & Burning*. He is also the editor of a new science fiction magazine, *Tomorrow*.

He is one of the foremost critics and reviewers in the field, as well, and his columns have appeared in *Galaxy*, *Analog*, *F&SF*, *Science Fiction Review*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Chicago Sun-Times*, among other places. Not content to merely take from the field, he gives to it as well, and has taught how to write science fiction at Clarion, the Taos Writers of the Future Experimental Workshop, and for the Moscow Moffia Writers' Program.

F.M. BUSBY by Jon Gustafson

Born and raised in the Palouse, F.M. Busby is the author of many science fiction novels, most notably *To Cage a Man*, *The Proud Enemy*, *Rissa Kerguelen*, *Zelde M'Tana*, *The Breeds of Man*, and *Slow Freight*. On the fannish side of things, he and his wife, Elinor, he produced the Hugo Award-winning fanzine, *Cry*. They have been coming to MosCon for many years and regularly provide great conversations with con members.

JOHN DALMAS by Jon Gustafson

John Dalmas is your typical science fiction author who has worked at the typical list of jobs before becoming a writer: farm worker, parachute infantryman, stevedore, logger, merchant seaman, army medic, mover, smoke-jumper, administrative forester, creamery worker, technical writer, and freelance editor. His first professionally published story was "The Yngling" (*Analog*), which was later expanded to novel length and published in paperback by Pyramid (1971, 1977) and Tor (1984). He's also written such books as *The Varkhaus Conspiracy*, *Homecoming*, *Fanglith*, *The Reality Matrix*, *The General's President*, *The Regiment*, and a dozen or more other excellent novels. John is married (Gail), has two grown children, and two grandsons. And lots of interests.

M.J. (Mary Jane) ENGH by Jon Gustafson

M.J. Engh is a librarian — kind, gentle, and understanding; this much is readily apparent when you read her classic sf novel, *Arslan*. A local destitute, she lives in Pullman, where she has written other novels (*Wheel of the Winds*, *The House in the Snow* (a young adult novel), and

Rainbow Man) and well-received short stories. She is a lover of cats, but is a nice person regardless.

MEL GILDEN by Mel Gilden

Mel Gilden is the author of *The Return of Captain Conquer* and is the primary writer of the popular *Fifth Grade Monsters* series. His books, *Harry Newberry and Raiders of the Red Drink*, *Outer Space and All That Junk* (a Junior Library Guild selection), and *The Planetoid of Amazement* received good to raving reviews in such places as *School Library Journal* and *Booklist*. These are all books for children and for like-minded adults.

Books for grownups include *Surfing Samurai Robots*, which received good reviews in the *Washington Post* and other publications, and which has spawned two sequels. Also available is *Boogeymen*, a best-selling novel for the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* series, and Number One best-selling novelizations of stories from *Beverly Hills, 90210*. Coming soon is a *Trek Classic* novel, as yet without an official title. He has also published short stories in many original and reprint anthologies, most recently in *The Ultimate Werewolf*.

He spent five years as co-host of Los Angeles radio's science fiction interview show, *Hour-25*, and was assistant story editor for the DIC production of *The Real Ghostbusters*. He has written cartoons for TV, and has even developed new shows.

To demonstrate that he remains a force for good in our time, he lectures to school and library groups, and has been known to teach fiction writing.

He is a member of SFWA (Science-fiction and Fantasy Writers of America), Mystery Writers of America, and PEN. He lives in Venice, California, where the debris meets the sea, and still hopes to be an astronaut when he grows up.

JAMES C. GLASS by James Glass

James C. Glass is the 1991 Gold Grand Prize Winner of the L. Ron Hubbard Writers of the Future Con-

test. He has sold stories to *Aboriginal SF*, *Pulphouse Magazine*, *Writers of the Future Vol. 7*, and small press magazines such as *Midnight Zoo*, *Eldritch Tales*, *Doppelganger*, and *Hard-Boiled Detective*. A physicist by training, he is currently Dean of the College of Science, Mathematics and Technology at Eastern Washington State University. His wife, Gail, is a Trekker and a *Beauty and the Beast* fan, a member of Vincent's Pride.

JONGUSTAFSON by Jon Gustafson

Jon has been involved in science fiction since pre-hysterical days. He entered the world of sf fandom in 1973, when he met this year's Fan GoH. He has attended many cons, written and had published many sf-related articles (and some short stories), and even had a book published (*Chroma: The Art of Alex Schomburg*). He was one of the founders of PESFA, MosCon, ASFA, and Writer's Bloc, and is a member of SFWA. He is the owner of JMG Appraisals, the nation's only professional sf/fantasy art appraisal service. He is married to best-selling author V.E. (Vicki) Mitchell.

BARB HENDEE by J.C. Hendee

Barb (affectionately known as Ms. Manners) has sold fiction to *Deathrealm*, *Cemetery Dance*, *After Hours*, *Not One of Us*, *The 1992 Year in Darkness Calendar*, *Pulphouse Magazine*, *GhostTide*, *Bizarre Bazaar '92*, *Amazing Experiences*, *Fugue*, Pulp-house's *Rats in the Soufflé* anthology, DAW Books' *1991 Year's Best Horror* anthology, and *Midnight Zoo*. She received an honorable mention in Ellen Datlow's *Year's Best Fantasy and Horror, 1990*, for her story "China Dolls in Red Lagoons" (*Cemetery Dance*, Winter 1990). She has been the co-editor (along with husband J.C.) of *Figment: Tales of the Imagination* (which was named one of the top 50 fiction markets in the United States this year) for the past three years and was an assistant editor of the

MagiCon Program Book this year. She likes gourmet coffee, Monty Python films, and — obviously — truly sick humor.

J.C. (JONATHON) HENDEE by J.C. Hendee

J.C. (sometimes called Jonathon by friends, affectionate enemies, and other beasts in the business) has sold fiction, poetry, art, and non-fiction to such markets as *Midnight Zoo*, *Deathrealm*, *Amazing Experiences*, *Pulphouse's Rats in the Soufflé* anthology (ed. by Jon Gustafson), *MagiCon (1992 Worldcon)*, *Program Book*, *GWN Magazine*, *Hardware*, *Star*Line*, *Novel & Short Story Writer's Market*, *Guidelines Magazine*, *The Poetic Knight*, *Leading Edge*, *Not One of Us*, *MZ Calendar 1992*, *MosCon XIV Program Book*, *Dragonfang*, *Paradise Creek Journal*, and *Fugue*. He is also the editor/publisher (along with wife, Barb) of the alternative press digest, *Figment: Tales from the Imagination*. He is the founder and executive editor of *Fugue: the Literary Digest of the University of Idaho* and the publisher and production manager of *Star*Line: the Newsletter of the Science Fiction Poetry Association*. He was also an assistant editor of the *MagiCon Program Book*. J.C. likes archaic weapons, SF/F art and animated films, sleeping (which he does little enough of), and eating at least once a week.

NINA KIRIKI HOFFMAN by Jon Gustafson

Nina is one of the many successful Moscow writers to leave the area for greener pastures, so to speak. She presently lives in Eugene, Oregon, where she cavorts with numerous other writers collectively known as the Pulphouse Gang. She is still, of course, considered a member in good standing of the Moscow Moffia.

About her early life, Nina says, "I am the sixth of seven children and grew up in Southern California, known by some as the Altered State."

Her short fiction has appeared in *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*, *Dragon Magazine*, the an-

thologies *Shadows 8* and *Shadows 9* (Charles L. Grant, ed.), *Greystone Bay* and *Doom City* (also edited by Grant), Jessica Amanda Salmonson's *Tales by Moonlight, Vol. I & II, Writers of the Future, Vol. I*, (Algis Budrys, ed.), *Pulphouse: The Hardback Magazine*, *Pulphouse: the Weekly Magazine*, *Weird Tales* (where she will be the featured author for issue #306), *Iniquities*, *Amazing Stories*, *The Year's Best Horror XIX* (edited by Karl Edward Wagner), *Grue*, *The Ultimate Werewolf*, *Aboriginal SF*, and last, but certainly not least, Damon Knight's *Clarion Awards* anthology. She will also have a novella, "Unmasking," released by Axolotl Press by the time you read this.

Nina recently broke out of the short story arena with two novel sales. One is a young adult novel, *Child of an Ancient City*, written in collaboration with Tad Williams. The other is a fantasy novel, *The Thread That Binds the Bones*, due out from Avon in September of 1993.

V.E. (Vicki) MITCHELL
by Jon Gustafson

Vicki has been involved in PESFA and MosCon since its early days, and has worked on the convention in many guises, including chair. She has been involved with Northwest costuming and has won several awards. A New York Times best-selling author, she has three *Star Trek* and *ST: TNG* novels on the stands (*Enemy Unseen*, *Imbalance*, and *Windows on a Lost World*) and has just turned in a *ST: TNG* young adult novel which should be out in 1994. She is married to Jon Gustafson and is owned by a gigantic and silly dog, Mica.

AMY THOMSON
by Jon Gustafson

Amy Thomson is another of the ex-PESFAns who have made good in the world of science fiction. Well-known in the fannish world, she wrote a short-lived column for *Locus* and has recently published her first novel, *Virtual Girl*.

VERNA SMITH TRESTRAIL
by Beth Finkbiner

Verna Smith Trestrail has been a well-known fixture at MosCon since The Beginning. She was one of our Guests of Honor at the very first MosCon (1979) and has lent us her enthusiastic support and presence ever since. Verna is "Doc" Smith's daughter. She has taught school in Indiana and frequently lectures on Doc and science fiction. She has attended many cons, talking about Doc, his books, and the development of Doc's books into a series of major motion pictures.

Verna is easy to find at MosCon. She has a bubbly, infectious personality and you may well find her continually in the center of a small crowd of her fans and friends. She is often seen in the presence of her husband, Al, who often accompanies her on her science-fiction excursions.

Her father, Edward E. "Doc" Smith, was one of the pioneers of science fiction as we know it today. He was the first writer to take us out of the solar system in fiction. His books have been continuously in print for over 60 years. He graduated from the University of Idaho (one of his classmates was named Virgil Samms — sound familiar?) and he was recently the recipient of the U of I Distinguished Alumni Award. We honor him each year as our Patron Saint.

OTHER ATTENDING PROFESSIONALS FOR WHOM WE DO NOT HAVE A CURRENT BIO:

Joel Davis
Steve Gallacci
Norman Hartman
Cyn Mason
Claudia Peck

Please, professionals, help me out in this — if you know (or even *think*) you will be coming to MosCon, send me some sort of bio. This will save me from publishing incorrect information about you and your work, and will save us both from possible embarrassment (something I'm sure neither of us needs). — Editor

MosCon XV Convention Committee

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And, of course, MosCon would like to thank all the wonderful people who took the time to volunteer their time to help with the convention. Without their help, putting on a convention of this size would be virtually impossible.

We would also like to hoist a glass to the memory of E.E. "Doc" Smith, and thank his terrific daughter, Verna Smith Trestrail, for her continuing support.

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If the past few weeks the following have been offered FREE in the Ad Mart, that's right FREE...a piano, washing machine, clothes dryer, ceiling tiles, carpet, auto, engines, dogs, cats, goats, firewood, storage shed, rides...And what would we call that section? FREE STUFF? Or would it be better to mix these in the run of the paper so that all could see it and take advantage of it?

And how much FREE stuff would there be if there was a charge? Even if the charge was only a dollar or two, not much, I'm sure.

Also, there will be stuff we're sure that you did not know that you needed until you run across it. Hardly a day goes by without someone calling with something that sounds interesting that I never thought of buying.

The Ad Mart has many things for your consideration, so take the time to look the entire paper over...you might be surprised at what you find!

Bacon 'N Eggs

by James C. Glass

There were rats in the soufflé again.

At least that's what we told our cook the second time black speckles appeared on the eggs he served up. Now John Redcloud is the best chef you'll find on any probe between here and Sol, and he knows it, but it still pissed him off when his scrambled eggs were criticized. "You don't like it, there's toast and oatmeal," he said, and everyone groaned. We'd been eatin' that stuff for four hundred and fifty days on *Roosevelt's* run to Procyon C and its trio of steamy planets, and so the sight of even freeze-dried eggs and bacon bits was heaven to most of the crew. Me, I don't eat breakfast. Anyway, the crew laughed, picked out the little black things hiding among the bacon bits and snarfed it all down, leaving little for John to put back in the oven for warming.

I'd been operations chief for ten years, then, and it was my second planetfall. A probe crew spends most of a lifetime just traveling, and two drops was already pretty good for a career. We were all grateful for that, and there were worse places to explore. We'd picked Emerald because the other two planets were just hot rock and old lava flows, and here we were surrounded by plant life so thick we'd had a hard time finding a place to put down. A botanical heaven: ferns and gnarled trees like arthritic hands draped in thick mosses in yellows and emerald green, red and purple flowers big as a dinner plate all over the place. Harry Burns and his botany team were spending as much outside time as their refrigeration units would allow, collecting plants that were somehow thriving at a temperature of a hundred and fifty degrees Fahrenheit.

Our third day on Emerald I was just finishing morning coffee when the intercom squealed: "Carl Doser down there?" Harry's voice. I jumped up and answered quick because he wasn't due back in for five hours. "Yeah, Harry, what's up?"

"Meet me in lock three, Chief. I've got a problem here."

"On my way," I said, and moved quick as I always do when I hear concern in a

man's voice.

Lock three was aft, two flights up, so it took a minute. When I got there two people were stripping E suits and the UV was on behind the port so someone was still decontaminating. The door snapped open and there was Harry, red faced, bending over a suited figure huddled on the floor. The others were busy stripping so I rushed straight to him. "What's up?" I asked, out of breath from the short sprint in 1.2 gee. I wasn't getting any younger then, either. But I am a survivor.

"It's Sally," he said, fumbling at the helmet of the huddled figure at his feet. "We were coming back with moss samples and she started groaning, and then she doubled up and went down like a rock. Cramps, she says, and it seems severe. Help me with this, Chief."

We got the helmet off and Sally Dieter looked awful, face pinched up in pain and her skin sweaty and grey. Scared us both right away. When we unzipped her suit she screamed and writhed around like a crazy person and that *really* scared us. We carried Sally in her suit, groaning and in a fetal position, all the way to sick bay where Doc Joan hustled us outside before she even made an examination. Went back to the lock to talk to the rest of the botany team, but they only scratched their heads. One minute Sally was fine, the next she was down on the ground yelling about pain in her stomach.

Joan came up two hours later to ask a bunch of questions and tell us Sally was seriously ill and she was doing some blood work on her. Whatever was wrong, she said, it was rough stuff.

The following day, it started happening to other members of the crew.

It was just me, Harry and Doc Joan having coffee in the mess room the morning of day eight on Emerald. John Redcloud poured the thick, black stuff for us and munched down his usual breakfast of dry toast. "Anyone for eggs?" he asked hopefully.

"Sure," said Harry, and John served

him up a plate.

"We've got to radio *Roosevelt* and get a pickup," said Joan, rubbing her eyes, "I've got them stacked up in there like cordwood and I need lab help, Harry. I don't even have a microscope and nothing is visible on the plates."

"You're sure it's some kind of bug?" said Harry, brushing mini-rat turds off his eggs before eating a fork full of them. John frowned at him.

"Has to be," said Joan. "Probably viral, the way they keep spiking fevers, and the penicillin isn't doing a thing. Sally went up to a hundred-five and was crazy with pain until I got her in the cold tub and then in a few minutes she was coherent again, asking about the others and wanting to know if her plant samples were stowed. Fifteen minutes out of the bath she was raving again and I had to restrain her. It doesn't make any sense, Harry, and I can't keep shuttling six people to and from the cold bath. I haven't had any sleep in two days and I'm out of ideas."

"Even if we call now," I put in, "we can't get *Roosevelt* back for maybe a week. They've followed those inner planets half way around Procyon by now."

"Terrific," said Joan. "Another day of no sleep, making ice as fast as I can." And then she seemed to brighten. "Maybe if the sick bay were cooler they'd at least get some rest. Cold seems to help."

Harry swallowed the last of his eggs. "The four of us are okay and we've been in close proximity to the others. Whatever it is can't be airborne and if we brought it in with us the UV had no effect. There has to be a common denominator, and we're not seeing it."

"You, Sally, Hadley, Estevez and Ono have been outside," I said, "and the rest of us have been in here the whole time. It's either airborne or contact, and I've handled the suits, too."

"Whatever," said Joan, and she ran off to turn down the thermostat in sick bay while Harry, John and I sat drinking coffee and puzzling at the table.

An hour later, Sally sat up in bed, screamed once very loud — and died.

The next morning, Harry was sick and out of his head like the rest of Joan's patients.

We were too scared to go outside so we put Sally in the aft lock and purged it good with nitrogen. The first good thing to happen in days was when I got *Roosevelt* on the horn and told them out troubles. The bad news was it'd be six

days before we got a pickup. Hang on, they said, and that's when I discovered pretty Doc Joan could swear for five minutes without repeating herself. After she'd calmed down she tried to encourage John and me. "The rest of them are doing better, but I've got sick bay down to fifty degrees. All we need now is pneumonia, but this bug doesn't seem to like low temperature. It's evolved with the hundred-fifty degrees outside. But I *still* can't get a culture. Come on, guys, there's three of us left here. What's the common link in all this. Think!"

So I thought. Five had been outside and five had not, and Harry had taken sick days after the others. We'd all been breathing the same air, and John usually washed our dishes and utensils in cold water. When someone got a cold we all got it, but not this time. John and I sat there staring at each other while Joan went back to start her patients on some kind of antibiotic, but she was back in a flash. "Well? Any ideas?"

"Not a clue," I said and Joan sighed, looking real tired, her eyes kinda puffy. John leaned back against the stove and folded his arms across his chest, the look on his face unreadable as usual.

"Eggs," said John Redcloud.

"What?" said Joan tiredly.

"They all been eatin' eggs — except us three. Harry had 'em just yesterday, and now he's sick, too."

Joan looked startled, and me I was thinking fast and he was right. The entire botany team had fueled up on eggs the morning after planetfall, cleaning out the whole pan so there was nothin' left for anyone else, but John had been making enough for the whole crew and more since then. John's a vegetarian and Joan is like me — breakfast is coffee and maybe some toast. And at that instant, something clicked in my head.

"What's the black specks on the eggs, John? Pepper?"

"Don't use pepper, just a little salt. People're picky about eggs."

"You know what I mean. The crew's been kidding you about it. Rat turds? Look like little peppercorns, they do."

"Nothin' I put in," said John, looking offended. "Maybe some burn from the oven."

Doc Joan was suddenly interested. "You cook the eggs in the oven?"

"Naw. I got only one skillet, not enough for everyone. I scramble eggs in

relay and warm 'em in the oven."

Now Joan seemed *real* interested. "Show me the oven, John."

"Right here," he said, and opened it. I took one look and decided it needed cleaning, but Joan pushed me aside and got down on her knees to look all around inside the thing. Those black specks were scattered around on the bottom of the oven, but it was when Joan looked up at where the heating coils were that she gasped, "Oh, my God. Carl, get me a bowl or a cup — and a spoon, quick. I think I've found our bugs."

I was quick about it and in a second she was holding a cup up inside the oven, scraping away with the spoon while John and I exchanged curious looks. She put the cup on the table and we looked inside.

Rat turds. Half a cup-full.

"They're thick on the oven ceiling, clusters following the shape of the coil, and they're *growing* there. One of them popped open while I was inside. Close the oven door, John!" It was more than curiosity in Joan's voice, now. It was fear, and I remember thinking that the stuff in that cup was nothin' to be fooled with. I stepped back a little from the table.

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"Gotta do it here. Sick bay's too cold," she said. "Get some towels to cover the table, but don't touch the cup or the spoon! I'll be right back." She rushed off towards the sick bay.

John and I laid out some towels at one end of the table, and didn't go near that cup, and when Doc Joan returned we backed clear up against a wall to watch her.

She had a mask on, and surgical gloves, and carried a stack of those little dishes I'd seen her use for growing bug colonies on the *Roosevelt*. She sat down at the table, put everything on towels, then poured some black stuff on a cup saucer and started worryin' it with the spoon. Little peppercorns, like I said, but kinda squishy. "Like skin," she said. "I bet it's protein of some kind." But then she hit a hard one and it popped open, and even from six feet away I could see something yellow ooze out. Made my stomach crawl.

"Here it is," she said. "We've got it!"

Well, you can have it, I thought, but she sure was excited. She popped some more, then smeared a bunch of stuff on those little dishes, some with black, some with the yellow gunk. It was past lunchtime, but I didn't have any appetite at all. "Gotta keep these things warm," she said. "They've evolved at high T. John, turn the oven on again, right where you warm the eggs."

"Ain't goin' near that thing," said John.

"Just set the temperature for me!" said Joan angrily. "I'll open it up."

John did as he was told and I stayed where I was, feeling a little wimpy, but then Joan had the mask on and I didn't and my mama did not raise a fool. So Doc put the dishes, cup and spoon in the oven and closed the door, looking tired but pleased with herself. "I get a culture, I've got a good chance of finding something that'll kill it quick. I've already eliminated penicillin," she said. "Now, we wait."

That didn't mean sitting. I was a one-man maintenance crew now and the environmental system was overloaded from that air-conditioner blasting away in sick bay. I spent the next twenty-four hours resetting relays, sending status reports to the *Roosevelt* and scraping frost from coils, buckets of it. The ice machine stopped twice and we were pouring frost into the cold tub while Joan fought with two more members of the botany team out of their heads with fever again. And it was *cold* in that room. *Damn* cold. All the while Doc Joan was

looking more and more haggard, big purple swellings of flesh now under her eyes, and *Roosevelt* was starting to talk quarantine to us. Couldn't blame 'em; the whole probe had become a bug farm.

I remember how thick and rancid the air seemed, and wondering if we were all breathing in yellow gunk. I remember noticing a stuffiness in my nose, and little pains in my stomach. It didn't occur to me that I hadn't eaten anything for twenty-four hours.

The next morning we rushed to the mess room, Joan walking jerky and looking ashen-faced. She opened the oven and placed its contents on the towel-draped table, took one look and dropped hard into a chair. "Damn," she said. "Damn, damn," and put her head in her hands.

I looked carefully over her shoulder. The volume of black stuff in the cup had grown considerably. But there was nothing in those bug dishes. Nothing.

And then Doc Joan groaned, tilting her head back towards me. Her eyes fluttered, rolled up in her head, and she fell forward hard onto the table.

Two of us left standing. At first we'd thought that Joan had the bug, too, but the symptoms weren't there and we decided it was plain old exhaustion. We laid her out on a cot in the mess room and she slept like a dead person for fifteen hours before she started tossing and turning and mumbling. John and I cat-napped and nibbled some toast and *Roosevelt* called to say pick up would be in four days with a med team joining us in quarantine.

Bad turned to worse when we lost our second crew member. Harry was thrashing around and yelling again and we had to do another cold dip on him, but when we went to get him we found his neighbor patient Ono lying peacefully dead and covered with a horrible black mass he'd vomited up. So we dipped Harry until he was quiet and put Ono in the lock with Sally, went back to check on Joan and found her sitting up on the cot. We told her about Ono and she bit her lip so hard it bled a little. Frustrated. Angry. After a while, though, she was thinking again.

"Eggs," she said. John and I looked at each other.

"Don't you see? They grow in eggs. Protein eaters! I'm doing the wrong culture. Help me up."

She stood there wobbly while we told her about the last fifteen hours. "Okay, so this is beyond serious, now. The whole crew can be dead in four days if I don't do

something right. Carl, put some gloves on and get a sputum sample from Ono. John, you help me to the botany lab. I still can't find my feet. Carl, you meet us there."

We did that. I found her in the botany lab working with the bug dishes. "Protein eaters," she said again. "They're eating our crew up from the inside. So, I'm using albumin for the culture plates. John, set that oven to one hundred-fifty exactly. This is our last chance."

John fled. I watched while Joan smeared ground peppercorns, yellow gunk and Ono's horrible spit on the bug dishes and helped her carry them to the oven. Her excitement was there again and a little color had returned to her face. Quite a lady. The bugs were cooking and Joan was thinking aloud; "Gotta get it right the first time. Penicillin, standard antibiotics no good. Different pathways in these things. Maybe combinations. God, I don't even know the pathology! Maybe an inhibitor. Shut those suckers down. How much for a hundred kilo male?" She suddenly became aware of John and I staring at her blankly. "Okay, you watch after my patients a while. I'm gonna do some inventory in the botany lab." And she left the room.

Just in time. Now Harry was sitting up, eyes open — babbling. When we touched him he screamed and clawed at my face. I gave him a bear hug, told him everything okay. Everything under control. Yeah. He calmed down, went back to sleep, forehead hot in the terrible cold of that room. John checked the ice machine when we noticed the silence. Down again, a handful of ice cubes left. I reset the relay, scraped two buckets of frost, set them at the ready,

Joan was in the mess room, smearing more gunk on more bug dishes, a jar of white powder in front of her. "They like eggs I'll give 'em eggs," she said. "If they don't culture out in albumin, we're done for."

"You got eggs in there?" I squinted at the dishes.

"Albumin. Like egg white. Thank God for the botany lab." She added four more dishes to the stuff already cooking in the oven. "How're my patients? You guys doing all right?"

John and I nodded, looking concerned. She was ashen-faced again. "Why don't you lie down awhile longer?" I said. "Maybe eat something?"

She took my hand, squeezed it. "Thanks, Chief. I'd like that."

We fed Joan some toast with honey on it, a glass of water, eased her back on

the cot. "We'll take care of everything," I said. She smiled, eyes fluttering, and was out like a light in seconds.

Four hours later we nearly lost Harry. Tackled him at the door of sick bay as he was staggering out, used up the last of the ice and frost cooling him down. He opened his eyes, grabbed my shoulder. "Water," he said. "I'm burning up inside, Chief." I looked around. Ice gone. What the hell, I thought, and dipped a cup of water out of the cold tub. Harry gulped it down and I got another. He drank three cups — and went to sleep like a baby,

I'm no doctor, but Harry going to sleep like that gave me an idea. We fed cold water to the others by the cupful. They seemed to crave it, and one cup of the stuff gave me a cramp. But they all slept peacefully the entire night. So much for modern medicine.

John and I even slept some, and in the morning we got to the mess room just as Doc Joan was shuffling towards the oven. She put her hand on the door handle and turned towards us, face grey. "This is it, guys," she said solemnly. "Hold your breath."

She opened the oven, took a close look, and screamed.

"YES!"

She took the little dishes out of the oven one-by-one and put them on the table. The dishes with pieces of peppercorns on them were blank. But the four others were streaked with narrow rows of lemon-yellow fuzz topped with bulbous swellings, and I thought of mushrooms in the hydroponic tanks on Roosevelt. "Pretty small for killers, aren't they?" said Joan, and then she turned around and kissed me right on the mouth. Nice. When she turned to John, he backed away from her quick up against the stove. "We *did* it! *Found* them! Now let's see if we can kill 'em!"

Very excited, she was, and I was still feeling that kiss. She sent John and I for more dishes while she rummaged in her pharmacy, pulling out vials of stuff, rushing back to the botany lab and staying in there the rest of the morning while John and I ate cereal, drank coffee, scraped frost and looked in on the rest of the crew. Some of them were getting restless again. Harry moaned, opened his eyes. He looked like a man near-starved to death. "We aren't going to make it, are we Chief? We're all gonna die here." A little tear leaked from one eye.

"We found the bugs," I said, patting him on a bony shoulder. "Doc is testing

now to see what'll kill them. Hang on just a little longer, Harry. We'll get 'em. Besides, you've gotta fly this probe for us."

"They're eating me up inside," said Harry, and moaned again. I have never felt so helpless in my life as I did at that moment, and now the others were moaning, twisting and pulling against the straps we'd used to keep 'em on their cots. Things were heating up again, next to no ice in the machine and one bucket of frost to work with. I tested the tub water with a finger. In that terrible cold room, it felt warm.

Joan appeared in the doorway. "Cooking again. The rate that first batch grew we should know something by early tomorrow. How're you doin'?"

"Fever coming again, and the dip is warm. The ice machine can't keep up with what we need, and I think we'll need plenty before tonight is over."

"Hold the fort," said Joan. "I've got one more plate to make with a protease inhibitor I found in the lab. When I do that, I've tried everything I could find. Okay?"

We nodded grimly, and Joan disappeared.

All the action started an hour later.

Alonzo, our electrician, sat up on his cot with a shout, pulling at his restraints hard enough to bend the one inch tubing of the frame beneath him. Black stuff was oozing from his mouth and he was making bluh-bluh sounds while his body jerked and shook. I grabbed him from behind while John ran for the frost bucket and headed for the tub and I screamed; "NO! Bring it over here! We'll never get the tub cooled down!"

John, bless him, did as he was told. "Now get me a spoon and crush up what ice we have left in the machine. All of it!"

John ran as I relaxed my grip on Alonzo, getting in front of him to wipe that horrible spittle from his mouth. "I'm here, I'm here," I said, near panic myself when I looked into his fear-filled eyes. "Oh, oh, oh," he said, over and over again.

John came back with Joan right behind him, handed me the spoon and I started shoveling frost into Alonzo's mouth and he was swallowing it fast.

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING?" screamed Joan.

I told her about my ice-water treatment, how it had calmed everyone right down. "I think the bugs are in his belly, and they can't work in cold. Ice or cold water in the stomach shocks 'em. That's what I think. It works, Doc; I've seen it."

Joan had reached for the spoon, but now she stepped back and sighed. "What

the hell, try it. We've run out of options, anyway."

So I shoveled and Alonzo swallowed and, sure enough, in a few minutes he calmed down and licked his lips. "Better," he said. "Thanks, Chief." I eased him back on the cot and turned towards Joan, who was looking broodingly at me.

"Okay, we'll do it your way," she said.

And we did. Five more times that night.

Two in the morning. Everyone resting quietly, but no more ice or frost. Joan looked at me, eyes sunken and dark-rimmed with fatigue. "It's now or never, Carl. We don't start a treatment soon, we'll lose all of them and maybe even ourselves. Let's check those cultures."

I followed her to the mess room where John was making coffee. She went straight to the oven, took out the little dishes one by one and put them on the table, an expression of gloomy despair growing with each trip. She sat down at the table and rested her chin in her hands. "Well, I tried," she said softly. "I did the best I could."

I leaned over her shoulder. The dishes were covered with neat rows of yellow fuzz like ripe grain fields seen from a kilometer above. Healthy. Growing. I put a hand on her shoulder. "Sorry," I said. "You just didn't have enough to work with on something new like this. I'd better call *Roosevelt* and let them know." She put a hand on mine, squeezed, pressed it to her shoulder. I looked at John, but he shifted his gaze to the floor in front of him.

"If only I'd —," she said, then jerked upright so fast my hand dropped away from hers. "Wait a minute!" She pointed a finger, counting dishes, then squinting closely at them, reading the little labels telling her which drug she had tried. Counted again. "There's a dish missing here! I had — oh, shit!" She jumped up from the table.

"What?"

"The culture with the actinylprotease! I left it in the botany lab when you had the trouble with Alonzo last night! It's been at room temperature all this time!" She rushed out of the room and I was right behind her all the way to the lab. The dish was where she'd left it, a swivel lamp still burning close over the working area. Joan practically leaped at it, eyes inches from the dish. "I think — yes, LOOK!"

I looked. Same thing, like rows of wheat, only fainter, and something was wrong with two of those rows, like lo-

custs had been at them, eating them to ground. Jagged, bare lines in a field of yellow fuzz. No life was there.

"Killed 'em!" shouted Joan right in my ear. "No time for a better test, Carl. I've gotta go with it, and now!" She was making calculations on a piece of paper. "No telling what else it'll kill in a human. As far as I know it's only been used on small animals before. This is a monstrous chance I'm taking here. I want you to understand that before I ask you to help me. Do you?"

"They're gonna die for sure if we don't do something," I said solemnly. "What can I do?"

"Oh, Carl," said Joan, and she kissed me again, only this time I kissed back and held it until she pulled away and smiled up at me. "Syringes in that left drawer. Help me fill them." She mixed and measured, her face flushed again with excitement. I helped her fill five syringes with the stuff she brewed and handed them to her in sick bay when she shot it into her five patients. She sat down, sighed. "I can see my whole career going down the drain for this. I might have just murdered five people."

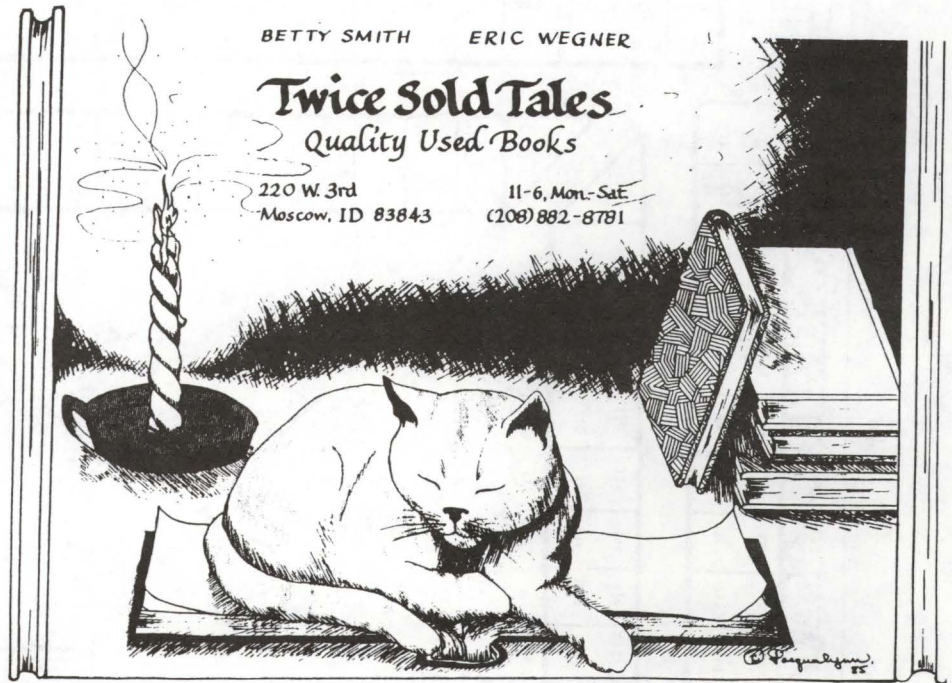
But it didn't work out that way.

Harry was the first to feel better, I guess because the bugs hadn't been in him quite as long as for the others. Joan shot them up four times a day until the *Roosevelt* arrived and it was another fourteen days before we were out of quarantine. The stuff in those syringes looked like swamp water, but in five days everyone was screaming for food and Joan started them on a liquid protein diet. None of us found it amusing when Harry asked for eggs.

We all felt bad about Sally and Ono. Another probe took them out for a deep space burial with a trajectory taking them into the furnace of Procyon C. A good way for a spacer to end it. There was relief when we discovered the bugs hadn't come in with anyone. There were clusters of peppercorns around the stove's vent to the outside, and the flue was full of them. That meant redesign before another probe landed on Emerald three years later.

When we climbed aboard *Roosevelt*, Joan and I were both sneezing from colds, giving each other sly looks and glad that nobody asked why we had the sniffles and the others didn't. We'd already decided we'd ship out together again if even the smallest opportunity arose.

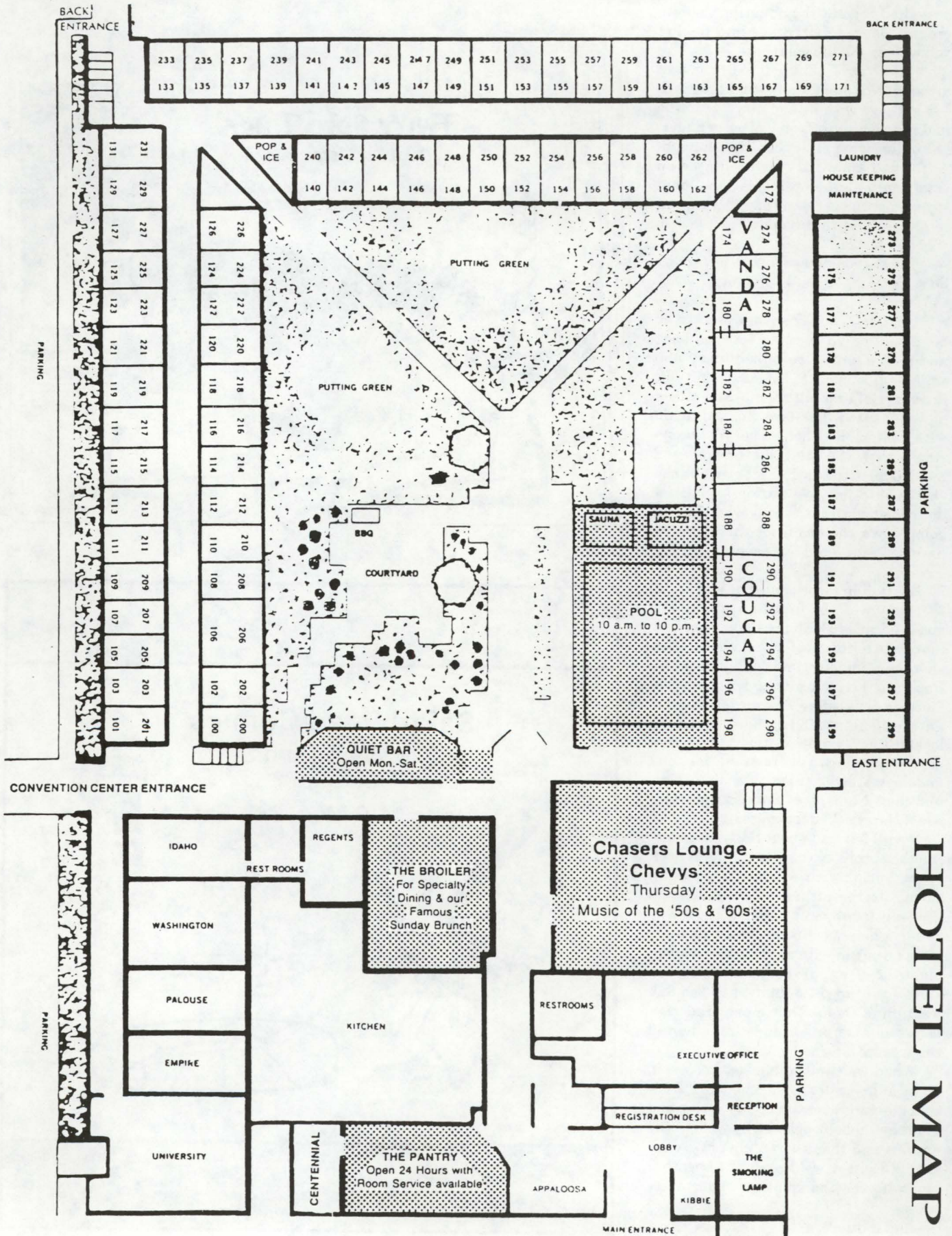
And it did.



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HOTEL MAP

Petals in the Wind

by Ralph E. Vaughan

The samurais rode hard across the desert wasteland west of the Dead Sea. The flying sand deepened the already-deep lines of their faces. The banner of their master fluttered. Their horses foamed and lathered but the thirteen warriors did not slacken their pace — despite the charts they had purchased in Baghdad, the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem might be just beyond the next rise or valley; then they would secure the head of the woman Mitsuko for Lord Zempachi Kunaishoyo and begin the long journey home.

Just three days previously, Komurasaki, leader of the warriors, had received information from a caravaner that Mitsuko and her companions — the traitor Ikeda Yoshaki and the antique battle-robot that had joined them in Khmer — had been seen traveling this way.

At the summit of the next grey hill-ock, Komurasaki called the riders to a halt, reached into his saddlebags and brought out a pair of binoculars. He scanned the horizon, then allowed himself a grim smile. He replaced the opticals and turned in his saddle.

"Jerusalem's ahead," he told his men. Like him, they were weary unto death, sweating under quilted armor, but none voiced a complaint. "If she's there, we'll take her."

Kusano, second in command, shielded his eyes and squinted at the great city that was no more than a smear against the horizon. "It will be after nightfall when we arrive," Kusano observed.

Komurasaki grunted, nodded and stabbed the sides of his animal with his heels. The company flew toward the alien city like demons, or men pursued by demons.

By the calendar observed in the Christian kingdoms before them, it was the 21st day of November, Anno Domini

One Thousand Nine Hundred Sixty-Three.

Lady Mitsuko paused across the square from the Shrine of the Flagellates; Ikeda Yoshaki and the bronze battle-robot, Dax, also paused, scanning the crowd. Outside the shrine, the faithful came to beat themselves cruelly with whips and chains, to wail like hell-bound souls.

Dax's gleaming head swiveled atop his reticulated neck and his visual receptors glowed ruddy. "Why?"

Lady Mitsuko shook her head in confusion. She wanted to turn away from the sight, knew they had better be on their way, but she could not shift her gaze.

"This is where Ioshua, son of the Christian god, accepted the Cross of Humanity," Ikeda explained, his voice low. "They punish themselves for his murder two thousand years past."

"Jesus called the Christ," Dax said in his clipped tone. "It is for his blood that soldiers shed theirs. I understand."

Mitsuko understood little of these western peoples and nothing of their religious impulses. She had seen little in her flight to convince her that the prevailing opinion in Nippon, that all westerners were barbarians, was false.

The wails echoed in her ears. Some people circled the shrine, others walked before the entrance or stood in place; a few crawled upon bloody knees. Clothing hung in tatters; some were naked. Ashes and sackcloth. Chains rattled, whips snapped. Flesh was removed by layers and the blood flew, staining the cobbled pavement, like scattered red flowers.

"Let us be away from this place," Mitsuko said finally, averting her gaze.

"Yes," Ikeda agreed. "This place is too open. Far too many eyes and tongues."

Lady Mitsuko drew her hood forward

and clutched her cloak with a pale hand. She continued on her way; the elderly scholar and the robot stayed close.

Jerusalem thronged with the rabble of myriad lands. There were, of course, pilgrims from all parts of the Christian world, as well as Mussulmans and Jews in their own quarters by leave of King John XIX; in the lanes and back alleys of David's City there lurked travelers and merchants, thieves, poets, murderers, jugglers, harlots, prophets, beggars, cripples, lunatics, demi-gods, soldiers, priests, magicians, and people who were strange in many ways. Even so, Lady Mitsuko and her companions stood out, memorable to the public informers whose tongues could be loosened for a few coppers.

They found lodging at the Inn of the Three Cups, where no questions were asked and people were accustomed to fleeting memories. They passed through the vined doorway of the inn, and a beggar on the street, a young man with a scar down his right cheek like a ragged lightning bolt, squatting behind a cracked alms bowl, picked up his bowl and walked around the corner into a narrow alley; he walked into the stone wall and vanished.

The three travelers procured rooms on the fourth floor of the dilapidated structure. They rested and counted the coins between them, all that remained of the travel-worn ponies on which they had journeyed so long; the ponies were by now meat before some merchant's or noble's hunting dog. On the morrow, they would travel by rail to Jaffa, where they would book passage on a galley or steamer bound for some hopefully safe port — Alexandria, Rome, London, or even the Western Lands where the Catholic King now ruled with an tolerant hand.

The other inhabitants of the Inn of

the Three Cups were merchants and mendicants, pilgrims and knights on lost causes, those looking for new lives or a place to die. In such a maelstrom of humanity, two foreigners and even the battle-rob were beneath notice.

Twilight settled over Jerusalem. Ikeda sat cross-legged on the floor, tossing little pieces of carved bone across the rough wooden floor. Dax sat near the window, gleaming in the sunset rays, a sculpture of burnished brass.

Lady Mitsuko asked. "What do the gods say of our future?"

Ikeda paused in mid-cast. "As always, the gods laugh." He finished the cast and studied the positions and attitudes of the carved shapes. "A period of decision, when the paths of what could be and what will be are not so resolutely fashioned by what has been."

"Are we yet followed?" the girl asked, gazing toward the window.

Ikeda looked up from the bones. "Don't need the oracles to answer that question and you do not need to ask."

Mitsuko nodded. "Lord Zempachi will not let his son be unavenged; his warriors yet ride."

Ikeda gathered the bones, carefully replaced them in their silk pouch and felt his stomach rumble. "I'm hungry," he announced. "I'm going downstairs for something to eat and drink. Mitsuko?"

She hesitated, glanced through the window, then back at the old man getting to his feet. "What of danger?"

Ikeda shrugged. "Danger remains part of our lives whether we huddle here or walk among others."

"I'll accompany you downstairs, but you will not find me much of a dinner companion for you." She looked to the robot.

"I must perform maintenance," the robot replied. "It has been a hard journey and this is the first chance I have had to rest." He opened a section of his torso and withdrew a set of gleaming instruments. "A good soldier cares for his body and his weapons."

Mitsuko and Ikeda left the battle-rob alone. On the landing, as Mitsuko's small hand closed upon the railing of the stairway, she paused and looked back at the closed door, then at her companion. The only light was that which drifted up from gaslamps in the common room — Ikeda was all but lost in shadows

"He is sad and lonely," Mitsuko said. Ikeda opened his mouth to speak, but Mitsuko held up her hand. "He is supposedly immune to the emotions that

destroy our hearts, and yet I feel at he is no less wracked than we."

"A machine yearning for the glorious death denied by the end of the Great Conflagration," Ikeda replied. "Programmed to kill or be killed in service to the Empire of France, but the war ended and he still lived, his final program unfulfilled. The ignoble end of Napoleon's dream has undone him. He wanders, seeking a suitable death, but finds none. Yes, sad and lonely."

Mitsuko started down the shadow-infested stairway. "Two hundred years," she whispered.

And in those two centuries the world changed. A series of wars in Europe had engulfed the world, had even touched Nippon with tongues of fire: monstrous births among the Ainu, the Eta and even the pure-blooded. Poison still ran through the land; just the previous year a creature born of a man and woman in Edo wailed like a wolf until stoned by frightened peasants. But, Mitsuko thought with a shudder, the most monstrous beings were those who were men outwardly and beasts within, such as the murdered son of Lord Zempachi. The blood had been pale; she was showered with chrysanthemums...

Ikeda caught her slender arms as she started to fall. "Mitsuko-san, are you ill?"

"No," she said. "Weariness grips me." She gazed at the grim face of her mentor; he saw through the veil of lies, but she did not withdraw her words. "A cup of wine is all I need."

They continued to the common room and took a table away from the huge hearth and the customers clustered about it. A man with one eye and nothing to cover the empty socket, wearing rough clothing and a greasy apron, placed a clay plate bearing brown bread, ripe fruit, and goat cheese and two pewter mugs of ale before them, then shambled off when rewarded with four copper coins.

The din of human conversation was overpowering in its persistence, in the way the words filled the space. Dozens of languages and dialects were mixed with inarticulate grunts and growls; occasionally a voice was heard above the others, shrill or deep, exhorting repentance. For every person who spoke, several held silence, staring contemplatively into the hearth fire, into their mugs of ale, or into nothingness.

The door opened. From the darkness walked a young man wearing the leathern clothing of a traveler. Over his shoul-

ders he wore a brown cloak adequate for nights not too cold. His handsomeness was marred only by a scar across his right cheek, a scar whitened by age and appearing as a bolt of lightning. He took a table across the room from Mitsuko and Ikeda and watched them over his mug of ale.

The battle-rob sat in the darkening room and gazed over the ancient city which he had visited once before, when he had saved the life of a Knight Templar. Stars scarred the velvet sky and meteors flew across the blackness, some natural, others decaying satellites placed into orbit before the war.

Dax felt a restlessness in his circuits. His maintenance had not gone well. Soundly built by his masters, though perhaps not as well as the battle-rob and artillery-crawlers of the British or the Federation of the Rhine, he had not been built to last forever. Two centuries was a long time, especially for a child of brass gears and algorithmic circuits, who recalled the passing of every empty second.

If only he had perished on the battlefield as had so many others. He turned from the window. While this was hardly a world at peace, the ability of humanity to make the sort of war for which Dax had been constructed had passed with the Fire. There only remained for Dax the slow decay that ate him like a human cancer.

Many of his weapon clusters were useless; there were no replacement parts. The world at large was trying to cope with rifled barrels and tempered steel. Certainly his nuclear heart was beyond the ability of anyone to mend. Still, his defects were not apparent, and even heavily armed bands were reluctant to confront a robotic survivor of a war they knew only from the horror stories told to children, a battle-rob that gleamed in the sun and stared at them with inhuman, uncompassionate features.

He thought of the humans and wondered. When the immediate danger that had brought them together in Khmer had passed, he should have continued his wanderings, searching for the death his final program demanded, but he had remained with them, journeying back. Perhaps it was just another indication that, along with everything else, his logic circuits were failing.

On the morrow he would go to Jaffa with them. And from there? Perhaps Alexandria and then to the sources of the

Nile and the Afric empires of the southern continent. Or perhaps he would not leave the Holy City at all but would linger for a time. In the end, he knew, it did not matter because no path would lead to the goal he desired.

Dax's audions picked up a noise in the street below, the slow and stealthy movements of a person not wishing to be heard. The robot stood and looked into the street.

People were as tiny fires to his receptors. From his vantage point Dax saw into the alley across from the inn; he shifted his head, receptors glowing softly ruddy with concern, distinguishing shadows among shadows — the warriors closed in on the tavern, silent as night, relentless as death.

Dax ran a last systems check on his weapon clusters, then left the room, relentless and resolute.

"We are being observed," Ikeda said softly, his voice not carrying beyond Mitsuko's ears. "A young man at a table across the room. A scar along his cheek like the Wrath of Susanowo. I saw him earlier today. He appears not to watch us, but he does."

"A spy?" Mitsuko whispered, glancing in the direction indicated. "A barbarian in the employ of Lord Zempachi?"

"In the Home Islands, the word of Zempachi is feared; the barbarians of the great outer world do not know his name or face. There's something else at work here."

"What can we do?" Mitsuko asked. "The inn is so crowded we can do no more than he."

A derisive snort escaped the old man's withered lips. "Do not look to these white barbarians for assistance. We're not of their faith, and that makes all the difference in the world."

"He comes this way," Mitsuko said. "He does not have the mien of a warrior."

Mitsuko and Ikeda openly gazed at the young man in brown. It seemed to Mitsuko there was a vagueness in his expression, the hint of a sardonic smile, as if he were the sole possessor of some cosmic joke of unsurpassed subtlety. He approached the table and asked to join them.

"Who are you?" Mitsuko asked. "My companion said you were observing us, that you had also done so earlier this day."

The man's smile broadened ever so slightly. "And did you also see me in Anyang and Teheran?"

The grim expression on Ikeda's face did not alter. "The question remains: who are you?"

"My name is Helmut Steinmetz," he replied, "not that that will hold any meaning for you."

"It is of Teutonic origin," the scholar said. "You are perhaps Bohemian or of the Federation of the Germanies?"

"No, neither of those lands, though your logic is impeccable, scholar," Steinmetz said. "I am from a place you have never studied, have never encountered in scroll or rumor." He leaned forward and regarded both fugitives. "However, you may have dreamed of me and my land."

"You speak in riddles," Ikeda snorted.

"You've come a great distance," Mitsuko said, motioning her companion to silence and gazing into the blue pools of the man's eyes. "I have strange dreams at times, of people and places unknown to me. Why are you here?"

"I am an explorer," Steinmetz said. "There are many like me, leafing through the pages of the Book of Worlds. It is our duty to take the familiar outlines of the

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map and fill them with unfamiliar names, to resurrect the great civilizations that are dust to us, or nameless; it is our task to chart the differences, note the similarities." He sighed. "Did you know that the flapping of a butterfly's wings on one side of the world can cause a storm on the other; a small difference in the pattern of the beating wings and the storm might destroy a city or bring the fishing fleet home. So it is with our actions and decisions — we tread the garden of forking paths."

Ikeda frowned but nodded. "I have heard the story — many worlds from one. One cannot believe in the unknowable."

"Jerusalem is full of people who believe devoutly in the unknowable," Steinmetz said. "Other worlds are not nearly as elusive as God; I come from one, have visited several."

"How can there be worlds beyond the one we see?" Mitsuko demanded. "I, too, have heard of the garden of forking paths, but it is only an exercise of the mind."

Steinmetz reached into a pocket, withdrew a photograph and handed it to Mitsuko. The young woman in the photo was garbed in a white coat to her knees;

she stood in a room filled with unfamiliar machinery and apparatus, before a large window that overlooked a city of glass and stone towers that touched the clouds. The young woman in the photo was Mitsuko.

"I don't understand," she said, passing the photo to Ikeda. "It cannot be me."

"Not you as you are now, of this world, but of the world I come from, where you had another name and we, you and I were... friends..." He stared at Mitsuko with a disconcerting expression that complete robbed her of words. "I was in Tokyo, the city you call Edo, when I saw you. Then there was the murder and your flight. I have followed you here."

"What do you want?" Mitsuko asked.

"Come back to my world with me, Mitsuko," Steinmetz said. He turned to Ikeda. "You as well, scholar. I waited until now to reveal myself because the warps and woofs in the fabric of space-time which permit travel between the replicas of Earth are not equally propitious everywhere. I missed you in Edo, and Jerusalem was the next transfer point. I offer you an escape from danger."

"We travel to Jaffa, then further westward," Ikeda said. "If necessary, we

will seek asylum from the Catholic King of the Western Lands."

"I can spirit you away from all dangers of this world," Steinmetz said urgently. "Mitsuko, I can —"

Ikeda touched Mitsuko's arm. Mitsuko looked up and saw Dax moving swiftly; the crowd in the common room parted before the advance of the gleaming battle-rob.

"The warriors of Zempachi," Dax reported. "They surround the inn. We must leave immediately."

"Come with me," Steinmetz pleaded, grabbing her arm. "I will not lose you again!"

The door burst open and three samurai entered, swords drawn; one also carried an automatic pistol. Dax would have targeted the man with the firearm first, but there was no clear shot, and he was constrained by programming, born of a nobler if not gentler century, against harming non-combatants, so he sent a needle-missile into the chest of the lead warrior. Quilted fabric and flesh puffed outward like an opening rose.

Those who did not move from the path of destruction soon enough were beheaded or shot by samurai desperate to see an end to their quest. Screams and shouts split the night. Mitsuko whipped her nagakata from its sheath and countered the steel of one of the warriors.

The man with the pistol fired at the gleaming hulk of the battle-rob. The jacketed projectile slammed Dax's shoulder and penetrated the machinery. Dax dispassionately evaluated the damage, swiveled his head toward the attacker and emitted a highly accurate burst of coherent light; he also prayed to the beings that the metal people secretly worship.

The man erupted in flame and fell; the firearm dropped from his hand.

The force of a sword-blow knocked Mitsuko off balance. Before her attacker could take advantage of the situation, however, Steinmetz broke his neck.

"There's no more time," Steinmetz whispered urgently. "You must come with me to the transfer point before the others attack. We can't defeat them all."

A commotion at the rear of the inn decided Mitsuko and she let Steinmetz drag her out the entrance, Ikeda and Dax close behind. Dax loosed a smoke-grenade into the common room.

They turned a corner and halted. Komurasaki stood in the alley, his two swords drawn. Behind him were the men who had faithfully travelled across the endless leagues in pursuit of another

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man's honor and revenge. Sounds behind Mitsuko told her the others had not been delayed by the smoke. There was nothing left to do but fight.

"It is over," Komurasaki said, not harshly. "Kneel that we may take your heads to our lord. It shall not be painful; you have earned that much."

Mitsuko shook her head. "My life is my own; it always has been. If you want to take it, you must fight for it."

Komurasaki sighed.

Dax tried to fire his missiles, but the mechanism jammed, as did the laser. *So very old, having outlived the usefulness of my century*, Dax thought with an objective bitterness. There was one last task to accomplish, and he ran toward the startled samurai.

Besides the traditional twin swords of their profession, the warriors also carried deadly weapons of past and present. Faced with the image of the juggernaut battle-rob rushing them, they abandoned tradition and attacked with projectile-throwing weapons.

Dax paid no heed to the jacketed missiles piercing his armored body. He felt only the heat building deep within his belly as he let the fires of his creation run

wild, felt the intoxicating glory of approaching critical mass. He dimly heard Mitsuko shout his name and felt a sharp pang of regret before the fires cleansed him of everything but relief.

Mitsuko fell before the first tongue of atomic fire surged through the alley. When the quiet and the dark ebbed back, she slowly sat up. Ikeda was on the ground near her, and he lived. Of Komurasaki and his samurai band, very little remained, less than of Dax; she turned and saw the flight of those samurai not killed — their leader was dead and for them the quest was over; they could never return to Edo, and if they did not commit *seppuku* they were doomed to wander barbarian lands for the rest of their lives.

Steinmetz sat against the wall, blood staining the front of his shirt like a dark, mysterious flower. He stared at her with dimming, tear-filled eyes.

"We lose each other again," he said, his words no more than sighs, almost lost in the whisper of the wind. "Goodbye, until..."

Mitsuko reached inside his cloak, where he had placed the photograph. There were others. In the dim light of the

alley, she looked at one after the other: her standing among strange landscapes that were dreamily unfamiliar, her holding hands with Steinmetz, her placid face as she lay in her coffin...

"Come, Mitsuko-san," Ikeda said, gently helping her to her feet. "This place is still not safe, though, perhaps for different reasons now."

Mitsuko stood. She clutched the photographs to her breast and let herself be led away.

After stealing their belongings from the Inn of the Three Cups, still wracked by confusion and terror, they obtained medicines for their wounds from a white-haired Jew who ran an apothecary in the old quarter of the city. They escaped to Jaffa and booked passage on a freighter westward bound.

In Tarshish, they heard news of the assassination of the Catholic King of the Western Lands, killed the very day they had departed Jaffa.

Standing on the afterdeck of the freighter, Mitsuko gazed eastward, toward gathering darkness. She dropped the photos into the sea; in the twilight, they appeared as petals in the wind.



512 S. MAIN "BETWEEN THE THEATRES" MOSCOW, IDAHO 83843

Corpus Christi Critter Café

by
Tanya Jean Willows

Fighting with Alan, her brother, over her choice of outfits became inconsequential as the mourners arrived at Corpus Christi's largest Baptist church. After all, Daddy had given her this tropical print, silk dress. Jessica smoothed it against her slender form and adjusted the off-the-shoulder ruffle. She glanced in the mirror, patting her frosted blonde mane, trying to tame it. Her thick spiraling ringlets refused to look conservative in the South Texas humidity.

Sharon, her sister, had arrived with husband and kids in tow.

Alan scowled with disdain. "If Daddy had given her a grass skirt, she'd have worn it."

"Well, brother dear, at least she's wearing something on top," Sharon said, looking down at her own modest calf-length dress.

Alan and Sharon had inherited Mama's traditional ways. Sharon's family consisted of a husband and the prescribed two point five children — counting their liver-spotted spaniel as the point five child — and she shopped at K-Mart. Alan had once been a religious fanatic, handing out carnations and preaching in the park. Today he was a church janitor.

Jessica took after Daddy. He had folk danced in Russia and hiked across Europe. The last year she had money to visit him, he was crossing the ocean, dreaming of sailing up the Nile.

Jessica waved at Bambi, Daddy's latest wife. Sharon frowned.

"Do you think Daddy's looking down on this with approval?" Sharon asked.

"Funny, I always envisioned Daddy looking *upward* in the hereafter," Jessica mused.

"He's in Heaven now," Alan declared.

Jessica tried to visualize Daddy in Heaven. He wouldn't know anyone there.

The service had a mix of proper church people whom Daddy had avoided like the plague, chatty bleached blondes whom Daddy never avoided, some gay folk, and a few odd ducks who defied

classification. A matron dripping with diamonds tried to explain fornication to leather-skirted Bambi. A Lucille Ball-type redhead in gold sequins tried to convert a gay painter while a tiger toga-ed, devil woman unleashed herself on an unsuspecting Jehovah's Witness. Before Jessica could rescue either one, someone fell face first into the punch bowl. Jessica thought it had been an appropriate service.

Jessica made her getaway and headed for work, as a day shift exotic dancer at the Honey Pot House. It paid the bills, but she still dreamed of the ballet.

The business lunch crowd was generous that day. Jessica earned enough to pay for some cheap evening studio time and electricity. She hated not having electricity.

The next morning Jessica dragged herself to the lawyer's high-rise office to hear the reading of the will. The lawyer droned on about a seemingly endless list of assets while Alan and Sharon took notes. Jessica thought up a dance routine while waiting for the bottom line: what had Daddy left *her*?

"Finally, each of my children will receive a hope chest and \$250,000. Which ever one of them changes their life the most creatively — and pointlessly — within one year will receive the remaining estate of ten million dollars."

\$\$\$ chinged in Alan and Sharon's eyes as if they were cartoon characters. Jessica merely noted \$250,000 in her check book. She would still have to work for a while before she became rich. Besides, she had never cared all that much about money.

"The hope chests will be delivered this afternoon," the attorney said, escorting them out of the office.

The lawyer was wrong. Jessica was still in bed when the chest arrived the next morning. She pushed it into her

bedroom, closed the black velvet drapes, poured a glass of brandy from the bedside crystal decanter, then slid beneath the plum satin comforter. She was sipping her apricot brandy when the chest began jumping up and down. She stared at the box in disbelief.

"Excuse me! Hate to bother you! Let me out!" came from the bouncing box.

"What?" Jessica exclaimed, scooting to the top of the bed, staring at the chest.

"I don't mean to disturb you," the voice inside the box whined, "but I have to go to the bathroom!"

"You what?"

"Gotta go — bad!" said the gruff little voice.

Jessica gingerly opened the box and jumped back. An odd-looking creature crawled out. It was about a foot and a half tall with a large head, big pointed ears, a bulbous nose, and shining orange eyes. A six-inch crop of bright, lemon-yellow fuzz stood straight up from its head as the creature looked about the room. It was wearing a summer outfit complete with sun visor and shorts.

"Bathroom?" it asked.

Jessica pointed and the creature waddled out of the room.

Shaking, Jessica steadied herself, holding tightly to the bedside table. She glared at the brandy decanter, then picked it up, pulled back the drapes, opened the window and hurled it out.

"What the hell are you, anyway?" she yelled at the bathroom door.

"Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Gothus," the creature replied, his — its — voice muffled by the closed door.

"Okay, but what *are* you?" she asked again.

"I'm a troll, of course."

Gently Jessica lowered herself to the edge of the bed. What was that number? "Oh, yeah," she said, then lifted the phone and dialed 1-800-FLIPOUT.

"Bayview Psychiatric," a pleasant voice answered. "If you have the insurance, we have the cure. May I help you?"

"I hope so — I'm seeing things."

"What type of things are you seeing, dear?" the secretary asked.

"I know this is going to sound strange, but there's a troll in my bathroom."

"You have a what, *where*?" the secretary asked.

"A troll in my bathroom."

"A troll? Oh, my! Dr. Scammer could see you at 9 am tomorrow. What is this troll doing, exactly?" the secretary asked.

"Probably peeing,"

"On second thought, we have a cancellation at 5 pm today."

"I'll be there."

"Just out of curiosity, do odd creatures use your bathroom frequently?" the secretary asked.

"Never this odd! I have to go, it just flushed," Jessica said in a panic.

"Wait, miss, what's your address? We'll sent someone right away. Stay away from the windows...."

Jessica didn't wait for the rest. The troll reentered the room, smiled at her, and rocked back and forth on its big feet. "I'm glad I got you, Jessica," it said at last.

"How do you know I'm Jessica?"

"Nice green lace teddy. Did you make it? Your daddy said you create beautiful things," Gothus said. "I make all my own clothes. May I have some of your scrap material? I like to sew pretty things, too."

"S-sure," she stammered. "There's all kinds of stuff in the basket in the bottom of the closet. Help yourself." Jessica continued looking at the homely little creature. "So you're a female troll."

Gothus found the basket and proceeded to hold scraps of lace and velvet against its body, "I'm a male troll," he stated matter-of-factly.

Jessica stared at the troll. "I thought trolls were horrible, dirty creatures. You seem like a nice... thing."

"Dwarf tales," huffed Gothus.

"Where do trolls come from — and how did Daddy end up with you?"

"Your daddy, God rest his soul, was hiking through Germany and slept under our bridge. He was interested in our art, music, and dance. We — that's George, Tim and I — had never been anywhere else in our lives," Gothus said. "Two hundred years under the same bridge. Quite boring, really. Your father asked us to come traveling with him and we did."

"Leave it to Daddy to pick up a bunch of trolls," Jessica said rolling her eyes. "I thought trolls were big creatures."

"Well, maybe Nordic trolls are bigger, but Germany has very small bridges."

"Wonderful — a compact troll. So how come you're here with me now?"

"I'm here to make all your hopes and dreams come true," Gothus boasted. "I'm suppose to help you spend your daddy's money so you'll win the contest. Possibly you should choose a creative endeavor, perhaps something pointless."

"Thanks, but I don't need any help spending money," Jessica told the troll. "And right now I have to go to work until that nest egg gets deposited."

"I know you're a dancer — what kind? Folk, ballet?" Gothus asked.

"A topless dancer."

"You're able to take your head off?" Gothus asked with amazement.

"That's not what I take off. Never mind. I dance for drunken businessmen."

"That definitely sounds pointless. We'll win the contest for sure," Gothus said, beaming.

With that, Jessica began to get ready. She liked little Gothus. From the bathroom she hollered, "Gothus, are you still in the closet?"

"Yes. I'm making a pattern."

"Bring me my gold high heels."

"Okay," Gothus replied, continuing what he was doing.

"Where are those shoes?" Jessica belated as she entered the bedroom. Gothus had cut out a troll-sized garment of baby blue velvet and was holding it in front of himself. He preened in front of the full length mirror on the closet door.

"Are you *sure* you're a male troll?"

"Positive," he said, coming out of the closet. "May I have these exquisite gold turbans with the tails?" Gothus asked.

Jessica looked down. "They're not turbans, they're my heels. They're shoes, not hats," Jessica said taking the shoe off Gothus' head.

Gothus pouted, "I wanted the other one for George."

Jessica changed the subject as she dressed. "About the money. Maybe we should build a zoo."

"A zoo," Gothus pondered. "Yes, your daddy would've liked a zoo. I'll find us a place today." He began to sew white lace to the velvet garment. "I helped your daddy a lot with business ventures. Jessica, do you like fruits?" Gothus asked.

"I beg your pardon?"

"I have oranges in the chest. You really should eat something before you go to work. Do you like fruits?" Gothus asked again.

Jessica accepted an orange and went to work.

After the second set Jeff, the bar-

tender came over to the stage.

"What's up, Jess? Some guy called, said he was staying with you. He wanted to know if the big white cold box in the kitchen was supposed to be empty."

"What did you tell him?" Jessica asked.

"Told him to call Pizza Hut or Sal's Deli. He didn't seem to understand how to place an order." Jeff said. "I had to tell him the numbers, how to use the phone book, and what to order. I asked him how he had called for you and he said he told the operator he wanted to talk to you at the Honey Pot House and she connected him. He's a strange one, Jess. Is he an illegal alien or something?"

"Something like that," Jessica said.

She called Gothus.

"Jessica's palace," Gothus said when he answered the phone.

"Gothus, what are you up to?"

"I love it here, Jessica. People are so nice. The African with the pizza dropped it on the floor for me and ran off before I could pay him — real nice fellow. And the newspaper has a story about a café in Galveston that has animals in their courtyard. Do you like that idea?" Gothus asked.

"Yes, yes I do. We could call it the Corpus Christi Critter Café."

When Jessica arrived home, Gothus was wearing his blue velvet toga. He had taken off the white lace and added a blue lace ruffle around the bottom. Real estate ads were spread across the floor, but he stopped circling ads in order to run get some pizza from the kitchen for Jessica. He brought the pizza in on a skateboard he had apparently borrowed from the African.

For the next week Jessica drove Gothus to and from proposed cafe sites. He would consult the ad, leap from the car, look over the site and declare, "This isn't it!"

Jessica gave her farewell performance on Friday. Gothus had convinced her to go with a Swan Lake number. She was sure it had never been done in the Honey Pot House before and probably wouldn't ever be again. Gothus watched from her totebag, totally enthralled with her performance.

She had hated the way she had been treated in the topless business, with men who made crude comments and would grab at her. Most of the clientele didn't appreciate her jazz style dancing and certainly wouldn't have tolera'ed

much in the way of ballet. Yet she would miss the stage, the audience. On the way home, Gothus rocked gently, as was his habit, in the seat beside her.

"Stop the car!" he shouted suddenly, and consulted a real estate map from the floor.

Jessica hit the brakes and looked out of Gothus' window at the seedy building, topped by a decrepit sign which read "Tropi Motel." It was one of those motels where one didn't have to rent the room for the whole night. Gothus struggled with the door, pushed it open, and got out.

"This is it, this is it!" he hollered.

Jessica didn't know what he was talking about, except that whatever "it" was, the Tropi *wasn't* it.

Jessica dragged Gothus back into the car.

It took about two months before the Tropi had become the new site of the Corpus Christi Critter Cafe.

Sharon arrived on the front steps of Jessica's house on a Sunday. Sharon had changed — a lot. She was dressed in shorts and a hand-painted tee-shirt. Her

long hair had been cropped and bleached a light blonde. She had been accepted into art school at U.C.L.A. and was leaving today. She had stopped on the way to the airport to say good bye. She had gotten a green-haired troll from in her hope chest. She had put the troll in a box and was planning to ship it to her new address, but somehow she had lost the box. She didn't seem particularly concerned about that.

When Jessica was talking to Gothus a little while later, Jessica asked him, "Gothus, what color hair does your friend George have?"

"George has purple hair. Does Sharon have George?" Gothus asked.

"No, she has a green-haired troll," Jessica told him.

"That would be my sister, Tim. Is Tim going with Sharon to California?"

"Not exactly. Sharon sort of misplaced Tim," Jessica said softly.

"Sharon *lost* Tim? You must find Tim! She grew up under a bridge. She'll get hurt without someone to take care of her," Gothus said and started to pace. Jessica promised to find Tim. On Monday Jessica searched all of Sharon's regular stops, but could not find Tim.

The search for Tim and the wait for the closing on the Tropi property took seemingly forever although the actual time was only sixty days.

At five o'clock on the sixty-first day, Jessica met the attorney at the Tropi and became its legal owner. The place looked like a construction site. The last junk car was being towed away, the flashing sign was gone and the pool had been siphoned of its green sludge and was being resurfaced with something that looked like white stone. The doors to the rooms were open and revealed men and women from the nearby homeless shelter as they tore up rotted carpet and pulled down stained wallpaper. The workers began leaving; Jessica choose a clean room and went to sleep.

At six am Jessica awoke to something bopping her in the nose. It was Gothus.

"Come see the Ballet studio," he said pulling on her arm. Gothus led her to the far end of the horseshoe-shaped motel. The dividing walls of three rooms had been torn down and the walls and floors had been stripped spotless. "It'll take me a few more days to finish it. Do you like it?" Gothus asked excitedly.

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She loved it. Her own studio, at last.

Jessica spent her days searching for Tim and at the end of the week she found the box that Sharon had packed Tim in. It was beside the art supplies store's dumpster. The box had been torn up by dogs. Jessica decided not to tell Gothus about the box.

Gothus came in to tell Jessica the latest on the progress of the Corpus Christi Critter Cafe.

"The pool is done; can you come meet the artist that paints real mermaids? Julie — that's her name — is coming tomorrow. I want you to hire her," Gothus bubbled out his words. Jessica was about to tell Gothus that mermaids weren't real when she remembered that she was talking to a troll.

Julie, the artist sat waiting, her raven hair up in an intricate pile of curls. She began immediately.

Jessica surveyed the grounds. A delivery van pulled up and unloaded bags into the crystal clear water in the pool. Visions of brilliant neon angelfish flashed in Jessica's mind. She ran to the pool's edge in anticipation.

"Goldfish?" Jessica asked.

"Japanese Kohl, bubble eye!"

"Fancy goldfish," she responded.

"They're not *all* gold," he said as he continued releasing the swimming flashes of color.

"Where did you want the two octagonal tanks?" asked a delivery man.

"The cafe's counter," she instructed as she surveyed the grounds. Gothus had been right, this *was* the place. A sign caught her eye: "Exotic Animals." She walked over to the door and entered. Gothus, rocking on his big feet, looked ecstatic upon her arrival.

"I got cats from around the world," Gothus said disappearing into an adjoining room. "Look — Persian, Siamese, and Burmese," he said dragging the three kittens through the door. "Plus a calico kitten; Calico *is* in India, isn't it?" Gothus said, placing the kittens in Jessica's lap.

"These aren't what I meant," Jessica began to say. Gothus quit rocking and tears welled up in his eyes.

"I have displeased you?"

"No, no, Gothus, I love the cats. Thank you."

"Wait'll you see the Caribbean dog," Gothus said as his cheerfulness returned.

"A Caribbean dog?"

"From the Virgin Islands — St. Bernard," Gothus explained.

"What else did you get?"

"Just my foreign pig," Gothus said, beaming.

"A foreign pig?"

"A Guinea pig," Gothus said proudly, leading in a long-haired guinea pig with a rhinestone collar around its neck.

Slightly annoyed, Jessica stated, "I want seahorses, clams, starfish and things like that in the restaurant's aquariums, do you understand?" Jessica said, remembering the mistaken fish order. Gothus nodded. Jessica picked up the mail and decided to read, occasionally she glanced up to watch Julie.

Suddenly, Jessica caught sight a bobbing bit of green fluff behind the lid of Julie's paintbox.

"What do you have in there?"

"Nothing," Julie said defensively, quickly closing the box.

"It's a troll!" Jessica said, and shoved her hand into the box.

"OUCH!!" Jessica screamed as something bit down on her finger. She jerked her hand back to reveal a green haired, yellow eyed troll dressed identically to Julie. It was still attached by its teeth to Jessica's finger. It let go, smiled shyly and began to rock on its big feet.

"Tim?" Jessica asked.

"How do you know of me?" the troll inquired.

"Gothus lives with me," Jessica explained pointing at the exotic animal room.

"Tim is *my* troll," Julie said defensively.

By the end of the day Julie and Tim lived next to the animal room.

As the next several months passed, the Café expanded and became one of the most popular luncheon spots in Corpus Christi and was succeeding without ever going into debt. Gothus continued to acquire profitable businesses on Jessica's behalf. She now had fifty dance students and, with Tim's help, a stock portfolio covering stock from Capezio Ballet Slippers to Keebler.

Thanks to art contests won at U.C.L.A., Sharon and Frank were moving to France under contract with EuroDisneyland. Sharon's letter indicated a new life-style far from the conservative Corpus suburbs. In essence, the letter explained Sharon's new jet-set life, complete with boarding schools for the children and trips to Paris. Sharon mostly wrote the letter to convince Jessica to sign over two million dollars' worth of the Swiss assets from Daddy's

portfolio. Jessica signed the enclosed papers.

"Gothus," Jessica called as she walked through the studio.

"Yes," he replied, stepping out of a darkened practice room. Jessica almost fell over him.

"I need a Spring Break trip." Jessica said

"Fourteen days from start to finish is all the time you can take off."

"The Amazon trip is twenty-one days, plus layovers and transfers." Jessica whined.

"And it's not tax deductible."

"What travel is?"

"Studying Hawaiian Hula, theater, art, and culture is. You got a brochure on that tour today."

"Okay, book that one for me. Now for a different order of business. Café critters. Originally, I wanted exotic creatures. You've convinced me that wild animals belong in the wild. However, we need more than cats, dogs, goldfish and rabbits. The U.S. Park Service has burros, donkeys, and long-horn sheep that are adoptable. We could buy the block of abandoned warehouses across the street, tear them down and put in a petting zoo."

"A petting zoo... I like that," Gothus said.

"Try to get some black-faced lambs and several breeds of goats."

"Maybe one gentle cow?"

"Of course, and some peacocks, ducks, and geese."

On the day she was leaving for her trip Alan called to inform her that he had just cast out a demon with purple hair and red eyes from the church basement.

"It was my George," Gothus cried.

"Maybe Alan only hurt George; maybe George got away," Tim said.

"He beat George with a baseball bat, fired up the furnace, and threw George in," Jessica explained. She was ashamed of Alan and felt it was somehow her fault that Alan had turned out to be such a jerk.

"No, not even a troll could survive that," Tim said sadly, shaking her head.

"Why did Alan do that?" Gothus asked as enormous tears rolled down from his eyes.

"He said he was returning it to Hell. Alan's insane."

"He *must* be insane to think trolls come from Hell. Trolls come from Europe. Everyone knows that," Tim huffed

angrily as she hugged Gothus. "And Sharon wasn't much better."

Sharon now lived the posh life and was getting divorced. She had gotten custody of the dog; neither Sharon nor Frank wanted the now-spoiled children.

Jessica felt guilty for leaving Gothus in his time of need, but no one wanted her to do anything. Gothus just wanted to spend time alone; he wanted to stay busy but he didn't want to be around anyone else.

Jessica was glad to get away, for since she had come into money she never did anything except work. As a matter of fact, she hadn't put in ten or twelve hour days back when she had a *job*. The vacation was great. Out of some sense of guilt she bought tons of things for Gothus and Tim, including a miniature volcano that, when it was filled with water, made a tiny fountain.

The petting zoo was well under way when she arrived home. The shelter people had been helping tear down the warehouses, planting grasses and wildflowers, and building barns in anticipation of the new arrivals.

Gothus scooted into the studio while Jessica unpacked her new Hawaiian and Tahitian costumes. She gave him his gifts of the fountain and a seashell studded doll bed. He was pleased, but the spring in his step and his gentle, happy rocking had not returned. He disappeared with his prizes and Jessica's dirty laundry.

Jessica turned on the music for the two-year-old dance students. In her notebook she wrote: yellow leotards, white tights, yellow squeaky toy ducks. Rubber duckie you're the one (march on, toe, toe) you make bath time lots of fun (march, jump, jump) rubber duckie I'm awfully fond of you (turn, step-ball-change, bend knees, squeak, squeak).

The ringing of the phone interrupted her.

"Jessica, it's Alan," the voice said.

"Yes, Alan. What's up?"

"Wonderful news! I'm going to open the Alanda Mission in Columbia," he said excitedly.

"How did that come about?"

"It's God's will, of course," Alan replied.

"I mean, how? A quarter million isn't enough to start a mission, is it?" Jessica asked.

"Well, that bought the coffee plantation, and ever since Dad passed away, I've been finding rare coins," he explained.

"Where do you find these rare coins?" Jessica asked.

"Many come in through the collection plates and the mission donations box, and I've found a bunch of them just laying in the street."

"Rare coins aren't worth that much are they?"

"Some of the pennies alone have been worth thousands," Alan said.

Suddenly an idea struck Jessica. "When was the last time you found a rare coin?" she asked.

"Yesterday."

"Gotta go... bye," Jessica said, hanging up the phone. "Gothus — Gothus! Oh, there you are. Gothus, what did you and Tim do for a living when you lived under your bridge?"

"Well, I took care of the land, planting crops and selling them; hence, in your society, I do real estate and deal with manufacturing plants. Tim took care of livestock, therefore in your society she deals with the stock market and commodities," Gothus explained.

"What did George do?"

"He collected the toll for the bridge."

Jessica didn't tell Gothus her newest theory — that George was still alive and hiding in the church and was still helping Alan, but a new daily search was launched.

By the June recital, George still had not been found. A new gold-colored cow graced the petting zoo and munched on the wildflowers that had begun to spring up.

When Jessica had started the Critter Café, she had not meant to go into public assistance but she was putting five single mothers through Vet Assistant School, three through secretarial school, and one was becoming an electrician.

"Gothus, how can we afford to help all these people?"

"The petting zoo is starting to make a profit," he explained.

"At two dollars admission? How?"

"We own the feed store and our staff does the vet work. Besides, we charge a lot for the feed that clients buy to feed the animals. The average guest spends seven or eight dollars apiece. It adds up."

So things went until September seventh. Jessica awoke to the sound of hammering. She dressed quickly and stepped out her door. Men were unloading sheets of plywood and covering the café's windows with them. Women were covering the fish pool with tarp and weighing it down. The sky was a putrid green with

ominous black streaks across it. A sheet of rain poured down and Jessica pulled her raincoat tightly around herself. A palm tree crashed into the street. A child leaped over the tree as she ran toward the studio carrying a disheveled chicken. Sarah, one of the zoo keepers, followed at a slow trot with two peacocks under her arms and a sheep tethered to her belt.

"Get the bakery trucks unloaded. Take the older people to the school; they have set up a shelter there," Gothus' voice boomed over the bullhorn. "Bring the animals in!"

Jessica raced across the street and began chasing a chicken. She looked up when she heard a dreadful braying. The burro barn blew away into the fence, sparks sprayed across the ground. She ran and caught the terrified burro, calmed him down, and led him across the compound. A panicked duck darted into the electrified fence and was incinerated in a crack of fire.

Jessica froze; she was trapped. Sparks arced off and on from the wet chain link fence as the electric cable blew in the gale wind. A sheet of water hit Jessica and she fell against the burro. A deep, harsh snap sounded above her head and the fence disappeared from sight.

"Evacuate, evacuate!" Gothus' voice boomed through the darkening block,

Jessica pushed the burro to the studio. The rain bit into her cheeks, her eyes stung, and tears rolled down her face. She felt the side of the building and crept along slowly, searching for the door. The sky was now pitch black with odd streaks of purple-green. The familiar neighborhood landscape had turned into a strange alien planet, complete with a new set of rules for gravity. The objects flying by and slamming into Jessica were no longer identifiable, just bits and pieces of use-to-bes. A strong arm pulled her and the burro into a doorway. The door sailed away.

"Miss Jessica," a deep voice said, "the homeless shelter's roof has collapsed. People are hurt. You have to come in the station wagon." The strong arm continued to pull her. Without realizing how, she found herself being directed through a massive field of giant broken pick-up-sticks. Two arms signaled for her to stop. A pale-looking child, breathing shallowly, was placed in the front seat; a woman was laid in the back. A jagged leg bone stuck out at an angle. Jessica felt sick. Many more injured women and children were loaded into the station wagon and once again

the faceless, bodiless arms began directing Jessica's progress to the hospital. One foot at a time the car moved forward, around piles of debris, up onto the sidewalk, around crumpled, over-turned cars, and kitty corner through now vacant lots.

In the packed hospital lobby, the television showed intermittent views of the city under siege from Hurricane Clara. Jessica recognized the street sign in front of the feed store, but all that remained of the store was a ripped-up chunk of sidewalk flanking one side. Jessica threw herself into helping the increasing number of injured. She helped interview people and fill out forms. She offered a kind word when she could.

There was no way to tell if it was 3 am or 3 pm when she fell asleep on the floor. The stirring of released patients woke her.

Jessica wandered into the street. The gray sky cast ominous shadows across what used to be Corpus Christi.

The rain dissipated and the sun began to appear. Screaming teenage boys raced by and, pipes in hand, smashed the refrigerator located in a tavern. At Sears, people who no longer had homes were toting off stereos, TVs, and microwaves. Corpus no longer had electricity. A more practical group of women and children were ransacking a grocery store and racing off to the remaining sections of a demolished apartment complex.

Suddenly, Jessica saw the café. She hurried her pace. At last she stepped through the café's doorway. Tables lay strewn across the floor. The place was ghostly quiet.

A soft, metallic banging sounded from the kitchen.

"Gothus?"

An enormous aluminum bowl scooted around on a field of spilled flour. She lifted the bowl to find Guinea Pig.

"Sque-eak!" it said hungrily. She found him a dumped box of Cheerios and was feeding him when she heard several male voices.

"Looters," she whispered to the guinea pig.

The sound of heavy, booted feet scuffled about in the main café. The kitchen door began to swing open, then stopped. Jessica tried to stuff herself into the cupboard. Why did the looters have to come here? The door swung open again. Jessica pushed herself farther into the cupboard and held her breath.

"Miss Jessica?" the large black man asked, pulling her out of the cupboard.

Jessica shook violently.

"It's Randy, Miss Jessica, I directed your car to the hospital. Don't you remember?"

Jessica nodded, unable to speak.

"We came to help," Randy explained.

Randy and the other men began sweeping up and sorting out still-intact items. Jessica carried the guinea pig gently in her arms and went outside.

She surveyed the streets. Corpus Christi was gone. It was all gone. She looked up the street — no, not all gone, the Honey Pot House was still there, undamaged. The Born-Again Baptist Church was gone, but the topless bar still stood. God really *did* have a strange sense of humor. Sarah arrived and led the cow out of the studio.

"What will they eat, Sarah?" Jessica asked, looking at the golden cow. The cow answered the question quickly, eating broken daisies and uprooted grass.

Jessica drug herself to the pool and pulled back the tarp. The flecks of gold came to the surface, their mouths opening, pleading for food. Goldfish and wildflowers and topless bars. She sat down and watched the fish. She felt something snuggle against her.

"Oh, thank God, you found Guinea Pig. I've been looking *everywhere* for him," Gothus said, crawling under her coat.

"I love you, Gothus." Jessica said.

"I know."

"Gothus, we're ruined; everything is gone, all gone," she cried.

"It may be in different places, but it's not all gone," Gothus replied. They cuddled by the pool until sunset, when they were interrupted.

"Excuse me — are you Jessica?" a handsome man asked. She nodded and pushed Gothus further under her coat.

"I've been searching for you for several months. I saw this place on the news just the other day and... well...." From behind his back he produced a purple-haired troll. Gothus and George simultaneously began to jump up and down and hug each other.

Curtis, George's new person, was a composer. Jessica led Curtis across the courtyard so the tiny couple could be alone.

"How did you meet George?" she asked, watching the happily reunited couple.

"Well, I went to this AA meeting in this church basement..."

"I see," she said, watching the couple as they gently held hands and rocked beside the pool. One of them giggled

"Is George a male or female troll?"

"I never thought to ask — is it important?" he asked.

"No, I guess not. Oh, God, I've just lost everything!" Jessica said, and began to cry.

"Oh, it looks to me like you've changed your life, most creatively, in the past year. There's hope," Curtis said, gently putting his arm around her.

"Changed my life... creatively... hope." She suddenly smiled. "The contest, oh, my God — Gothus! We've won the contest! We've won! The past year's been both creative *and* pointless — we've won!"

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Dear Ybba... by Larry Tritten

Dear Ybba,

The other day I went to a bi-color orgy with a female friend. I moded for iridescence, pointing out that it was optimum for such circumstances, but she changed promiscuously all evening, going from blonde through slate black, ash gray, topaz, luna cotta, rose, orange madder, emerald, smalt, and plum. She had a better time than I did, and she also met a guy with plaid erogenous zones — as I write this they're vacationing together on Opus. Do you think I should have been a bolder and more whimsical colorist?

Pale and Wan

Dear Pale and Wan,

Who knows? This is the kind of thing that has to be played by aura. It's hard to know what another person's preferences will be. There are women who prefer achromatic types or total swartness. Iridescence is optimum, but it isn't very adventurous. Your date was apparently the type who prefers extreme tincture. She might just as well have been an enthusiast of pastels. She might even have been the type who likes off-color jokes. Mating is never easy, whether you are a plasmic blob, a machine, or a humanoid. Keep at it.

Dear Ybba,

I'm a biophysicist whose current work involves the application of Freudian dream theory to the consciousness of molecular crystals, which are not only alive but exhibit rudimentary perceptive activity. My research has proved conclusively to my mind that crystals dream of chandeliers, dreams that I infer reflect wishes — dreams of grandeur, so to speak. A colleague, in the

meantime, has used a crystal ball to arrive at the notion that crystals often dream of a place called Tiffany's, which they conceive of as a paradisiacal post-life setting, i.e., heaven. Do you think that divination is a valid technique for studying crystals?

Scientific Dreamer

Dear Scientific Dreamer,

I don't want to shine on you, but I suspect that crystal balls may (or may not) be as good a method of scientific investigation as any, especially those filled with snowflakes that swirl around when you turn them upside down. If you can't get one of them, the next best bet is a "magic" Eight-Ball that answers yes or no questions with a rotating strip of printed answers that can be consulted on the bottom of the ball. Seriously, though, I don't think that science has all of the answers. I'm not so flip as to subscribe to the newly fashionable theory of physics that matter doesn't, but I do know that atoms and molecules tend to be more fickle in some parts of the universe than in others, and I'm sure you've heard the theory that the whole universe is just a dream in the mind of God. Sweet dreams.

Dear Ybba,

I've known a lot of computers in my day, both stationary and mobile, mechanical and anthropomorphic or zoomorphic, but I've never encountered one that appreciated a good joke. Tell them one and they invariably remark, "Does not compute!" or give you the kind of look a spacecraft dealer gives an astrophobe. From the simplest gag, such as, "Why does the veleplex cross the node?" ("To get to the other edge.")

to the most hirsute shaggy dog story, there seems to be no response whatever. Why don't computers have a sense of humor?

Jocular

Dear Jocular,

Because they are machines and are literal-minded. On the other hand, the brain is really just a computer made of meat and most advanced species have a rich sense of humor. Incidentally, here's one for you: What does it say on the bottom of a Pogglish computer? (This end up!) HAAAAhahahaha.

Dear Ybba,

I recently took a job as a Mobius stripper (when I remove the clothes from one side of my body, they show up on the other) in a place called the Top Sum Saloon on Bessel. Bessel is a mathematical frontier, with mathematicians from all over the galaxy working hard all day. At the end of the day, they like to have a few drinks and relax in a place like the Top Sum. Most of them are lonely, too. My most avid fan has been a topologist from Earth who came to every show for days before introducing himself. He asked me if I'd have a drink with him and I agreed. We shared a Klein bottle of expensive wine and by the time we finished it, he confessed that he was totally in love with me, so much so that he couldn't even do simple fractions. I think I love him, too. He says he wants to see the other side of my figure, but I only have a one-sided figure — which he should know — but I guess love is blind. How do I handle this?

Out of Shape

Dear Out of Shape,

If he really loves you, then it really shouldn't matter that you have only side any more than if you had small breasts. Also, since he's a topologist, you should expect him to be pleased and intrigued once he contemplates the exotic sexual possibilities. A new branch of sexology, sexual topology, combines topology and sex and has already yielded two new positions for sexual intercourse that even yogis and acrobats can't manage. I refer you to the recently published *Transverse Invagination* (Counting House, \$7.95).

Dear Ybba,

I'd like to leave my body to science, but science on my world (Kazonk) is so primitive (for instance: our scientists think that matter is composed of subatomic particles that aren't allowed to make left turns, and that in order to escape from a planet's gravity you have to wear a disguise and travel at night) that I'd feel better about leaving my body to somebody else's science — say, Terran or Jovian science. Do you think I'm being unnecessarily xenophilic?

Uncertain

Dear Uncertain,

Leaving one's body to anyone is risky. A cousin of mine with no scientific aptitude whatever left his body to art and it ended up being remaindered in a museum. I also had a friend who left his body to science fiction, but they found it implausible and rejected it. As for leaving your body to Terran science, you'd be leaving it to the kind of scientists who are extremely intelligent but who still dress in the kind of clothing you might find in a Salvation Army drop box. If I were you I'd leave my body to my native science, particularly if I had to pay pre-mortem shipping costs.

Dear Ybba,

Why is it, do you think, that moons are more universally regarded as romantic than suns? Moons are cold and pale, but suns burn hot — like passion. If moonlight is thought to provide a proper milieu for hunka hunka rather than sunlight, can the love be deep or lasting? Sunlight makes me want to get hot, too, but

moonlight makes me glum. What is this with moons?

Sunny

Dear Sunny,

All things are relative, not just your aunts and uncles. So it is with terminology. When song writers on ancient Earth wrote love songs, the sexual evolution hadn't occurred yet and I suppose they chose imagery consonant with subdued passion. In any case, the role of the moon in love songs didn't hurt Cole Porter's bank account any. Be glad we call it the solar system, and make hunka hunka while the sun shines.

Dear Ybba,

My husband gave me a subscription to time for my birthday, and for the first week I intend to visit medieval Hibernia, pre-wheel Detroit, and do some shuttling in prehistoric times. I've heard jokes about time travelers who wear wrist watches. What I'd like to know is, would it be gauche to wear my expensive Swatch, or should I leave it home?

Time On My Hands

Dear Time On My Hands,

Of course a watch is somewhat redundant while shuttling, but a watch is also an ornamental item, so I would be my own judge. Incidentally, if own an original of one of those watches with the anthropomorphic mouse whose four-finger gloves tell the time, they can usually be sold in the trans-temporal black market for a lot of money.

Dear Ybba,

I'm a field researcher for the Rhine Institute of Earth and have been studying telepathic beings for years. Telepaths range in type from those on Alpha Mundane whose abilities are so crude that they move their lips while reading minds to those on Phosphor VI, who can read the minds of women at a discount sale. My basic rule as a non-telepathic student of telepathy has been: while walking on the tele path, don't fall into a sar chasm. Recently, though, I've encountered a race of telepaths on the third moon of Ed's Star whose abilities are uniquely primitive; i.e., when they project thoughts, thought balloons like those

in comic strips appear above their heads so that even non-telepaths like myself can read their minds. In the past few weeks I've discovered so much unflattering (but unvoiced) thought about myself that I'm ready to seek another vocation. It just may be that if God had wanted us to read minds, He'd have given us psychic access library cards. What do you think?

Puzzled

Dear Puzzled,

I've only dabbled in telepathy, but it has been my experience that most minds only deserve skimming, interesting marginalia notwithstanding. I do think that a mind is a terrible thing to waste, especially the libido. If it's a good read I'm all for it, especially if there's nothing good on the tube that night, and there seldom is.

Dear Ybba,

I was a guest at a party on Earth given by several libertines (a word whose meaning is one who lives freely). These celebrants inhaled the vapors of burning vegetation and amused themselves by doing impressions of a local animal called "the beast with two backs." Fascinated, I kept sneaking a microscan in where the sun doesn't shine. One of the celebrants broke my nozz. Anthropology is my avocation. Did I do wrong?

Dismayed

Dear Dismayed,

Consider yourself fortunate. Earth has a history of baffling customs. This is a planet whose *post*-sexual revolution cultural environment was such that film and video entertainments in which the bodies of females were penetrated by knives were popular and accepted, but those in which they were penetrated by their lovers' phalli were largely repressed or censored. Only last year a court in the state of Maryland prosecuted a couple for using non-biodegradable spelunks. I suspect that your microscan may have been considered an invasion of privacy, even at a revel. Next time, offer to pay.

Dear Ybba,

I never thought much about lint but I inadvertently discovered that the sentient napery here on (Z)** consider it a gastronomical treat somewhat analogous to caviar among humans. They will pay any price for prime lint, and a combination plate of chintz, flannel, and denim lint is almost priceless. Lint is a scarce here as uranium on Earth. It's incredible to me that I've already gotten rich enough to retire just by inverting the pockets of my old Cordon Bleu jeans. The thing is, the stuff has a druglike effect on these creatures. they get high on it, and the sense of euphoria and power it gives them makes them feel like glad rags and party dress. Do you think it's ethical to deal lint?

Material Guy

Dear Material Guy,

What's ethical and what isn't is, of course, a matter of circumstance. One creature's *poisson*, *n'est-ce pas?* How much can you get me for a used Angora sweater?

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Never Give A Telepath An Even Break

by
**James
S.
Dorr**

"Raise the bet twenty-five standard token. What'll it be, gents?"

"I'll match it."

"Check."

"Too rich for me — I'm going to fold this time. What about you, Nick?"

"I'm folding too."

I found a stool at the Dock House bar and looked across to where my partner, Nick Seraikis, sat playing poker with five other spacers. The man to his left checked as well — put in just enough to meet the new bet — and, the rules forbidding another round unless at least two at the table raised, the original bettor laid down his cards, one by one, revealing an ascending sequence from three to seven.

"Straight, seven high."

"Would have beat me anyway, fellas."

The man to Nick's right, who'd folded first — admitted defeat rather than risking more on his hand — threw his cards in the center. All he had were two pair, nines and queens, with his fifth card a ten. Nick slid his own cards, face down, to the dealer, and then he saw me.

"Hold my place for a hand or two, will you, guys? Got to stretch my legs a little." He stood up and went to the bar a stool or two down from where I was sitting to order a beer. When he'd gotten it, he sipped off a little foam and carried it with him as he strolled through a beaded arch to the dance floor beyond. A few minutes later I ordered a second rye and bottled and followed him through.

"You wanted to see me?" I asked when I found him.

"Yeah. What do you think of that girl over there?" He gestured to where a tall, light-skinned woman was dancing with a Translight-Vega company man. Nick and I were independents, although my partner insisted on wearing his uniform too, even if the insignia were gone, whenever he thought there might be some chance of finding a game. Even after we'd

made the last payment on the *Geraldine T. Mendoulos*, the semi-automated freighter that earned us the taxable part of our living, he still maintained that it brought him luck. In less guarded moments, he'd admit he thought it was psychological, really — dressing to blend in with most of the crowd helped put a potential high roller off guard — but it came to the same thing. He played poker better.

"Mixed stock, I'd guess," I said after a moment. "Mostly High Kalton and — a little bit — Wexford's Planet. Good looking, though, if that's why you ask."

"Look at the eyes — gold with black flecks. They look anything like the eyes of that guy who raised at the table?"

"You think he might be a telepath, Nick?"

"I know the girl is — you can tell by the way she's working her sailor." Nick set his beer down on a ledge by the archway. "As for the guy, I can't be sure, but it's either that or he's damn lucky for a lousy player — both of the others who stayed to see him had drawn more than one card, meaning there just wasn't any excuse, with a straight like that, not to have gone all the way to the limit."

"Maybe he didn't want to scare off..."

"Pete had three aces — he would have stayed. Everybody improved that hand. Even two pair might have chanced it, especially if he'd seen someone else drop out before him."

"Well, if you think he's reading the players, why don't you report him?"

"For one thing, he's slippery — too damn chicken to let me be sure. But even if I was, how'd I prove it? Besides, when he drops, I'm making enough on the other players to cover my losses." Nick picked up his glass again and stared at it, then passed it to me. "Another thing, too. Whatever he's doing, I want to beat him."

I watched from the bar as the game

went on. Others dropped out until only Nick and the golden-eyed stranger were left at the table. It got simple then — after ten or twelve more hands, Nick had lost the limit he'd set and he dropped out too. He still wasn't sure about the stranger, but he had learned his name. Andron Dekkar.

We lifted the next day — we'd only come down on Garrison Blue to take on a shipment — and, by the time the voyage was over, Nick had made enough playing poker at other stopovers that I was sure he'd all but forgotten the one night he'd lost. Then, after our fifth haul back to home port, we ran into Andron Dekkar again.

This time it wasn't at a sleazy dockside saloon, but at New Ringwater's best casino. We'd just come in for something to eat and to watch the action — Nick's too well known to play on his home ground and, since I've sometimes worked as his shill, I'm not popular at the tables either. Just as we were about to enter the dining room, Nick touched my shoulder.

"Look over there," he whispered. "The man in the cashier's line — see the high cheekbones?" I looked as the tall man he'd pointed to turned. We both saw the eyes.

"Now get lost," Nick whispered. I saw a woman I knew standing a couple of paces away and I did as he said. Andron Dekkar had seen Nick as well.

The lady was game for a dinner on me — Nick and I had earned a bonus on that last trip and were both still flush. We passed him and Dekkar on the way in and heard them discussing an invitation-only game.

About three hours later the woman was gone and I was just hanging around the tables when Nick marched past me. I looked up and saw him go into a wash-room so, shortly afterward, I followed suit. He was combing his hair when I

came in, making sure every strand was in place, and I moved to the lavatory next to his.

"I'm practically sure," he said in a low voice, concentrating on what he was doing. "If he's not reading players' thoughts to know what they're holding, he's sure won a lot of hands that he shouldn't. And I know it's not any skill with the game — he brags too much about how much he's won and how he's come up so far in the world since the last time we met him. He's got a gold chain — did you see it on him? He says he bought it on Garrison Blue — in part with winnings he got from me."

"Then why don't you quit, Nick? If you can't beat him..."

"There isn't *anyone* I can't beat it's just finding a way. And he does have weaknesses too. He can't bluff, for instance. I doubt he even knows the concept. He can't, apparently, read more than one person's mind at a time — or thoughts much below the surface either — though he doesn't have to. He doesn't, for instance, have to know why I've drawn a certain number of cards, or why I bet on them the way I do, as long as he knows what they are when I get them."

"Then you're going back?"

"It's a matter of pride — that's something *you* know about." Nick put his comb back in his pocket and straightened his tie — he still wore that uniform, even in home port. "Yeah, I'm going back. Luck's running for me against every player except for Dekkar, but some of the others are starting to drop. I want you to join the crowd looking on — they're starting to smell blood and even the manager, Roberts, is in it. As soon as the seat to my right opens up, I want you to ask to join the game."

"He's a friend," Nick said when I left the onlookers and moved to the table. He made a pretense of speaking softly to the other three who remained. "He's not very good, but he likes to play."

"Then why not... yes, fellows?" Dekkar asked the table at large in an accented voice. "He's not in your company, is he Seraikis? Or — oh, I see now — you just wear those clothes, but you're both independents."

"You didn't know, Dekkar?" Nick had his eyes on the golden-eyed man's face. "You guess pretty well when it comes to the game."

"Ah, but then all I think of are cards," Dekkar replied, a smile on his face, "Isn't that the same as you others?"

Nick nodded as if he'd had something

he already knew confirmed, and gestured toward the chair at his right. "It's jacks to open," he said when I took it — in other words, the standard game. You get five cards and have to have at least two jacks if you want to open the first round of betting. Then, when everyone else has bet too, you get to replace up to four of your cards by drawing new ones from the dealer and, if you think your new hand is better than what the others got on their own draws, you raise the bet higher. The only thing, though, the way Nick and I played it, was that if *he* raised after the draw, and everyone else either checked or folded, then I'd raise too just to keep things going no matter what cards I had in my own hand.

The next few hands were for fairly low pots and I even won one, following Nick's lead. When he didn't raise, he usually folded — Nick rarely just checked to another bettor — and that left me free to play on my own. Then a large pot came and Dekkar went out just after the draw, letting Nick take it. Another player turned in his cards and left the game.

That left one other, aside from Nick and Dekkar and me, and he left, too, after the next large pot went to Dekkar. "So," Dekkar said, "except for your friend — who, I wonder, with some of the hands he shows at the end, if he always plays as if he knows what cards he's got — that just leaves you and me. You want to make it interesting now?"

Nick nodded and glanced in my direction. I gritted my teeth at Dekkar's insult, but nodded too, so he held up a blue chip instead of the usual white we'd been using to indicate the new minimum bet. "Ten times what we've been playing for, then."

The next three hands went by without anyone even having enough to open. I wondered about how Nick's luck was doing, now that the cards were running low — judging from the chips at his side it'd been good so far, even if the other man's pile was at least twice as large. Then it was my deal.

Nick, to my left, opened this time by betting the limit — five hundred token under the new stakes he and Dekkar and I had agreed on. By the rules, that meant he had to be holding a pair of jacks or better, but Dekkar saw him and I raised the minimum. Both of them checked and asked for cards, Nick taking two and the other three, while I, with hopes of a possible straight, took only one.

I watched Dekkar pick up the cards he'd drawn and saw his face brighten — I knew what Nick meant about his being a

lousy player. I glanced at my own card and saw that I hadn't improved my chances.

"I think I'll check to you, Dekkar," Nick said — that was a signal to let me know that something was on, but the cards Nick had drawn still lay on the table. Dekkar counted out fifty blue chips and pushed them into the pot in the center.

"The limit. Five hundred."

"I'm in," I said, shoving my own chips into the pot. I was going to lose, whatever happened — four cards to a straight, without the fifth to complete the sequence, counted for nothing — but I had to stay in to see what lead Nick would give me next.

He put in his fifty chips and raised fifty more. Dekkar raised too, but only twenty-five this time, so I just put in my own seventy-five and passed back to Nick.

"I'll see your twenty-five, raise you fifty. That'll be five hundred token more. What say — if my friend's willing, of course — we up stakes again?"

"I... you haven't looked at your cards, Seraikis," Dekkar said, staring down at where Nick's new cards still lay where I'd dealt them.

"That's right, Dekkar. Some people say poker's a game of luck as much as of skill. You willing to test yours?"

"I... I'll see you, Seraikis." He pushed fifty more of the ten-token blue chips into the center and I did the same, then added a minimum raise of five.

"Looks like my friend wants some action too," Nick said. He looked around and spotted the manager, still in the crowd. It was growing larger. "Roberts," he called, pulling a roll of bills from his pocket, "I'm going to need more chips. Get my friend some, too."

The game continued for several more rounds, Nick and me raising — Nick always the limit — and Dekkar just meeting the bet when his turn came and looking more nervous each time he did so. The two cards Nick had drawn still lay, undisturbed, on the table.

"You sure you don't want a new limit?" Nick asked. He'd bought chips from Roberts a second time, with the last of the money left from his bonus, and, even after he pushed his usual fifty raise out, his pile was larger than Dekkar's now. "You could just end it in one round, you know — I'm sure my friend would be willing to drop — by betting the table."

"You mean betting everything we have all at once?" Dekkar's voice quiv-

ered, then sounded surer. "And just against you, without your partner — you *are* playing partners. But how could I bet enough to meet you if you just keep on buying more chips?"

"I'll guarantee — and my friend can confirm it — that I've spent all the money I have on what you see here." I glanced up at Nick's reference to me and saw Dekkar staring right into my eyes — and then I knew. He *was* reading my thoughts, without even making any more pretense at being subtle. Meanwhile, I heard Nick's voice droning on.

"You can buy chips, too," Nick was saying, "or, if you're light, the manager's here and he might give you credit. Maybe he'd stake you enough to match what I've got for that gold chain."

I saw Nick twist and motion to Roberts. Nodding, the manager came to the table to stand next to Dekkar. He had two men with him — two *large* men. Then Dekkar turned and the spell was broken.

He looked at Roberts and Roberts nodded a second time. "It's worth enough for the bet," he said, but his voice sounded strange. "That is, Nick, if you still want to play him."

Dekkar took the chain from his neck and threw it into the pot on the table. He shoved his entire pile of chips behind it. "It's done," he said. His hands were shaking. "I'm betting it all."

I folded my cards and looked at Nick who still only had three cards in his hand. "I'm out," I whispered.

"It's my bet then, Dekkar," Nick said, his voice even. "I'll meet your bet, just like I said, with everything here." He shoved his own pile into the center, then looked up and smiled. "And now I'll raise the size of the table."

Dekkar turned white. "You can't," he said. "You told me — you told everyone here you'd used all your money. Even your friend..."

"Knows I've already spent the money I got from our last trip," Nick finished for him. "But you used credit to make that last bet, and Roberts ought to take *my* credit, too." He looked at the manager. "You've seen the *Geraldine* in port. What would you say my share of her's worth?"

"A good sixty thousand at least," Roberts answered. "I'd go that high — but Nick, are you sure you..."

"You *can't* bet again," Dekkar shouted. "I don't mean the credit. I mean you can't win — all you have is two kings, ace high."

"And two other cards that I drew," Nick replied. Dekkar leaned forward and

stared at Nick's eyes. "No — don't do that, Dekkar. You already know that I haven't seen them. The question, though, is *how* do you know that two of the cards I *have* seen are kings?"

"I — I know how you play, Seraikis. I guessed..."

"No. You might have guessed about the ace — I only drew two cards — just like I can guess, from your draw and the way you've been betting, that you've got two pair with, probably, the highest one queens. But how do you know that I don't have *three* kings? Or maybe a second ace to go with the pair of kings you claim I have already? How can you be absolutely *sure*, Dekkar, that I didn't improve my hand with one of those cards I haven't looked at?"

"I..." Dekkar began.

"I'd guess you read my thoughts when I looked at the hand I was first dealt," Nick continued, his voice still level. "I could have improved it, in which case I'm almost sure that I'll win, but I don't know that — and you don't know either. That's what I'm betting on."

Dekkar picked up his cards again and studied them carefully. "You don't know if you did or not, though..."

"That's right, Dekkar, but the point is that *you* don't know either. That's what makes it fun — makes it poker. Now, by the rules, you raised to me so it's my turn to raise back if I want to. I'm betting my ship."

"And I'm going to cover that bet," Roberts broke in, his voice even, too. He moved directly behind Nick's opponent and gestured to his men to stand on either side. "As for you, Dekkar, I'm going to offer you credit as well, so you can't get out by claiming you don't have enough to meet it. But be very careful because, if you lose, I'm going to make sure you pay every token and fraction back."

"I — I just..." Roberts' men moved in a little closer,

"Be very careful," Roberts repeated. "In any event, this will be your last game — I'm also going to make it a point that the word about you gets spread around. So what'll it be? Either you meet what's been bet against you or leave the game."

"I... I'm out," Dekkar whispered. He dropped his cards, face up, in the center — two tens and two eights, with a queen for a kicker.

Roberts and his bodyguards moved back just enough distance to let the

TOMORROW

...if we are gone,
who will howl at our steel
stained wake, sniff over
gang-banged hulks of corroded
wire, shattered glass and scrap
metal?

...if we are gone,
who will prowl our splintered streets,
scale our strangled towers,
drag their twitching kill
down the whimpering tunnels
of Paddington?

...if we are buried
forever, whose child will rise
with born-again mind, power-sick
soul? Who will dream
the next disposable
jungle?

K.V. Skene

golden-eyed man leave his chair. He opened his mouth, as if he wanted to say something more; then closed it and pushed his way through the crowd that surrounded the table.

Nobody spoke until one of Roberts' men walked around the table to Nick. "That was some chance you took, Mr. Seraikis, betting your ship like that," he said.

Roberts joined in. "And you knew all along he was reading, didn't you." It wasn't a question.

"I knew he had weaknesses," Nick replied. "The final clue came when he let on that my partner's playing had made him confused — he hadn't found out yet that we had a system. That meant, at least, that some of what I'd suspected about his limits was true."

Nick got up slowly and leaned with big hands on the edge of the table. His voice sounded tired. "Then," he went on, "the idea came — just as I was about to pick up my cards on that last draw — that, by not looking at them at all, I'd confuse Dekkar even more. From that point on, it was simply a matter of play-

ing the odds."

"But Mr. Seraikis, the odds were against you," the bodyguard who'd spoken first said. "Even keeping that ace as a kicker" — he paused for a moment as if he was working it out in his head — "it'd still be something like four to one you hadn't made any improvement at all. And yet you raised him,"

"No," Nick replied, "I checked to him first. When he raised, I knew he'd improved, but, when I raised back and he didn't go the limit again, I knew his hand hadn't gone up that much. And it hadn't even occurred to him yet that I didn't care what the cards I'd drawn were. I never did, really, because those weren't the odds I was playing."

"What do you mean by that?" Roberts broke in.

"I was betting on whether he'd stay in the game. Yes or no — that made the odds even. But then you backed me in talking him into raising the table — that let him know the risk would be more than just a night's winnings — and I raised him further. As far as he knew, the rules had just changed — he could

have been forced into debt, or worse, on a single hand. That's when I figure the odds came to my side."

Roberts whistled, "I guess you got a pretty good point there. You think about it, psychologically, someone like Dekkar who's always won by reading hands can't really be said to have ever played *poker*. You didn't give him a single break, did you?"

"There's always a chance — I took a risk too. I'm used to it, though." Nick stretched and smiled, then leaned back to the table and, picking up the heavy gold chain Dekkar had left there, he fastened it carefully around his own neck. "Want a look at the cards he lost to?"

Roberts smiled too, while both of the men who were with him nodded. Nick reached for the two cards that lay on the table, still face down, and pushed them back into what was left of the deck I'd dealt from. Then he picked up the other three he'd held in his hand.

"Dekkar told you himself," he said, turning them over. "Just the cards that I opened with — two kings and an ace."

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" BEST PIZZA ON THE PALOUSE "

GRAVITY WELL

by
Kent Patterson

When the city bus dropped Matt Pearson off and pulled away from the curb, it left a cloud of greasy exhaust swirling around him like water around a bathtub drain.

With rising astonishment, Pearson watched as the smoke circled, turning his pants a darker shade of gray.

What the hell could cause that? He took two steps and stopped. For a few seconds, the eddy lost shape. Then, slowly, long gray tendrils of smoke searched his way out, and again he was the center of a tiny whirlpool of Diesel exhaust.

A thrill not exactly of fear, more like intense nervousness, shot through him. What was this? Freak air current? No. What breeze there was blew toward the street. Static electricity? He'd just washed and dried the pants yesterday. Industrial strength static cling. He'd have to buy some of those anti-cling washday products the compulsive clothes washers advertised on TV.

Relieved, he walked briskly, leaving smoke tendrils following behind him like ghostly fingers.

As usual, Pearson's office at Roaring Feathers Software depressed him. He didn't smoke, but the carpet reeked of old cigars. The cream colored walls had long since faded to grey. His poster of Hawaii had faded too, its corners curling like a dying plant.

After he finally managed to get started, Pearson forgot everything except the job. The first draft of his manual revision for the new GraftixPlus Release 3.0 (Release 4.0, really, but the company was praying everyone had forgotten the original release 3.0) had returned from one of its endless wanderings through the bureaucracy. As usual, it came back festooned with so many paste-on slips they hung out on all sides like a fringe.

"How ya doing, Matt?" Pearson glanced around to see Annie, the new gofer (her job title recently upgraded to

Office Resource Person). Fresh from high school, Annie wore jangly plastic earrings, styled her hair in "business punk," and regarded anyone over thirty as archaic.

"You got a letter from those guys at Delta Data, and a brochure on DTP, and Darla, this woman with the husky voice wants you to call..."

"Thanks, Annie. I'll get to it." He'd never thought of Darla's voice as particularly husky, but Annie liked a bit of color in her reports.

Pearson turned back to the computer screen. Then he became conscious that Annie was staring at him.

"What is it, Annie?"

"You know you got paper clips sticking to your back?"

"What?" He reached around. Sure enough, two paper clips stuck to the back of his shirt. He picked them off.

"Uh. Thanks, Annie. They must have got stuck in the cloth."

Her duty done, Annie left, heels clicking as she walked down the hall.

Puzzled, Pearson put a paper clip on his shirt front. It stuck. He got up, closed the door to his office, then unbuttoned his shirt front and started putting paper clips on his chest. They stuck. He pulled one off, held it at arm's length, and dropped it. It fell to the floor, though closer to him than when he'd dropped it. He held another clip a hand's breadth from his chest and dropped it. It fell diagonally, hitting his stomach and sticking.

What *was* this? Static cling from hell? He reached over and touched the steel lamp he always used to ground himself before he opened a computer case. The paper clips didn't drop off. Not static electricity, then. Come to think of it, paper clips were excellent conductors and wouldn't be held by static electricity anyway.

A ball of fear grew in his stomach.

He'd just been fooling himself with the static cling theory. What kind of an electrostatic charge would be strong enough to make a cloud of Diesel smoke follow you like a long lost friend? But if not static electricity, then what?

Suddenly Pearson felt something squeezing him like a housewife squeezes a lemon. He collapsed back into his chair. For no apparent reason, a pencil on his desk rolled towards him and leaped for his chest. He slapped it across the room.

Enough was enough. The company owed him sick leave, and this was as sick as anything he'd ever heard. He collected his wits, stood up, and walked out of the office. As he did, pieces of paper followed him like chicks behind the mother hen. With a violence which rattled the windows, he slammed the door on them.

Once outside, the bright sunshine of a perfectly normal day made him feel better. He'd have to call Darla; they nearly always went out on Fridays.

As usual, Notary Public, the neighbor's huge gray cat, greeted him when he got to his apartment. Notary firmly believed the sole mission on earth of humans was to feed cats. Pearson found the utter normality of the cat's approach comforting. Cats didn't get psychosomatic illnesses. He felt ashamed of his own fears.

"Nothing for you today, Notary, you shameless panhandler," Pearson said, bending to pet her.

Instantly her fur stood up and her back arched toward him. Yowling, she lost her grip on the concrete and fell up towards him. Flipping around in mid air as only cats can, she landed on his arm, sinking her claws into the bare flesh.

"Hey!" Shocked, he flung her to the ground. Instantly, she shot across a parking lot, under a trash dumpster, then up a wooden fence. Once there, she

crouched in cat fight-or-flight position, staring at Pearson as though he were a kitten-stomping monster from Mars.

Blood welled up from the scratches on his arm. But instead of dripping, it made little beads like sweat on a cold bottle of beer. *Worse and worse*, Pearson said to himself. *Maybe I'd better see a doctor. Or maybe a psychiatrist.* There was an emergency ward just a couple of miles away. At least he should get the cat scratches looked at. Maybe he could talk to someone there about counseling, or something like that.

Once again he had the sickening feeling of being squeezed. This time it came so intensely he had to lean against a lamp post. He felt heavy.

With a slightly rolling gait, Pearson walked back to the bus stop at the corner. He tried to ignore the way tree branches bowed down at him. Soon he had accumulated an embarrassing load of dead leaves, twigs, grass cuttings, and cigarette butts. *I look like I'm wearing camouflage*, he thought.

What was going on? Could this possibly be an hallucination? *If so*, he thought, *I'm a raving loony. Next thing I'll be putting my hand in my shirt and calling myself Napoleon. Maybe all this is my unconscious mind's idea of a good joke.*

The blue sky, low clouds, traffic noises — everything seemed normal. Except him.

So let's think about this scientifically, he said to himself. *What force in the universe can attract paper clips, trees, and cats? Gravity! But that made no sense. Yet certainly it wasn't an electrostatic field. Or magnetic. What else was there? Damn.* He didn't need a doctor, he needed a physicist.

Of course! Wayne Yeh at the University! Roaring Feathers had done some custom programming for him, and Pearson had gotten to know him. Not bosom buddies, but at least first names. He caught the first bus heading for the campus.

"If it's a trick, it's a devilishly clever one," said Dr. Yeh. He had a round face, slightly stooped shoulders, and the brightest blue tie Pearson had ever seen. Yeh pulled a stapler off Pearson's chin. When Pearson had walked into Dr. Yeh's cubby hole of an office, a deluge of computer printouts, books, pens, and student papers had smothered him.

Now Dr. Yeh had Pearson standing in the open center of the physics lab, a huge barn-like room with a concrete floor and doors big enough to drive trucks through.

Pearson stood still while Yeh he peeled off layers of debris like leaves off an artichoke.

As Yeh worked, Pearson told him the story. Yeh asked a million questions. When had he first noticed the "dust magnet" phenomenon? Exactly when did the force get strong enough to pick up a paper clip? A pencil? A tin can? Did the force get stronger gradually, or did it increase in sudden steps? Pearson answered as well as he could. Yeh recorded every word.

"Now, that's the last of it," Yeh said, pulling his glass paper weight from Pearson's stomach.

The physics lab smelled faintly of alcohol and ozone. Around the side, a counter held a number of computers, oscilloscopes, tools, and books. A wooden rim around the edge of the counter held the material in place. Whenever Pearson moved, everything rattled.

"This force feels like gravity," Yeh said. "It tugs at me when I'm near you. But that's not possible. Not by any theory of gravity I know. As you say, it's true each person has a gravity well around them. But the force is tiny. In any case, any gravitational force a person might create is miniscule compared to the earth, which is why I'm not flying toward you. The force of gravity is proportional to the mass. You're exerting a force big enough for a small asteroid. Yet you're not a small asteroid, are you?"

Yeh smiled at his physicist humor. Pearson had long since given up laughing.

Musing, Yeh continued. "So one point is that you have far, far more force than something of your mass could possibly have. The other point is that gravity diminishes with the square of the distance. A gravity well should extend indefinitely. This field seems to be intense right next to you, but it falls off rapidly. At about 30 feet, it drops to zero. Beyond that, nothing. At least nothing I can detect."

"So if it's not gravity, then what?"

"Well, either you are the best conjurer it's ever been my fortune to meet, or there's more to psychokinetic energy than I've ever thought, or..." He paused. "Maybe I'm going to have to change my mind about gravity."

"Could you please hurry? It's getting hard to stand."

"Oh, yes. Pardon me." Yeh called in a young man in an Einstein tee shirt. The two of them helped Pearson to lie down on a heavy steel table on wheels. Then they rolled in a machine which Pearson had never seen before. Yeh fiddled with

the machine, attaching it firmly to the wall, then installed a long arm with a massive lead weight on one end. The lead weight at the end of the arm swung towards Pearson. Yeh stared at a read-out on a computer screen.

"This gadget's only a fancy scale. It measures the exact pull on the lead as it approaches you." Dr. Yeh said. "Sort of a lash up, really, but it should get approximate data." He watched the computer screen as the weight swung back and forth. Finally the weight stopped an inch from Pearson's chest.

"Incredible!" Dr. Yeh whistled through his teeth. "It *must* be gravity. Or something very like it. Close up, you actually exert more gravitational force than the earth. At five meters, it's still considerable. At ten, nothing. I plain can't believe it. Scott," he said to the young man. "Get Nobu, Ted, Judy, Ahmed, and anyone else you can find. Tell them to drop whatever they're doing and get over here on the double. We're talking Noble Prize stuff." Scott went for the door in a dead run.

"Now, don't worry, Mr. Pearson. We'll find out what's going on." Dr. Yeh's tense smile belied his assuring words.

"How can it be gravity?" Pearson said.

"I wish I knew." Dr. Yeh said. "This is by far the strangest phenomenon I've seen. It could be the sort of career chance which happens maybe once a century. Galileo with the telescope. Einstein and relativity."

"Just what Mom always wanted me to be. A scientific breakthrough," Pearson said, his voice dripping with what he hoped was sarcasm but which sounded more like fear.

"I can't believe that out of all the people who might have found this, I'm the lucky one," Dr. Yeh said.

"My sentiments exactly," said Pearson.

Suddenly a surge of energy burst through Pearson's body. He felt a giant hand clutch him, kneading his body with soft, incredibly strong fingers. *Now I know what being a lump of bread dough is like*, thought Pearson. He raised one hand. It took all of his strength to do it.

"My leaping Lord," Dr. Yeh said. "This gets more astonishing by the second." He looked from his computer monitor to Pearson. "Your field strength increased many fold in less than a second." For the first time, his face showed anxiety. "How do you feel?"

"Like I'm being squeezed to death by a boa constrictor."

"Yes, I suppose you would," said Dr.

Yeh, returning to his instruments. "This is getting worrisome."

With enough commotion for a calvary charge, Scott led a troop of graduate students into the room.

"Stand back!" shouted Dr. Yeh. "No one goes any closer than ten meters to the subject." The students deployed like trained soldiers. Soon Pearson was surrounded by a wall of equipment and hard working students.

Pearson seemed to weigh a ton. Even raising his hand to his face required a major effort. Standing up was simply out of the question.

Another sudden surge of energy shot through him. Again, the sensation of being squeezed, a kind of throbbing, kneading crushing sensation that left every bone aching and every muscle screaming with pain.

Now it was impossible to lift his arm. The weight of his cheeks pulled his mouth open. He could close it only with a great effort. Talking was an impossibly fatiguing exercise. He could manage only a few words before he needed to rest.

Now one of the students fixed a microphone to a strong cable, then lowered it to within an inch of Pearson's lips. No, since the microphone cable was parallel to the floor, "lowered" was the wrong word. But any direction to Pearson was down. Gravity well. For the first time, Pearson noted the aptness of that expression. That's what he was. A man at the bottom of a deep, deep well, getting rapidly deeper.

"Please," he mumbled into the microphone. "Please call Darla Bauer. She's on campus, a teaching assistant. Extension 3824. Tell her I'm here." The students looked at each other blankly. Then the woman called Judy ran for a phone.

"Pearson, can you hear me?" said Dr. Yeh.

"Yes," he mumbled into the mike.

"I'm projecting a graph on the ceiling." Sure enough, a graph appeared on the ceiling. "I've graphed the increase of strength of your gravity field as to time." A bright green line appeared. At first, the line increased very slowly, only occasionally making little stair steps up. Then the stair steps got bigger, and there were more of them.

"The early data is, of course, only an estimate based on your subjective experience. But I feel it's within an order of magnitude of the truth," Dr. Yeh continued. "The truly astonishing thing about this data is that it indicates the field strength is increasing by an exponential function. By squares, in fact. Every step

up, the force increases as if it is multiplied by itself. Also, the step intervals are growing shorter, so the multiplying effect is coming more and more frequently. Yet the field only extends to a sphere with a radius of roughly ten meters. Beyond that, there's no effect whatsoever. At least not yet."

A uniformed campus security guard came in. For a few minutes, he and Dr. Yeh held a whispered conference. Then the man left.

Dr. Yeh continued. "Mr. Pearson. I apologize for my earlier overoptimism. I can't explain this effect. But if it continues — even for two more steps — the gravity well about you will grow to catastrophic proportions. I'm putting an extrapolation on the graph."

On the graph, a red line appeared. With the next step, it shot clear to the top of the graph. The next after that took it clear off the graph and into the stratosphere.

A sudden hubbub of voices broke out, with Darla's the loudest and highest. "Let me in, Goddammit," she shouted, following this with a string of epithets which Pearson would have guessed she didn't even know.

Soon she appeared, face red, hair mussed, with a man holding each arm. "Let me go, assholes!" she raged. Then she stopped struggling to look at Pearson.

"Oh, my God! Can't you morons see he's suffocating? He needs help. Get an ambulance!"

"Young woman, I am very, very sorry," said Dr. Yeh. His voice was low, but so authoritative that even Darla stood stock still to listen. "Mr. Pearson is quite beyond any medical help. You must stay at least ten meters away. I've already asked security to clear the other floors of this building. Don't forget that this force extends to the ceiling over us and through the floor beneath. That area includes part of the steel frame of this structure. If our calculations are correct — and I for one pray they are not — within a few minutes he will generate a gravitational force which will be quite capable of collapsing that frame. This entire building will fall. It is imperative that he be moved to an open space immediately. Campus security is now making these arrangements."

No sooner had he finished speaking than massive twin doors opened to the outside. Its engine rumbling, in rolled a fork lift on hard rubber wheels. The fork in front had been covered with a matress-like pad.

The students parted to let it through. Cops with guns and radios burst in, yelling at everyone to get back, go home, there was nothing to see.

When the fork lift lifted the steel table he lay on, Pearson felt as if his body would be pulled directly through the steel.

He lost consciousness.

When he came to, the fork lift was rumbling down the street leading to the University football stadium. A police barrier barred a curious crowd from getting too close. *Well, after thirty-one years of total obscurity, Pearson thought, at last God grants me my fifteen minutes of being a celebrity. You can have it back, God.*

The forklift deposited him on his back precisely in the center of the football field. Then its engine quit. Now Pearson noted the lift had no driver. They'd rigged up a remote control. Very clever.

Above him, the first pink hint of sunset tinged the fluffy clouds. The air smelled of crushed grass and Diesel exhaust. As from a great distance, he could hear a multitude of voices. Loudest and highest, Darla shouted, "I love you, Matthew! Don't give up hope." Only at that second did Pearson realize fully, without embarrassment or pretense, how much he valued her.

There was nothing gentle about the next attack. It came as a great slap. Every atom of his body seemed to vibrate. His lips pulled away from his teeth. His eyes bulged, stinging from dryness, but he couldn't muster the strength to blink.

He concentrated on breathing, trying to pull air into his crushed lungs. He was dying, and knew nothing could save him. Nothing.

Yet he struggled, desperately trying to breathe, to live, if only for a few more seconds.

It was so damned unfair. What had he ever done to deserve this? But then who deserved to die? How many times had he walked past car wrecks, hospitals, nursing homes, without once considering the pain of the people inside. And that was fair. If every person felt every other person's pain, the entire world would be nothing but a house of mourning.

But he had lived unconsciously, believing in his own strength, his own will, confident his world would stay the same, that the rules which worked Tuesday would work Wednesday.

And every second of every day he had

been walking above an abyss. An image from a half-forgotten literature class came back to him. Mankind was nothing but a spider hanging its web over the fires of hell, scurrying back and forth on the few flimsy threads it considered to be the entire world, and never once glancing down.

The next slap made the last feel tame. They came every few seconds now, one after the other. Turf and dirt rolled up like an ocean wave from the football field and buried him. But the mass of the fork lift prevented dirt from covering his face. He could still see a small slice of the sky. Now the clouds turned red and gold. Pearson thought it the most beautiful thing he had ever seen.

The slap came again. The fork lift crumpled like a scrap of paper.

By all logic, Pearson should have been dead a long time ago. But from the beginning, this force had been without logic. It was as if some alien power had selected him from a random list and decided to destroy him without actually killing him. Crushed beyond recognition, his body had long since ceased to function. He couldn't remember how it had once felt to stand up, to walk freely. He could barely remember how it had felt to

breathe.

Yet a tiny spark of consciousness remained. He gloated in that, reveled in it. In his mind, he sat hunched over that tiny spark like a caveman over the very first spurt of flame, knowing that as long as that flame burned, he had separated himself from all that was inanimate and brutish. As long as that tiny mote of consciousness remained, he was Prometheus, clinging to life in defiance of the gods themselves.

Now the slaps came one after another so rapidly one began before the other stopped. He no longer reacted to the pain, he could not. All his mind concentrated only on that tiny patch of sky which by now had become indistinguishable from his last bit of consciousness. The sky grew smaller and smaller. Then, finally, like a tiny spark in the night sky, the patch winked out. He understood. He had entered a gravity well so deep no light could escape and its beams fell back like a batted ball. Even thought could not escape, and his consciousness melded into the great unknown.

At that precise instant, Pearson vanished from the universe he'd always known and appeared in one which, even had he had the capacity to comprehend

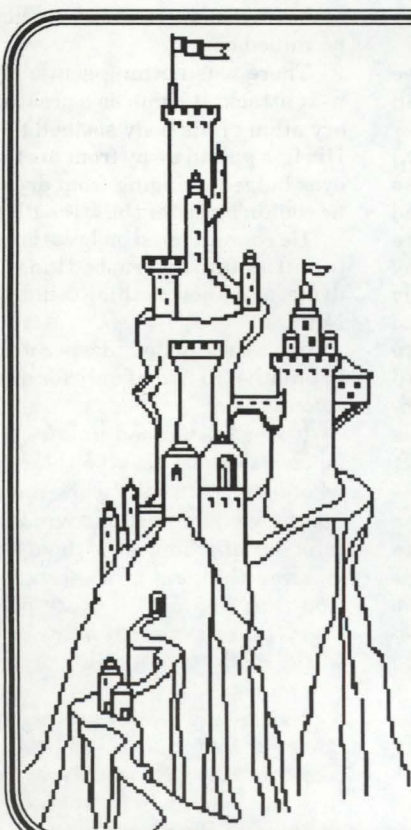
it, and even had he a means of sending a message back, he had no words with which to communicate a hint of its wonder and terrible beauty.

PEGASUS

*Night, and hoofbeats ringing
anvil-like on stars
cosmic stallion winging
white as moonbeam's bars,
past blue Venus swinging,
over crimson Mars.*

*Eyes grown cold with passion,
feet with fire shod,
find their destination,
skyways never trod —
to what unmade creation,
what unpondered god?*

June Miller



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GOD DAMNED HOBBY

by Ray Nelson

The pink slip was actually pink.

Gallagher sat in his swivel chair, staring at it as it sat quietly in his in basket on his gray steel desk. Other people in his department had gotten pink slips. Their unoccupied desks surrounded his under the pitiless white light from the frosted glass ceiling. But he had thought he would be the exception, one of the few who would not be cast aside in what the corporation called its "radical reorganization". He had served the company well for over two decades. He could not believe they would simply give him his notice like this, as if he was some young trainee on probation.

There must be some mistake.

He leaned forward, his chair creaking faintly, and picked up the slip, then leaned back again, reading it. The phrasing was scrupulously polite but the message was clear. He was fired.

There was more in the in basket; reports, memos, printouts. He paid no attention to them. If he was fired, what meaning did these things have for him now? What more could happen to him if he simply ignored them? If he snatched them up and tore them to little bits?

So he simply sat there, pink slip in hand, healthfully thin, respectably clean-shaven, wearing his usual conservative gray suit, his usual conservative black tie, his usual conservative white shirt, essentially the same outfit he had worn, with small variations for style, since the day he had been hired. That's what a man wears, at least if he hopes to remain in the employ of this corporation.

It wasn't an outfit he would have chosen if he'd had a choice.

He did not tear up the papers in his in basket. He did not scream like a man falling from the roof of a high building. He did not pick up his chair and smash it into the screen of his computer terminal. He thought of these things, but he did not do them.

He was not that sort of man.

Instead he quietly put his computer

terminal on screen-saver, stood up and, still clutching his slip, walked down the aisle between the abandoned desks, neither particularly fast nor particularly slow, in fact at exactly the same pace he had always walked during business hours, the same pace all the employees of the corporation walked during business hours.

Arriving at the elevator, he pressed the up button and waited.

After a few moments the doors slid open to admit him. He pushed the button for the tenth floor, the highest floor in the building. Hands hanging lifelessly from his shoulders, eyes staring at nothing, he rode upward. The doors opened. He got out.

The receptionist, a neat, attractive woman in her thirties, sat at her dark-stained wood desk. She looked up, smiled.

"Good afternoon, Mister Gallagher."

"Good afternoon, Miss Smith."

"Can I help you?"

"I have to talk to Mister Chesterfield."

"Do you have an appointment?"

"No, but it's urgent."

"May I ask the nature of your business?"

Wordlessly he showed her the pink slip.

"I see," she said, and the sympathy in her voice, however well-meant, humiliated him more than anything he could remember ever hearing before. She pressed a button and spoke into her intercom. "Mister Gallagher to see you. He says it's urgent."

After a pause, a hearty voice answered from the speaker. "Send him in, Alice."

Gallagher walked past her, opened a heavy oak door, and entered a huge, sun-drenched office. Chesterfield stood up to greet him, a short, fat silhouette against a floor-to-ceiling picture window. He was dressed in gray, the same as Gallagher, but wore no necktie. Gallagher had never

seen a member of senior staff without a necktie before, let alone the director himself, and the sight shocked him profoundly, but he concealed his feelings as he advanced across the deep, soft rug, hand extended.

They shook hands firmly.

"Hello, Gallagher. What brings you here?"

"This." Gallagher showed him the slip.

The older man sighed. "Ah yes. You better sit down."

Gallagher sat in front of the massive wood desk. Chesterfield settled himself behind it with a little groan.

"Surely there is some sort of computer error," began Gallagher.

"No, there's no mistake." His boss seemed embarrassed, unable to make eye contact.

"Then it must be a temporary layoff."

"No, I'm afraid it's permanent."

"Is there something wrong with my work?"

"No, your work is fine. I'll give you my personal recommendation for your next job."

"My next job? There are so many people out of work, and I'm not as young as I once was."

"I'm sure you'll find something."

"I suppose so." He thought, *As what? A night watchman? A short-order cook in a hamburger palace?*

"If there's anything I can do?"

"There's one thing."

"Name it."

"Explain it to me. Explain what's happening."

The fat man sat back, templeing his fingers and frowning. After a few moments' silence he said, "There are a lot of factors, of course, but they aren't really crucial. A lot of little things, but only one big thing."

"One big thing?"

"This." Chesterfield gestured toward a black attaché case on his desk.

"What is it?"

The executive opened the snaps and lifted the lid. In the lid Gallagher saw a screen similar to the screen on any computer terminal. In the lower half he saw a keyboard only slightly different from the one he'd used for years. "It's only an ordinary lap top computer," Gallagher said, baffled.

"Not quite," said Chesterfield. He punched the power button. The screen lit up. "She's what they call a trivideo terminal. She has a built-in cellular modem so she can talk to any other terminal that's on line anywhere in the world without even having to plug in. You know those new super batteries they've developed for electric cars? This baby has got one. She can run continuously for over a year without recharging. And she doesn't just handle digital data. She's a telephone, too, with a video option so you can see the person you're phoning. And watch this." He punched a few buttons.

A brightly-colored image of a man playing golf appeared on the screen, together with the murmur of a crowd. The golf club swung. The ball sailed through the air.

"My God," whispered Gallagher.

The picture was in three dimensions.

"She's picking up satellite transmissions, and without a satellite dish," said the fat man gleefully. "I tell you, I don't care what it is, if it's broadcast, this little cookie can pick it up."

"But what does that have to do with my job?"

"Don't you get it? You see this big building? You know what it costs to rent this building? Well, we aren't going to rent this building any more."

"You're moving?"

"I'm moving to my hunting lodge by a lake up in the mountains. No more rush-hour commute. No more punching the time clock. I can sit out on my porch with this gadget in my lap. I can sit on the dock with my bare feet dangling. I can sit in my boat fishing. And I'll still be in instant contact with the whole company, with the whole wide world."

"At least you'll have to maintain a mainframe somewhere."

"Forget it with your mainframe. An earthquake can happen to a mainframe. A fire can happen to a mainframe. A terrorist can happen to a mainframe. With trivideo there isn't any mainframe. She has so much memory capacity the main database can be scattered in pieces all over the globe in a whole lot of little trivideo units like this one, so if something happens to a unit, its data can easily be recovered from the others. If some

smart hacker tries to stick a computer virus into the works, the output of two terminals won't match and we'll spot the trouble instantly. Don't you see? We used to have to be in a certain place to function in the corporation, in the business world. Now we can be anywhere." His eyes gleamed with enthusiasm.

Gallagher saw a glimmer of hope. "If I could have one of those machines?"

"Could you afford one?"

"How much are they?"

"You know the old joke," said the fat man, switching off the unit. "If you have to ask the price, you can't afford it."

Gallagher rode the subway home, as he always did. He had a beat-up old Ford pickup, but he didn't like to commute in it. All too often the traffic would slow to a crawl or even a complete standstill. His nerves couldn't take it. Better to stand up, wedged in between the other semi-conscious subway riders, than to gamble on getting to work late.

He realized numbly that in a week or so he wouldn't have to commute either way. Chesterfield had given him some time to wind things down with the company, had even hinted that nobody would object if he ripped off a little online time on the company terminals to modem his resumé around to prospective future employers.

But would that do any good?

All the corporations would be radically restructuring, shedding employees like a persian cat sheds hair, switching over to trivideo. There might be jobs for the few who had their own trivideo units, but everyone else would be out of luck.

The sun was setting as he trudged from the subway station down a tree-lined street to his two-story Queen Anne Victorian house. As he mounted the steps to his front porch he realized that even his home, the place he'd lived in since arriving in this town, was not secure. He didn't own it, only rented, and without a job he couldn't pay that rent.

He opened the screen door, took out his keys and let himself in.

He thought, *I'll have to move to a cheaper place.*

He turned on the lights in the front hall.

There, along the walls, stood the wooden orange crates that housed his collection. There were, he knew, similar orange crate bookcases in every room. While the kids had been growing up, before the divorce, his collection had occupied only one wall of the guest bedroom. In the years since the family had left, the

collection had spread like a weed everywhere. He'd had money. He'd been able to spend it as he pleased.

He thought, *I might move to a cheaper place, but what about my books, my magazines, my comic books?*

He went from room to room, turning on lights.

There they were, his plastic-encased copies of *Detective Comics* running from the current issue back to the May 1939 issue where Batman made his first appearance. There was his complete set of *Batman* comics. There was his mint condition copy of the incredibly rare *Spicy Mystery Stories* for February 1936, the pulp where the earliest incarnation of Batman had appeared, then the villain, not the hero.

There was his complete run of *Action Comics* and *Superman*, and his yellowing copy of the mimeographed amateur magazine *Science-Fiction: The Advance Guard of Future Civilization* for January 1933 where Superman had debuted, also as a villain.

There was his complete set of *Weird Tales* magazine from the very beginning through its various incarnations right up to the present, and there his complete collection of all the books and pamphlets ever put out by Arkham House, the publisher who had first published the *Weird Tales* gang in hardback. Gently he took down from the shelves first one, then another of the books, whispering the magical names of the authors. Clark Ashton Smith. Ray Bradbury. H.P. Lovecraft. Robert E. Howard. Yes, there he was, the creator of the mighty Conan the Barbarian.

All Gallagher's treasures were neatly filed so he could, if he wished, instantly lay his hand on any item there, and each time he took one out he remembered where and when he had gotten it. Ah, here was the copy of *Amazing Stories* he'd picked up in a magazine bin at the St. Vincent DePaul thrift shop. Here was the *Strange Tales* he'd bought in the huckster room of a local science-fiction convention. Here was the copy of *Marvel Mystery Comics No. 1* he'd paid a fortune for, much to the dismay of his wife.

As he wandered from room to room his own personal tragedy faded gradually from his mind. Yes, he'd lost his job. Yes, he might be too old ever to get another one. Yes, he'd lost all his company benefits, too, through no fault of his own. Somehow that didn't matter.

What mattered was these priceless treasures he'd accumulated, one item at a time, since childhood. What mattered

was the work of these grand old pulpsters, these writers who had worked so hard so long ago to tell a good story for a penny a word on threat of suit, these disreputable masters of the boundless imagination.

He stood in his front hall at last, looking to the right, to the left, up the stairs. Aloud he said, "What will happen to you all without me?"

Could he store them? He knew what storage rental places were like; the leaking roofs, the bold rats and cockroaches and silverfish. Better to burn them and the house with them than abandon them to slow decay and vermin!

Perhaps he could save a few things, take them with him to the sleeping rooms or trailers or wherever he had to live. But which things? They were all so heartbreakingly beautiful, so priceless, so alive with wonder and history.

He found his way in a daze to the upstairs back bedroom where he kept his copies of the best magazine of all, the magazine that had started as *Astounding Stories of Super Science* and gradually evolved into the current *Analog*, the magazine of Asimov, Heinlein, Hubbard, Van Vogt, and good old Doc Smith. Reverently he removed a brittle copy from its plastic envelope.

Why, here's a story I haven't read yet, he thought with alarm.

He sat down on the floor, his back against the door jamb, and began to read.

In the morning he awoke, still on the floor, his body aching, the magazine still in his hands, open to Doc Smith's "Grey Lensman."

The company cafeteria was open, but a sign announced it would be closed tomorrow, closed for good. As Gallagher entered he noticed the place was almost deserted. In fact, he, the cook and Miss Smith, the boss's secretary, were the only humans in sight.

He got his usual coffee and donut and was about to settle down at a vacant table when Miss Smith called, "Mister Gallagher?"

"Yes?"

"Come talk to me. It's so spooky with everyone gone."

He carried his tray over and set it on her table, then seated himself across from her. She wore an impeccably neat gray pantsuit and a white frilly blouse. He could see she was nervous by the way she was shredding a paper napkin.

He said, "I suppose you got a pink slip too."

"No, looks like I'm staying on."

"Are you going up to Chesterfield's hunting lodge with him?"

"Well, yes, as a matter of fact." She blushed.

"I see."

"I don't have much choice, do I? What am I going to do? Charge him with sexual harassment?"

"I suppose not."

"But let's not talk about me. Let's talk about you. I suppose you've modemed out your resumé to a couple of hundred potential employers by now."

He shook his head. "No."

"Why not?" She sounded definitely alarmed.

"I have other responsibilities I have to take care of first."

"Your children?"

"No, they've been out on their own for years."

"Pets?"

"In a manner of speaking."

They finished their break in silence.

Back at his desk, Gallagher fired up his computer, went on line and navigated to an electronic bulletin board devoted to science-fiction where he posted a message briefly describing his collection and asking if anyone was interested in giving it a home. Then he added his own E-mail box number and broke connection.

He thought about writing up a resumé and sending it out, but couldn't bring himself to begin. He decided he'd have to wait until he found someone to take the collection before he could concentrate on anything else. He wished he'd been more active in the science-fiction community, that he'd formed friendships with other fans, but though he'd attended a few local conventions, he'd always been too busy to socialize with anyone outside the corporation. He did not know personally even one other science-fiction collector, had no idea what his collection might be worth in dollars. Some of the items might be valuable. He'd heard tales about fantastic prices for old comic books, tales he couldn't bring himself to take seriously, but he didn't just want to sell off a few high-ticket items to some speculator who would only resell them without even reading them. He wanted to find someone who, perhaps bribed by the high-ticket titles, would preserve it all, not only the Heinlein and Asimov, but the Ray Cummings and David H. Keller as well.

When he downloaded his E-mail late

that afternoon there were fifteen responses, but only one that fitted his specifications.

It was from a certain Professor Addison, a librarian at the local university.

It was a local call, so Gallagher didn't feel guilty telephoning the man.

"Addison here," came a young-sounding male voice.

"I'm Mister Gallagher. You left a message that you might be interested in looking at my collection?"

"I definitely would. Is there some way we can arrange a meet?"

"I live only a few miles from you. I could come over this evening and bring some stuff to show you."

"By all means! For something like this I'd be happy to stay here at the library after hours."

"I can make it by eight." Gallagher calculated that would give him time to ride the subway home, load up his pickup with crates of books and magazines, and drive over.

He met Miss Smith in the elevator on his way out.

"My, you look happy!" she remarked with surprise.

"Everything is going to be all right now."

"You found a job?"

"No, I haven't started to look yet."

As they walked through the echoing lobby she looked at him as if he'd lost his mind.

Professor Addison was a small, tweedy young fellow in his late twenties with a hearty handshake. He liked the first load Gallagher delivered but was astonished to learn there was more.

For the next few days Gallagher shuttled back and forth between his home and the university library so often he lost count of the trips. Each time the professor was waiting for him with a hand truck and expressions of astonishment.

Gallagher made no attempt to find work, did not even return to the office to use the free computer time his boss had offered him. He was happy simply to drive back and forth in the sunshine as his house grew emptier and emptier. If he thought of practical matters at all, it was in terms of *I always have suicide to fall back on*. This idea he found curiously comforting.

At last the final delivery had been made and Gallagher, sweating and grinning, faced the professor on the loading dock of the library. The sun hung low in

the sky and a cold wind had begun to blow.

"That's all of it," said Gallagher.

"Wonderful. We've already started scanning the first things you brought us into memory."

"I have to tell you how grateful I am to you for taking this stuff. I couldn't bear the thought of carting it all to the city dump. I know it's mainly only a lot of cheap old pulp magazines and comic books and paperbacks, but it has meant a lot to me."

The young professor took out a checkbook and began writing. "We can't afford to pay you what it's all really worth."

"Pay me?" said Gallagher with surprise.

"But we do have a fairly generous budget for special collections this year. Based on your inventory, I've gotten authorization for this figure." He wrote the figure on the check and handed it to Gallagher.

Gallagher stared at the figure.

"Oh, my God," he murmured.

Gallagher, in blue jeans, tee shirt and sandals, sat on his front porch steps in the bright morning sunshine, his new trivideo laptop open beside him.

"Let's see if it works," he said to himself.

He carefully began tapping the keys, glancing occasionally at the instruction book lying open on the next step up. He had no trouble getting the trivideo number he wanted from information and punching it in.

The surprised face of Miss Smith appeared on screen.

"Mister Gallagher!" she exclaimed.

"Good morning, Miss Smith."

"What can I do for you?"

"Nothing. I'm just testing my new trivideo terminal and you're the only other people I know who have one."

"You have a trivideo terminal?"

"That's right."

"Then you must have found a new job."

"No, this terminal is mine, free and clear, not some employer's. I didn't even have to make time payments."

"Mister Chesterfield wants to talk to you."

For a moment the screen showed only pine trees and mountains, then Chesterfield's amused face came into view.

"Well, Gallagher, I'm impressed. If you have a terminal you're back in the loop. I can't rehire you. We're not hiring people any more. We're contracting with

them. We can contract with you, doing some of the same sort of account work you did before, only on a free lance basis. You'll probably end up making more money as an independent consultant than you ever did as a simple employee."

"No thanks, Mister Chesterfield. I have other plans."

"Okay, if you've got a better offer I won't stand in your way, but maybe we can do business at some future date. You have my trivideo number."

"So I do."

Gallagher broke connection.

There was one more thing he wanted to check. He punched up the trivideo number of the university library.

Professor Addison came on screen, grinning. "Well, hello again, Mister Gallagher. Any more treasures for me?"

"Not today. Did you say you had started scanning my magazines into memory?"

"That's right."

"Including the first issue of *Unknown*?"

"Yes."

"Can I access it?"

"You seem to have a trivideo unit, so no problem. Ready to take transmission?"

"Ready."

The professor punched his keyboard. There was a brief salvo of bleeps, then he said, "Okay, you've got it."

"Thanks."

"Next time you won't need me. You can punch straight through to the database. Good luck!"

After breaking connection, Gallagher called up on screen the cover of the magazine that was the pride of his collection. There it was, dated March 1939, announcing the featured story, "Sinister Barrier" by Eric Frank Russell and displaying a huge dark figure clutching the world. It was the same great picture he knew so well, in full color and complete in every detail, as good as ever.

In fact, better than ever! The image had been computer enhanced and returned to the same brilliant color it had had when it first rolled off the presses, free of any trace of fading or yellowing.

Tears filled Gallagher's eyes, blurring the revelation before him. Now he would always be able to see it, no matter where he was on Earth, and it would always be as it was the moment he first laid eyes on it, forever safe from the inexorable menace of air, moisture and sunlight. Every story, every illustration, was only a fingertip away.

More, the collection was now easily

accessible to anyone who wanted to read it. Science-fiction fans yet unborn could some day read the work of the great old pulpsters on some planet circling a distant star.

He shut down the terminal, closed the case, and carried it out to the curb. There he carefully slipped it behind the front seat of his brand new electric van, next to the couch that made into a bed. The van had been sitting in the sunshine for hours, soaking up energy with the solar cells on its roof. It was all charged up and ready to go.

He slid behind the wheel, strapped down, and pressed the accelerator pedal. Noiselessly the van pulled away from the curb.

Gallagher wondered, *Shall I go east or west? North or south? Should I revisit every place I've ever lived? Or shall I boldly go where I've never dreamed of going before?*

As he whooshed up the freeway onramp, he hummed the theme from *Star Trek*.

The original *Star Trek*.

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to
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Some Messages from the ConCom

WRITERS' WORKSHOP

M.J. Engh

A message from M. J. Engh to all you beginning writers who didn't enter a manuscript in this year's workshop: Start thinking *now* about next year. Manuscripts need to be delivered weeks before the convention, so participants have plenty of time to read them all thoughtfully and critique them thoroughly.

Is it worth the investment (six copies of your short story manuscript)? Well, you get careful, personalized critiques from professional writers (most of whom would ordinarily charge at *least* \$15 an hour for this service, say \$50-\$100 per story) but that's not all. You also get an applied lesson in critical reading — the techniques of spotting what makes a story successful or unsuccessful.

If you're not sure how a workshop works (or a woodchuck chucks) or if you hesitate to expose your not-yet-caloused writer's ego to this kind of scrutiny without a sunscreen, pick up an information sheet near the Registration desk.

Meanwhile, this year's entrants will be meeting with several of our pro guests to discuss the stories they submitted this summer. You can recognize them by their slightly dazed but enlightened looks and the way they keep scribbling on scraps of paper.

HOSPITALITY

Jefferson Slack

Welcome to the Inn of Jade Serenity! This year's hospitality suite has a few changes from prior years. Following the example of last year's, hosted by the SCA, I'm trying to adopt a certain atmosphere to hospitality, in this case a Japanese flavor (or as close to Japanese as one can get in an American hotel).

Hospitality is split into two different rooms this year; the main suite will be non-smoking, while the smaller room nearby will be smoking and, for the most part, filking. Also, due to licensing prob-

lems, we cannot serve alcohol; however, feel free to bring your own into the suite if you wish. However, alcohol may be prohibited from both hospitality rooms entirely if it turns out to be a problem.

Four board games will be available in the main hospitality suite: chess, backgammon, Go, and Mah-Johng (in keeping with the Oriental flavor). In addition to the usual refreshments (coffee, tea, soda, and, yes, candy), I'm trying some variety, mostly fruit, vegetables (for dipping), and sweets made without processed sugar. However, if you really need that sugar high, we can arrange to supply it for you.

I'm hoping to make hospitality a place to come and recharge your batteries from the hubbub of the con, so come on in, grab some cha, play some games, and socialize in the Inn!

ART SHOW AND ART AUCTION

Liz and Austin Wilmerding

What would MosCon be without its art show? So yes, once more we are displaying, for your enjoyment, one of the best collections of art in Northwest fandom. Please come to the art show to look, enjoy, and perhaps buy that piece of art that you just can't do without.

Bidding: The tags on each piece of art contain spaces for written bids. A written bid is a *contract to buy at that price*. All items with two bids will go to auction. Single bid items will be sold to the person making the bid *after* the auction. You must be a member of MosCon to place a bid and attend the auction.

The Auction: This will be the usual voice auction with bidding going in minimum of dollar increments. Bring your checkbook and wallet and/or your favorite credit card. (Please get your credit card pre-approved at the payment table.) This is a good time to add to or start your very own art collection. There will be a list posted before the auction with the order of the items going up for bid.

After-Auction Sale: Immediately after the end of the auction, the art show will open up one last time for the sale of those pieces with no bid upon them and an after-auction sale price. That not-to-be-missed bargain might be there waiting for you! (However, don't trust that that special painting will be there unnoticed by anyone else. There is a good chance that it will have been bid upon and gone to auction.) Also, those pieces of art with but a single written bid should be paid for and picked up at this time.

So come and enjoy the Art Show! The artists have worked to display their best for you. Be sure not to miss it!

DEALER'S ROOM

Lou Ann Lomax

As usual, the Dealer's Room is sold out. And as usual, it is filled with a wide variety of goods for your perusal. This year, we welcome:

Dragon Tales

Jon Gustafson

Beth Miller and Debi Robinson-Smith

Quicksilver Fantasies

Uncomyn Gifts

Betty Smith and Kathy Sprague

New Mythology

Starlance Publications

Anna von Runkle

Angelwear Creations

PROGRAMMING

Janice Willard

• **Programming in the Courtyard** — We will again have the courtyard available to us for "free-form" programming space, weather permitting. This will allow you to get creative with your convention. If there is a programming event which you would like to do and do not see scheduled, or you wish to continue a discussion begun in regularly scheduled programming, we invite you to 'do it yourself'. Just check the courtyard schedule and pick a time.

• **The Popularity of SF** — SF used

to only be read by a few; now it has gained in popularity. Has this hurt or helped the genre? Has the quality of writing improved, or just the quantity? Was part of what you enjoyed about reading SF its uniqueness?

•**Medieval Realism: Historical Correctness in Medieval Fantasy and SF** — How important is it to be accurate to the historical period? What facets of diet, clothing, weaponry and sociology should be considered by a writer? What are good researching techniques?

•**Porn vs Erotica and Defining Community Standards** — When does a picture stop being a nude and start being smut? Should people be protected from graphic depictions of sex? Where does protection stop and censorship start? Whose standards should we choose?

•**National Endowment for the Arts** — Does government support of the arts also constitute government control of the arts?

•**Woman Who Write** — A century ago, there were few women writers. Now they make up a sizable portion of the writing field. But do they get the same respect and monetary gain as their male counterparts? Do women have special problems to deal with when becoming writers? Is taking care of the house and children still considered their major role and their writing "just a hobby?"

•**The Cultural Persistence of Monsters** — Many cultures, not just our European-based one, have shape-shifters and vampires and other creepies that go bump in the night. Why do we create these myths? Why do we need them?

•**Mistakes You Don't Want to Write** — Common mistakes made by beginning writers and how to avoid them. How to get your manuscript read instead of on a direct trip to the slush pile.

•**Time and Time Again** — Time machines and time mechanics and the paradoxes they could, would, or did create.

•**My Day Job** — Writers don't always pay the bills with their writing and many have a full career in addition to their writing. How do they feel about their other job? Does it hurt or help their writing?

•**The Really Silly Slide Show** — Some of our comic artists will present a slide show to tickle your funny bone.

•**Violence in Literature** — Is violence in our print industry a result of, or contributor to, the increase in violence in

our society? Do depictions of violence, particularly erotic violence, increase the incidence of violence? What responsibility do writers and publishers have in this?

•**Getting Started in Art** — Pro Artists will discuss portfolio and self-promotion and other techniques for career development.

•**Spicy Stories** — Come join us for the fun while pro writers create a round-table story.

•**The Second Great Annual Verna Surprise Chocolate and Decadent Delight Auction** — Come one, come all! Bring your appetites and money to this delectable fund-raiser for the family of MosCon's Patron Saint, Doc E.E. Smith.

•**The Obligatory Star Trek Panel** — Several of our *Star Trek* writers will tell of the trials and tribulations of writing in the *Star Trek* Universe.

•**The Science of Magic** — Any magic system used in fantasy has to have an internally consistent set of rules or laws governing its use. These explain how the magic circumvents the laws of nature as we know them on our world and are needed for the magic system to be believable and rewarding to the reader. How did writers arrive at their

particular set of rules and what are some of the more elegant systems you've seen?

•**Klingon 101** — To better aid in diplomatic relations, Ambassadors from the Klingon Empire will be conducting this brief seminar to teach humans their glorious language.

•**The Genie and the Bottle** — From dinosaurs to drosophila, molecular genetics now looks at the very stuff of evolution. Now that we have let the genie out of the bottle, what is it likely to do?

•**The Oceans and Glaciers of Mars** — Was there once liquid water on Mars? Could it support Life? How did Mars develop this way?

VOLUNTEERS

As always, MosCon lives... or falls on the floor and thrashes about... on its volunteers. We hope you will take the time and, we will admit, the little bit of trouble it takes to volunteer to help with MosCon XV. Check in at Operations. We will have some goodies for you for helping out, including — but not limited to — our custom volunteer buttons.

Please volunteer!

For Lewis Shiner and Bruce Sterling

MOZART'S MIRRORSHADES

His time, before our Real time,
Became a branching sideline
Our time, a two-way road
So we messed with his time
Showed him different signs

Symphonies in B, C, or G Minor
Vanished from the mirrors of his eyes
Replaced with the gleam of radios, stereos
Hovercars, guitars — his own studio
Timeless concertos waltzed from Real time
Back to his day
His music heard before his debut

Bruised colors, notes and tones
Bounced off his mirrorshade mind
To compose a different future
Unrecorded notes and tunes

Mozart in mirrorshades
Not imprinted as we knew
His history refracted by our time
We took what we pleased
Stole his time's luxuries

No damage to our future,
But the present
His mirrorshades reflect.

Colleen Anderson

MosCon XV Membership

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01	Barbara Hambly	47	Lynn M. Kingsley	90	Betsy Mott
02	David Martin	48	R.T. Harwood	91	Diana Statt
03	Steve Fahnestalk	49	Charles O. Christenson	92	Susan A. Allen
04	Dr. Victor R. Baker	50	David D. Graham	93	Brady Harper
05	Jon Gustafson	51		94	Shari Smith
06		52	Betty Bigelow	95	Lynda Carraher
07	Mike Finkbiner	53	David Bigelow	96	Michael T. Jones
08		54	Mary Hart	97	Jill Foster
09	Vicki Mitchell	55	Mike Larkin	98	Chad Schuit
10		56	Kitty Howard	99	Madilane A. Perry
11		57	Richard Lyon	100	Ruth Frey
12	Debra L. Miller	58	Phillip Sullivan	101	Richard Bolon
13	Lou Ann Lomax	59	Marjorie Stratton	102	Tam Gordy
14		59a	Ginger Stratton	103	Shelly Gordy
15		60	Larry Stratton	104	David M. Carson
16	Charles Leaphart	61	Brian D. Gregory	105	Sue Berven
17	Scott C. LaRoy	62	John Dalmas	106	Leroy Berven
18	Andrew LaRoy	63	Daron Fredericks	107	Rod Eggleston
19	Jean Crawford	64	Deborah Fredericks	108	Judy Helgeson
20		65	Jameson Richards	109	Nilsson's babysitter
21		66	Angela Jones	G1	Verna Smith Trestrail
22	Rosella L. Miller	67	Shari Patrick	G2	Algis Budrys
23		68	Greg Sardo	G3	Lynne Taylor Fahnestalk
24		69	Mark Rounds	G4	
25	Scotty Evans	69a	Garret Rounds	G5	Lynn M. Kingsley
26	Bea Taylor	70	Susan Rounds	G6	Greg Sardo
27	Lisa Satterlund	70a	Jani Rounds	G7	Jacquallynn D. Duram-Nilsson
28		71	Myron Molnau	G7c	Chris Nilsson
29		72	Francis Sciamanda	G8	Kevin Brockschmidt
30	Thom Walls	73	Allan Yeats	G9	John Dalmas
31	Becky Fallis	74	Kristina L. Anderson	G10	F.M. Busby
32	Nels Satterlund	75	Al Trestrail	G11	Elinor Busby
33	Lea George	76	Daniel Fears	G12	Steve Gallacci
34	David George	77	Robert D. Griffiths	G13	Eileen Brady
35	Edgar T. Lincoln	78	Leonard D. Rufo	G14	Mel Gilden
36	Sue Majewski	79	Gary Huffman	G15	J.C. Hendee
37	Pete Majewski	80	Robert E. Ackerman	G16	Barb Hendee
38	Norma Barrett-Lincoln	81	Lillian A. Ackerman	G17	Norman E. Hartman
39	John P. Bradley	82	Louise O. Regelin	G18	James C. Glass
40	Steve Forty	83	Judith Ritter	G19	Gail Glass
41	Ed Steever	84	Bruce Ritter	G20	Cyn Mason
42	Frank White	85	Paul Castrovillo	G21	Joel Davis
43	E. Carol Daugherty	86	Harold J. Miller	G22	Amy Thomson
44	Bruce D. Martin	87	Phyllis Lomax		
45	Arthur Taylor	88	James B. King		