

# new worlds

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area complex

BY BRIAN  
VICKERS

SPECIAL ALL NEW WRITERS ISSUE



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# new worlds

Number 184

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Cover by Gabi Nasemann

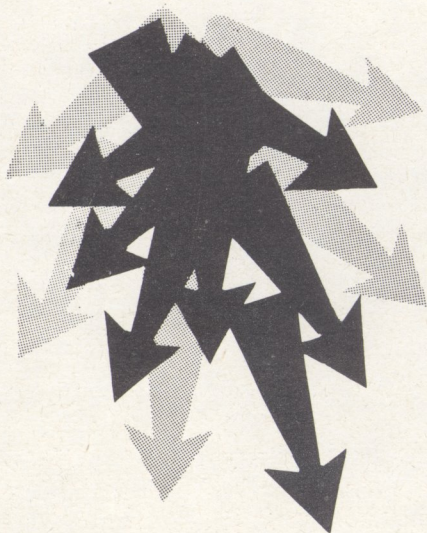
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## LEAD-IN

ONE OF THE most urgent motives for the continuing publication of *NEW WORLDS* in the face of its many difficulties is that it is one of the major outlets for new writers in this country. This issue is a new departure in that all our contributors appear in the magazine for the first time. They are all unpublished, or rarely published, elsewhere.

We believe that it is vital to provide such an opportunity—for the young writers themselves; for the publishing world which all too frequently is reluctant to give new writers a break; and for the readers, who need fresh concepts freshly presented.

The lead story in this issue, *Area Complex*, is by **Brian Vickers**, a 24-year-old Yorkshireman from Huddersfield. Trained as a painter—his story is illustrated with his own work—he has had a brief and disenchanting teaching career and is currently devoting his time to writing. He lists his influences, chronologically, as Paul Cézanne, William Golding,

Max Ernst and—‘of course’—J. G. Ballard.

He adds: “About his life in 1906, Ernst wrote: ‘Excursions into the world of prodigies, chimeras, phantoms, poets, monsters, philosophers, birds, women, madmen, magi, erotica, stones, insects, mountains, poisons, mathematics, etc.’ I would just like to add: coke bottles, concrete cubes, nebulae, caverns, quasars, glass eyes, galaxies, pipelines, motorways, hydrocephalics, astrophysicists, dropouts, nudists, fossils, twins, photomicrographs, xenophobes, numbers, targets, teeshirts, pop stars, nuclei, lunar modules, radio-emissions, lasers, contraceptives, DNA, synthetic caviar, submarines, dolphins, deserts, sunglasses, beaches, rockets, defoliants, electronic music, plastic dummies, cybernetics, synchrotrons, supermarkets, solar cells, seismographs, EEGs, VTOLs, ICBMs, LSD, etc.”

In one of the most remarkably atmospheric first stories we have read, Vickers covers many of these excursions. Others will, we hope, provide future stories.

Another disenchanted teacher is **M. John Harrison**, aged 23, who spent two-and-a-half years training before he decided: “Those that can, do. Those that can’t, teach. And those that can’t teach, teach teachers”.

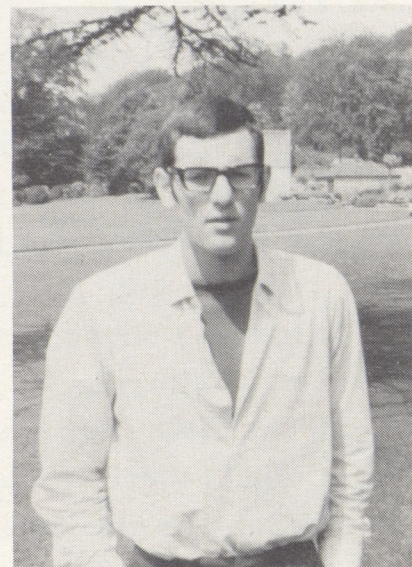
He is now ‘doing’—working as a full-time writer in a bed-sitter near Highgate Cemetery, in the Victorian red-brick wastes of North London. His work has appeared in *SCIENCE FANTASY* and *New Writings in Sf*.

*Baa Baa Blocksheep* is an ideal illustration of the improving trend these young writers are introducing into science-fiction, drawing its influences not from the pulp magazines of the 40’s and 50’s but from the novels of Flann O’Brien and Thomas Pynchon. The result is something unique. M. John Harrison is also one of this issue’s reviewers.

The prime seminal influence on almost all young writers beginning

their careers now is Ballard. Vickers admits this influence and pays tribute to it in *Area Complex*, as does **Gretchen Haapanen** in *The Pieces Of The Game*. But both have transmuted it into something utterly personal.

Miss Haapanen is a Southern Californian—“from within thirty



Holdstock: ‘Analog’ and dinosaur fossils

miles of the dry terrain, desert smells of the Mojave. The Santa Ana in *Pieces* is a nervous, powerful wind off the deserts which blows for about two weeks in October, clears away the smog”.

In the past, Miss Haapanen has worked for a phone company, a newspaper, an insurance agency and the Pasadena Art Museum, and she is interested in painting and music. She is currently established in London, where her husband, David Gilbert, continues his work in brain research.

The only other American in the issue is **Stephen Dobyns**, 26-year-old poet who, after receiving his M.F.A. in creative writing from the University of Iowa Poetry Workshop, went into virtual seclusion in upper Michigan to devote his time to writ-



ing. His poetry has appeared in many American journals. *How May I Serve You?* is his first piece of science-fiction, taking up a traditional sf theme and applying to it his poet's sensitivity, irony and clarity of vision. At present, Dobyns is working on several new stories, and is compiling a collection of his poetry. He has recently finished his first novel, *Green's Leavings*.

Another traditional theme refreshed by an original vision is that of *Black is the Colour* by **Barry Bowes**. Mr. Bowes, who lives in London, has had poetry published in *AMBIT*.

One of the few young writers working in both the *NEW WORLDS* field and that of the American SF magazines is **Robert Holdstock**, an applied zoology student at Bangor

packed and dialogue-crammed. Being a zoologist, I like to situate them on other worlds and invent believable aliens. To pose a biological problem and invent a biological solution".

Nevertheless, he also writes in a variety of unconventional styles and *Paupers' Plot* is a remarkably consistent and intricate parable.

When not writing, Holdstock divides his time between his Liverpoolian girl-friend and tramping around Romney Marshes looking for dinosaur fossils.

Another trained scientist, 22-year-old **Chris Lockesley**, who lives in Surrey, has similarly found a mild clash between his physicist training and his artistic impulse.

"Everything interests me which means I have to be extremely ruthless to get anything done with the dedication it deserves. The difficulty lies in the satisfactory oscillation between the 'interested sensitivity' of writing and that of 'organised aggression' needed for goal-achievement". At present, sensitivity seems to be in the ascendant and he is devoting most of his time to writing.

The youngest contributor to this issue is 21-year-old **Graham Charnock**, of Alperton, Middlesex. His ambivalent attitude to his employment—he works as an executive with a large West End advertising agency—has provided much of the experience and conflict in his story *Crim*. He has been writing for a number of years, and recalls his first submission—in his very early teens—to *NEW WORLDS*, then edited by E. J. Carnell:

"There was *Decline and Fall*, a three-hundred-word plotless vignette, which came back with the note: 'So sorry: our minimum is 3,000 words'. I promptly shot off a three thousand worder. That came back too, on a bare slip this time . . ."

Among the illustrators of this issue is 23-year-old **Marek Obtulowicz**, whose work is being published

for the first time. Born in Poland, he has lived in England for fifteen years. He also writes poetry and



Vickers : Quasars and coke bottles

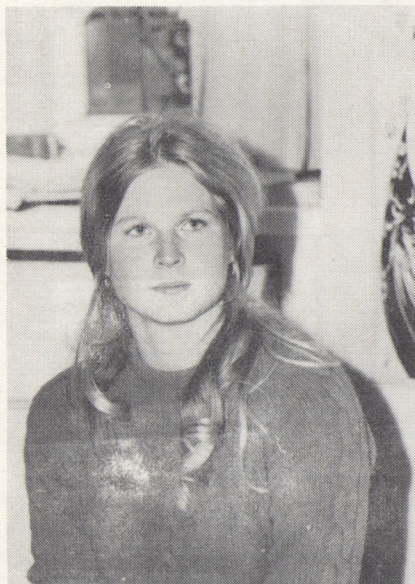
prose and has just completed a play.

All these contributors are in their twenties and the high standard of their stories promises well for the future.

As numerous and just as promising as the writers we introduce this month are those whom, for reasons of space, we could not include. These, including **Andrew Weiner**, **Conrad Atkinson**, **Alan Montag**, **David Kilburn** and **Dav Garnett**, we expect to publish in the near future, either separately, or as contributors to another showcase all-new-writers' issue.

Next month we will be featuring a new novella by **Samuel R. Delany**; *The Delhi Division*, a long-awaited new Jerry Cornelius story by **Michael Moorcock**; and fiction by **Brian W. Aldiss**, **Thomas M. Disch**, **James Sallis**, and others.

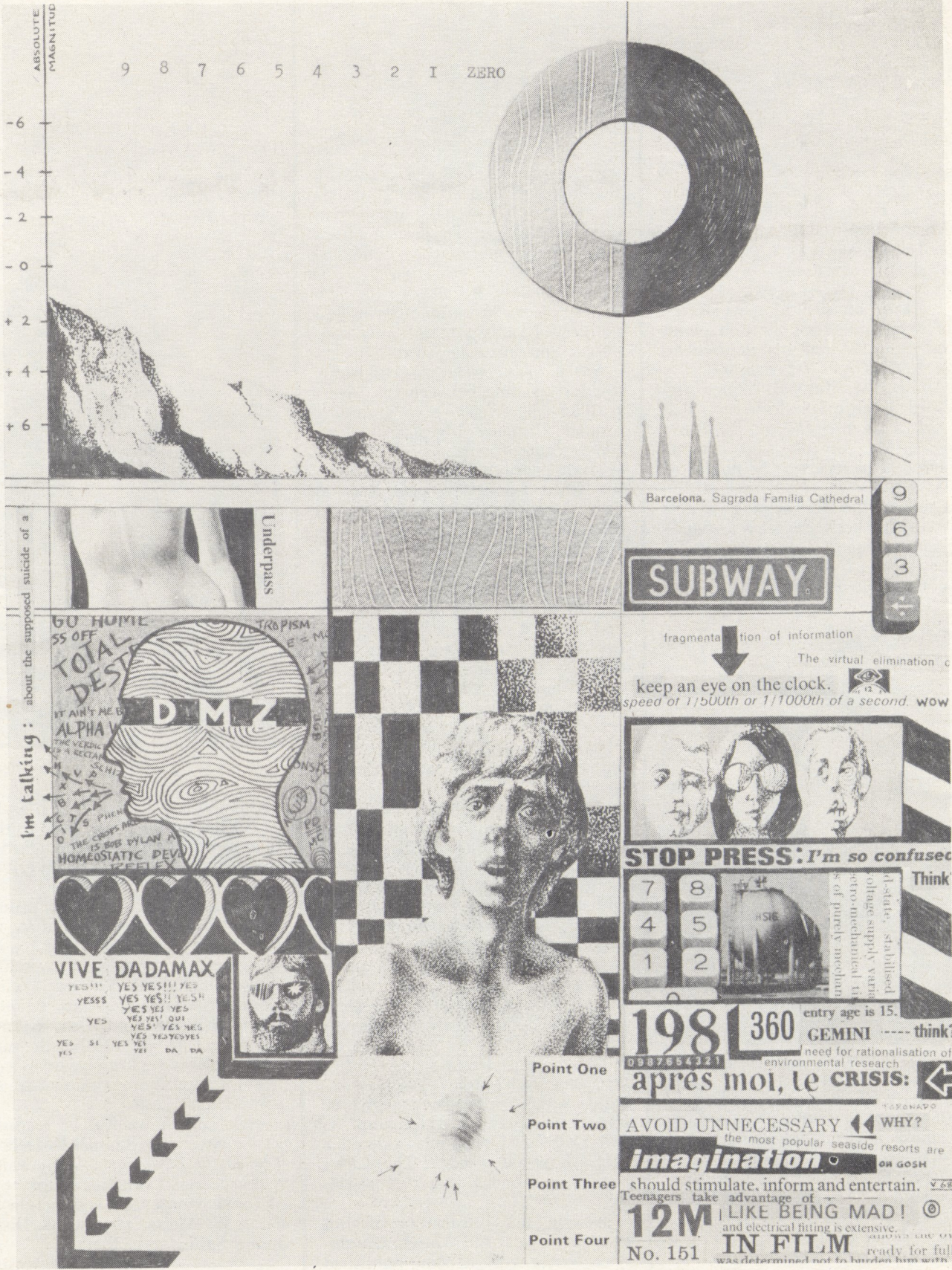
Graham M. Hall.



Haapanen : Something utterly personal

University. He writes: "I find nothing more relaxing than writing SF unless it is reading SF, and I'm as lazy as a Simak character when it comes to anything but those two occupations. My main and most enjoyed style is *ANALOG-Yankee*. Don't think badly of me—I just enjoy spinning a yarn that's action-





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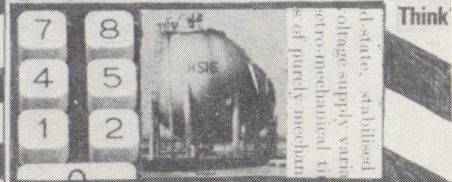
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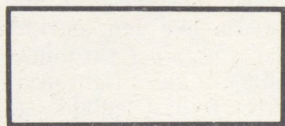
Point Three

Point Four



# AREA COMPLEX

BY BRIAN  
VICKERS



PHILIP IS WATCHING me and now, more than ever, his face resembles mine. His image is dark, as though perpetually living in its own shadow. In the past he has occasionally appeared from a subway entrance, sometimes from a forest of billboards, but lately he is always alone on a featureless beach that is too desolate to comprehend. Always his face is terrifying, with an expression far beyond fear, sadness or anger. He tries to speak. His mouth moves but there is no sound; his hands move but they make no sense. He knows me, i know him, we are alike, but too far apart. Sooner or later the lightning will come and Philip will be gone.

Our part of the city's big as sectors go. We have a lot of dreamdromes, waste lots, autogrids and skyhigh feelpix, but no real dommies like where i used to be a long time back. All we have is just a row of apartment buildings facing a ruined area and backed by thirty dirty floors of Esco-Unicon Autobuy. i live there because when we first came, ma—my dear old smothering mother—said she wasn't living in no dreamdrome or autobuy and if we had to stay she wanted somewhere natural-made for living. i was soon fixed on staying because of Dinny, so here we are.

There's an old fun palace too, where Angel lives. The come-on music still plays now and then, and that's because that bloody stupid Denny looks after the place, together with Angel. The sub-art frontage is so noxie it hurts and i'm not in the market for that kind of pain. All that slivy sub-lim stuff makes me really fractious. Denny hasn't got much of the sonics working yet except for the bits of musick, but the building drips with graffoglob. ESCOMALT HEDON INC, it says. AMBIENT PLEASURE!! ALLFEEL SUPER-SENSE!! NON-PROPHET BENEFICENT ESCO-LOVE ESCOLATES!! TRISEX VOLUPT, and so on, quantum sufficit. All the things that make bad jokes in old books make bad reality. Maybe i'll wreck that breaking place when i've dealt with Denny. It's too vomact.

When the lightning has passed and Philip's image has faded i generally find myself sitting in front of my old IBM with my fingers trembling on its keys, or i'm on my bed, staring at the ceiling and sweating. Then i look around and sooner or later i see Andy Gritz's painting on my wall, gazing at me. The face in the painting is the third part of a triptych, the third reflection in a folding mirror. The painting, Philip, and me.

My father, who was a bastard, died five years ago when i was eleven, just before i realized i could have given him hell. If he was alive now he'd wish he was dead. Smother leaked a bit when he croaked, though, and that bugged me, because he was a for-real bastard. Anyway, where we lived was real nice and there wasn't too much fighting or anything, but i decided to get out because the place stank of him. Smother never thinks much about anything and she just came. We saw a lot of fighting and killing then, but we just sidled along. Occasionally we'd get cornered by real savage-looking goolies. Naturally, i was scared at first, but they never touched us. i soon realized that nobody else ever left their own sector and that nobody could touch me when i thought and felt a certain way. i must have known that earlier, without thinking about it, else i'd never have dared to set off like that. Once i knew what i could do i spent days cursing the old man for dying when he did. Anyway, i'd no idea where we were going so i suppose we just went in circles for a bit. Once we came to an area where buildings were thin on the ground and hiding from each other, exclusivewise. These dommies were busting with hedonistics and lazy-aids, and the colors were as nice as could be expected from something made by dimmies. There were neumosleeps about half a mile square, with dozydopes, sleepy-beeps and aphrodizzigas that still worked. i know they did, because a coupla fairies moved out of the biggest dommy just so that smother and me could move in for the night. First thing i did was take my stinking rags off and flop on the best neumosleep. Then i saw these switches and the first one was for the ADG. It was so good i could have jumped a tailor's dummy, and i was only eleven then. After that, dozydopes and sleep. Next morning i prowled around a bit. Everything was groovy; a real boorjoe's palace. i found another bedroom, all white and tidy, with shelves of books and a few pictures on the walls—i liked that one best. On a small desk was a folder advertising un progrès dans le traitement du syndrome dépressif and a yellowing page from an old mag. On the page was an IBM ad that posed a problem. A fly represented a nuclear particle and a cubic lattice represented a molecule. The fly had to start at one corner and pass sixteen intersections without repeating itself or recrossing its route on the same journey, then end back where it started. Problem was, how many different journeys were possible. The kick came at the bottom of the page with the calculation times. For a human it said 7,500 man-years. For the IBM 7090 computer it said 30 minutes. Below that it said Solution: but that had been cut from the page. The desk drawers were full of paper covered with calcs which sort of dribbled off into drawings of girls and suns and fishes. Something really grabbed me then, and i got to feeling miserable in that room. i couldn't resist the books though, and i grabbed a few. Behind one of



them i found a lovely silver medallion on a chain, with beautifully engraved words. After a while i put the thing around my neck and left. i wish to hell i'd never seen that place.

i don't even know why i'm bothering to write this. It's a stupid thing to do. Dinny might read it, i suppose, and perhaps Coby and Kerry, but no one else. It's on the few nights i'm not with Dinny, when my mother is really bad, that i feel like writing. Ma's getting very thin and she's coughing more and more. She's almost dead. i must stay with her on nights like this and i just can't have Dinny near. She wouldn't mind, but i would.

It was last night that Denny went too far. i was laying in bed listening to mother's coughing grinding through the thin wall and thinking how cold it was without Dinny, when the ceiling started shaking. Then the walls twisted and seemed to come in at me. i got to the window and saw Denny among the ruined buildings opposite, just grinning. After a while he went and things returned to normal.

For a few minutes i just stood there, feeling cold and weak, wondering what could be wrong with Denny that makes him do things like that. In most ways he's a nice kid, and besides, he looks unbelievably like Dinny with his brown skin, flat nose and lopsided mouth.

Then my mother started coughing again, and calling for me. i could hear her spitting blood. If she can't die quietly she ought at least to be able to go without the walls dancing around her, so i knew Denny would have to be stopped.

i'll do it tomorrow if i can, though it'll be hard if he doesn't do something to make me mad when i see him. If he behaves normally i'll just be friendly and try to reason with him. That won't get me anywhere.

IT SEEMS TO ME that the lightning flashes come more often now. There's just been another and my lamps hurt and my head's buzzing. In the middle of all the pain, just when everything was blood red, i remembered a book i was reading today. A real bitching tome, all yellow and flaky. 'Dynamics of the Anti-Society' it was called, by an old proffy name of Hubert H. G. Kusick. In chapter 8, 'Total Complex'—which is a real nothing title—it says: "In the terminal period of degeneration in such a culture a distinctive frenzy of directionless creativity characteristically occurs, resulting in a prolific mish-mash of half-formed ideas and unassimilated emotions rather than a fulfilling crystallization of them; virtually a repository for all the psychological torments of failure." Well that made me burn until i saw how funny it was, frustrated old biddies like Kusicky saying how awful it's going to be to be without hope. It's fun, that's all, and so's writing, just like it's fun catching bennies and making them wish they'd never heard words like sex and degenerate. i read all 552 nothing-flimzies of Kusick's tome and it took me an hour which is much longer than what it should, it was that bad. A real vomact.

i want to write about Dinny now. The only thing i don't like about her is that she's taller than me. She moves through the mess of streets, rubbish and rusting autos as though it were paradise. Sometimes i think

nothing could hurt her because she seems to be at terms with everything.

Her hair is what's called black, though it's all colors and very long. There's a long shiny scar on her right shoulder blade which makes the rest of her brown skin seem even nicer. Her mouth is big and tilted to one side like a lippy grin that's always there beneath a flattened nose. She has eyes which can be all shapes; they can be sad and soft or smily vile like they were when i first knew her and she gave me hell for months.

Girls like Jen and Jeannie are all right in certain places with certain things around them. With Dinny it's different; she's right everywhere. She can stand in front of the foulest feelypic ad, with its obscene, shimmering tri-D movement, and her shoulders and breasts make it bearable. Compared with Dinny the other girls are about as attractive as the nudie in the ad for Mastilax, with a blood red pill between her lips and a rose between her tits, and that's bad.

In my room, nights when it's tacky dark, the way Dinny's thighs catch the slits of moonlight gives my scratchy brick walls the best reason in the world for being that way.

She's like some place i've never been.

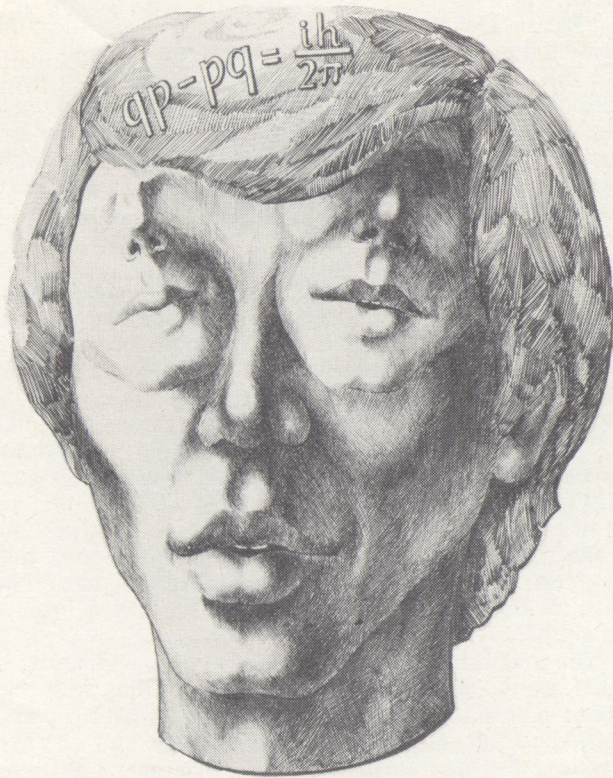
i've hardly ever wanted to touch Jen, but i can't keep my pinkies off Dinny. That's the way it is. But Coby seems happy with Jen, and Kerry just shrugs and says Dinny's all right.

Kerry's a funny kid. i like talking to him and he always listens as though he's only happy when he's listening. He doesn't often seem happy. He's thin and pale with a small face with hair all round it. At running cats can't beat him and he's always pussying about on parapets and edgy ledges ten tall stories up, so the bennies would have an awful time to snare him alive. Another thing: he can't stand to be touched. i caught hold of him once, as he was ghosting past, and he jumped that fast he was in two places at once. He just clunkered inside an old Chevvy then, all wet and limy and shivering so much i thought he'd fall apart. So it's awful petrifying for him. With girls, i mean, and some of them are finking cows about it. i think i'll have Dinny sort them out. But that's a bit gordian too, because Dinny doesn't seem to like Kerry much. i wish i hadn't to think about these things. Soon as i start thinking i can't stop and i don't sleep for days, then i'm useless and mean and hating myself.

Philip's eyes torment me and those painted by Andy Gritz follow me without moving. i want to write about Coby and Dinny, Jen and Jeannie, Charley, Steve, Smokes and Tinkle, Mikey and Suds and all the rest, but those eyes remind me of something i don't like thinking about.

Names don't matter, but Dinny calls me davy, so that'll do. What i can't stand is like yesterday between her wheezings smother said "You're 15 baby, an' in 7 days y'll be 16 'cos you wuz born 22 7 19 cantquiterememberwhat, an' today's 15 of 7." Like formulas. She has everything in numbers. It makes me sick, but she's happy. She made me promise to remember all the numbers after she's dead and i did, but the trouble will be forgetting them. What i'm going to do is decomp everything that has numbers, especially clocks. There's solar clocks everywhere that just go on and on. Clocks





are like Denny; they just go on being stupid till you can't stand it anymore, then you've got to stop them being stupid. Like bennies, i've hurt a lot of bennies. It won't do any good nulling the clocks; they'll still be in my head. Remember the numbers she says, when all the time i could tell her how many days i've lived, how many times my heart beats every day, how many times i put one finking foot in front of the other, and how many seconds i've known Dinny. Especially that.

More numbers: in our pack there are eighteen kids and my mother. There used to be more and they were older, though everyone over twenty had been killed before i came. Now i'm fifteen and there are only three older than me. Nobody but bennies have given us trouble since i came. Dinny says she can remember a lot of trouble with other mobs before that, but not since. Pity, that. Sometimes i really want to hurt and get hurt.

Dinny can be bitchy mean. She once terminated three bennies who'd managed to put the sleepies on Coby, ready to carry him off. i saw the bodies—she did it well.

When i first came she used to hurt me all the time, until i was sick, sometimes. Remember, i was only eleven, and she was bigger, older and stronger. But all the time she knew and i knew that she was making me like her more. Sometimes i'd try to hurt her back just a little bit, like i do to other people, but it didn't work at all.

For years now i've been afraid of meeting somebody i can't deal with. With Dinny it doesn't matter, but now there's fat, obscene Angel roosting in the fun palace. Sometimes i think he's one of the bennies.

Anyway, he just watches and smiles.

Then, worse than Angel, there are the lightning flashes. i don't like thinking about them, because then i've got to admit i know what they are.

i'm so scared stiff i don't know what to do.

\* \* \*

July 17

Davy says I should try writing something. I asked him what, and he said, "Anything you want, Dinny, but don't invent anything." He's gone off on his own today, so I'll try.

It's funny him saying that about writing. It was Davy who taught me to read and write, but then he got mad with himself for doing it. I asked him why and he said, "Books! They were all written by idiots, Dinny. Bloody stupid proffies and tutes and eruditties. I hate 'em. I hate 'em cos they were written so cool an' nice when all the time things were gettin' worse till their puky words seemed responsible for it all." Then he said, "I've tried killin' words, but all that happens is it gets just as bad as that flukin' nausy palace with its pornocack."

He gets mad like that a lot more lately and that's good in a way, because then he gets things done. Like with bennies. Once, about ten bennies came woolfooting down East 250, dressed in those silly white uniforms originated, way back, by their founder, the Divine Lite, Blessed John Baptismo. Each uniform had that foul bennie emblem—a winged heart—on the jacket front, and most of this mob's were red, so we knew they were pretty important. The emblems were Blessed John's idea originally but his son, Benjamin, introduced the color system to denote ranks in his "crusading army." Now they're the self-styled Benevolent Society, or the Evangelist Police Organization, and they're corrupt. Their sanctified expressions don't disguise their ugly minds and the uniforms don't disguise the sleepyguns as they come hunting—"recruiting converts" as they call it.

Anyway, Davy was mad about something that day, and he had us all just standing around in plain view. Of course, the bennies soon started hefting their sleepyguns, but Davy really let them have it.

They started yelling and running as though they'd crabs in their pants—probably thought they had. Then they went all mewly and week-kneed and it was easy to catch them.

When I asked him, Davy said he'd made them feel as though something terrible was about to happen. He said, "Like an old-time conny felt just before they strapped him in the chair. Like an incomp softsell with a bitchin' wife an' seven kids, when he's tryin' to stop bein' a wino, an' he's goin' to work at eight on a cold grey mornin' an' he just knows the boss will chop him before noon, an' what's more, he's got the syphy from Blondie Kneesgripper, an' it's for sure he'll be taken short before reachin' work anyway. Like a chronic claustrophobe goin' every night to sweep the subways, because his IQ's only 78 an' nobody'll give him another job, an' he faints three times a night, 'cause he's sure a train's comin'. Like a half-blind seventy-year-old goin' to see his wife for perhaps the last time, 'cause



she's in hospital with cancer, just when he realizes that the noisy gray shape twenty feet to his right is an Androfax Cuddletoyz transporter doin' sixty in a restricted zone. Like a baby feels, bein' born."

That's the way he talks at times like that, all in a rush and in the present tense, as though all those things were still happening. After that last sentence he spat on one of the whimpering bennies.

But, after all that, he let most of the bennies go. He said that they'd probably feel like that most all the time from then on.

Charley and Reb, who are both older than Davy, had dived into an old Buick with a couple of female bennies, who hadn't screamed for long. When they came out we could see that they were both forty at least, and looked as though perhaps they wouldn't mind staying. They went all right, when Davy saw them. I think he was feeling pretty sick just then.

He doesn't often actually kill bennies; won't let us, either. But then he'll say things like, "They're stupid, are bennies. They oughta do things on a big scale, 'stead of comin' like sittin' ducks. They will do, sometime, I suppose."

So I suggest eliminating *them* first. There probably aren't too many and we could easily get at them with Davy. Or we could leave altogether. Davy's always talking of places he's read about, not like the city at all. He just grins, or scowls, and says, "I don't like killin'." Or, "There ain't no such places." Or, "There's no point, Dinny." So then I've got to get mad and try to hurt him. That's difficult because he hurts himself so much that he seems practically immune to anything I can do.

It's not like when he first came, with his scraggy old mother fluttering behind him like a crow. He was easy to hurt then . . .

He'll be back shortly. I'm afraid I know what he's done.

\* \* \*

WELL IT'S HAPPENED and Denny won't be bothering me any more. i left Mikey and Suds with smother, to fetch me if she got worse and they said: "Yes davy, we promise," but i suppose i knew they wouldn't.

i hung around near the fun palace all morning. It got hot and drony so i had a little noddy in the shade of a feelypic till i felt Denny was near then i woke. As he came out of that nausydrome i saw Angel baby behind him. Then he vanished. Stupid Denny is like friends with him. Well he won't be much use now.

i spent a few ticktocks sorting my face out like friendly. Big browneyes and grin. Small and baby-brotherish. Then i trotted out with my pinkies in my pockets and kicking rubble. Denny was sitting on a wall squinting at a musoplex of wires and terminals that he had in his grabs. Every now and then he'd tickle the thing with a mikyprobe and look satisfied. He didn't need the probe really.

Then i sidled up and said: "Hello Denny. What's that thing?" and he said: "Halo davy. It's part of the funderific esco emotosensitive totalfeel with hundred per cent participation and objective/subjective time control and it don't work." Then he grinned and a bit of rubble flew up and did a pollywobble round my

head.

"Please Denny," i said, "don't do that," then the brick fell but more bits moved under my feet and made me fall. Rocks hurt my arse. An old Plymouth hood tore my back and started grilling me. I should have been ready for him doing that because once he got things moving around me i was in a fix. i can only work on people. Not things like rocks. so i got hurt. As it was i knew i'd have my work cut out just to stop him getting worse which was a brilliant way to start.

i didn't mind the hurting much, but i got kind of mad the way Denny just went on squinting at that freaking escoglob. Then consuming mad because he'd done what he had while i was trying to make him see he shouldn't so i wouldn't have to fix him.

"Denny," i said. "Why d'you do it? Dinny don't like it." And he said: "You're like an old tute, davy. Inventing reasons instead of just saying is smokes you. Anyway I don't give a fug for Dinny." After that he spat and scratched himself and went on mikyprobing while i lay on the plymmy lid getting hotter and madder. Denny's flattened face looked so much like Dinny's that i wondered how come she had a brother so gooly.

The next thing was my skirt had slid up and wrapped itself around my neck. While i was struggling with that about half a ton of concrete lifted, hung over me and started to fall. Hurting's one thing, expiring's another. i moved fast and still got covered in grit and Plymmy rustflakes. Meanwhile the shirt was putting up quite a fight but i managed to kill it and stamp on the shreds. By that time i'd completely blown my cool and i let Denny have it right in the middle of his grin.

For a few microsecs i thought nothing was happening because he kept on grinning although i could feel how it ought to be tearing him apart. When i'm that mad i can't really control what i'm doing, so i didn't know what to expect. The way it was i must have been thinking what an idiot he was because his grin sort of slackened and his eyes jigged. His lips went soft and his pinkies shot to his ears and there was drool everywhere. He started making googoo noises but before that he just muttered: "It's all right, davy," which upsets me when i think about it.

The fact that i soon realized he could actually have killed me if he'd really wanted to made me feel pretty low about what i'd done, honestly, but i couldn't alter anything then. After a while Denny jumped down off the wall, landed on all fours like a monkey, staring at the half-repaired escoglob device the way a shiggy cat stares at useless fishbones. The drony heat got worse.

Before i left a voice called from the nausy palace, deep and whiney at the same time. "Denny," it said. "Denny baby, where are ya?" Just like that, with fairy accent. Denny's moony eyes shot about a bit, then he loped off. I knew the lightning would come.

For some time i doodled around thinking and cursing myself till i realized i was getting fried without my shirt so i went and sat in the old Pontiac where i do most of my reading. It was like an oven in there too, with dust and flaking upholstery everywhere. The stacks of books i keep there looked deader than ever and there was a pile of shiggy shit right in the middle of





The Gutenberg Galaxy. i was still covered with Plymmy rust and blood which stuck to the seat. In the mirror my face was a mess. Sort or half baby, half animal. It scared me.

Then everything went dark and it was as much Philip's face as mine. It was not the complete image i get when my eyes are closed, but the terrible desolation of his dreamlike beach imposed itself on my surroundings. The car seemed to be resting in the meaningless no-man's-land, a narrow zone between one dark, unknown region and another. Philip's face—or mine—was asking its question again, but the silent lightning came, bleaching everything bone-white, stirring the seething currents of pain in my head.

i found myself chasing off to the autobuy which i usually hate like mad, through the black glass doorway and down those putrid Escalators to the Restawhile floor, all in a blood-red haze with an orchestra of quasars shrieking in my ears. Once down i jumped straight into the Olde Englishe Countrie Duckpond with Genuine Ducking Stooles and Spreading Oake which is only slightly better than the AhSo Rising Sun Lotus Pool with Mimosa and Pagodas next door. The pools are subgroundzero and lit by morphochrome skylites integrated in the autobuy's area which is just a grudging acre of synthetic rocks, broken-down eterno-flowers and sweeping concrete abstractions. As i lay on my back in the pool i could see the snide curves of one of these through the amber plexiglass. The water was flat and teppy but it felt lovely after the air which a thermoclock said was 92 and rising at 1322 hours local time and hotter tomorrow if it doesn't get colder. So i went under and stayed as long as i could till my lungs felt like compressed lead and i saw a body floating only it wasn't a body at all just the Genuine Olde Englishe Village Buffoone by Androfax Inc. then i came out. Coby keeps those pools filled from the auxie tanks

under the East 250 autogrid because he likes making water go uphill but he must be idling of late, letting rubbish like that fall in. Remembering i'd got to have a shirt because of the sun i made off to the automated garment-despatching units on floor 8, leaving wet footies on the way. While passing through Toiletries and Cosmetics i thought i saw Philip again, indistinct like an image in a double-exposure with a slivvy smile from an advertising mural showing through. His face—or was it mine again, reflected in a pane of glass?—seemed grainy, just like in the newspaper photograph i have of him, and something about his expression made me uneasy than ever, as though i'd forgotten something important. Anyway, i tore myself away and finally made it to floor 8 where all the clothes are. Coby dismantled all the auto-units long ago to make it easy to get at things. i looked around and nearly cried because there were six thousand two hundred fifty seven plastic-wrapped shirts in stock and only one of me.

**A**BOUT THIS ANGEL. i first saw him a while back; 428.5 hours ago to be precise, when he moved into the fun palace. He's tall and flabby with a puking face and blubbery lips that have droopy fuzz all around them. He has pornoscopic eyes, baby Bacchus blue. From pinkies to pads he's all leather with studs, rivetted in like a proffy's chair, but he gets hot and takes his jacket off, displaying a sweat-shirt that's a total chomatic disaster, with the word Angel blazing across his bouncy pectorals. He wears chains and badges and scratches himself. He's done nothing much except corrupted Denny, but i hate him. i'm afraid of him too, because i don't think i can deal with him like i did Denny. i ought to let the others fix him, but . . . i don't know. i want to know what he's here for.

My mother died today. Of course, Mikey had gone noddy and Suds had toddled off spying on Coby and Jen in the Cinderfella Male Pulchripalor. I couldn't be mad for long because she replayed the whole oozy



hearts-and-flowers scene for me. It was fun. Apart from me there's only Suds can do that and she has a marvellous way of decorating the goings-on if she thinks they're getting dull. I specially liked the way she made things appear on Coby's butt so they looked different every time he moved—which was often.

\* \* \*

July 18

I'm sick about Denny—after all, he is my brother—but what else could Davy do? Of course, I had to make him suffer when he came back and told me about it last night—partly because he seemed to expect it. And today, like always after something like that, he's been practically lifeless.

Davy's sleeping now, but I can't. Apart from the Denny business, Davy's small, dark face brings back too many memories. Except that it's clean now, his face hasn't altered much in five years.

That gets me back to him coming, with his mother and all, like some goofy from an old book. He was the smallest, scruffiest, most miserable looking kid I'd ever seen, pig-filthy and scowling at everything. Of course, I soon realized he wasn't to be spat on, the way nobody did anything about him—I think we all just stood around, gawking. Naturally, Finch, who was top dog then, tried to do something like he was expected to, but it was as though his feet were nailed and his guts had turned to googlefoam.

Davy just wiped his snotty nose, glared and said, "We've come a long way an' we're tired. I don't want to hurt anybody."

Nobody did anything but me. I couldn't help it, I started laughing, and couldn't stop. It was so giggly, a little gooly like him saying that, though it was obvious he was something different. He just turned and blazed away at me with his eyes.

I was nearly thirteen I think, and I didn't count for much then; just another kid with gawky legs like hinged stovepipes. In those days we had people like Finch and Esme, Creech and Josie and plenty more, all of them older. Finch was about twenty, but he didn't last long after that. Microbe—Mikey—and Suds are Finch and Esme's kids. Kerry is Creech's young brother.

Anyway, the thing was, I saw my chance to do something the others couldn't, and I didn't think much about the reasons. When Davy glared at me I felt for a moment as though something bad was trying to get at my thinkbox, but it passed. Then his savage little frontage went lost-looking, a bit scared, then sort of excited. That was when I knew he was easy to hurt, that he needed hurting, that he'd stay, and that I wanted him.

I left the wall I was lounging on, and slouched over to him, feet going scuff scuff. As I passed, Finch whispered, "Get the sod, Din!" then whimpered a bit. I curled my lips at him.

When I got to Davy, he was hardly up to my chin. I scuffed rubble over his sneakered feet and asked him what his name was, as though I didn't give a damn really. He showed me his teeth and snarled, "David Garrick." That was lost on me, but I did notice a book in one of his tatty pockets; though I couldn't read the

title then, it was "Great Acting Through the Ages."

He was carrying an old carpetbag and a bulging Panam carryall, which seemed a stupid thing to do. "Going on a vacation are you, Mister Garrick, sir?" I asked.

He grinned as wide as his ears and said, "Sure thin'. That's it exactly"—and walked off, pushing his mother by one elbow.

She'd been quiet till then, but she turned and snarled, "Stringy little cow!" She's never really liked me ever since.

Not much later I was in front of the rosebud mirror in Diana's Divinity Shop, telling myself that I wasn't *that* stringy any more, and that was true. I tried to imagine my hair long over my shoulders instead of short and spiky. Then I gathered the loose of my teeshirt in one hand, minced about a bit, then took it off altogether.

I was going to drop my jeans too, when I noticed I had company. It was Juan, a tall, dark kid about my age, who died about a year later. Whether or not Davy was responsible for that I'm still not sure. I've never asked him.

Anyway, Juan stood there in the dark heat, a stupid grin on his face and a marshmallow expression in his great black eyes, saying silly things like, "Jeezylord!" and, "Lookit Dinny's boobs!" and "Hooooo!" Then he said, "Girl, you's invitin' wape." The poor boy couldn't pronounce Rs.

I forgot I was annoyed, and grinned. "An' you rate your chances, eh Johnny?" Actually, the things he'd said were just what I needed then.

With the first flood of his courage gone, he stood fidgeting, going even darker with embarrassment. He was really very shy; I could handle him.

Very deliberately I stepped out of my jeans, all the time watching Juan. Then I thrust one hip at him, put my hands on my thighs and licked my lips, all in rather bad imitation of a lurid book cover I'd once seen. Juan spouted sweat on his upper lip and around his eyes till he looked as though he was crying.

I let him look and, later, let him touch. He was like a blind man with Braille, with long hands sweating and shaking. Before long he was crying, round latin tears that made his great lashes glisten. I supposed then that he always would cry around girls. Some might like it, but it made me uneasy. And all the time I was thinking of Davy's lovely big grin, and of how much nicer it would be with clean teeth, face and hair.

Even then, for God knows what reason, I was already obsessed about things being clean.

ONE DAY, WHEN he'd been here about a week, I crept up behind Davy as he stood watching some of the young kids playing. No one else creeps up on him. "What sorta mouths d'ya like?" I asked sweetly.

He hopped and dithered a bit, but he didn't turn.

"Oh," he said, "sort of . . . big lippy mouths, speshly under a flat nose, with a dimpled chin." Which was like me.

Then I grabbed and spun him round, pushing my face at his. "Yeah well, I like mouths with clean teeth, ya filthy little bastard, an' if yer stayin' yer havin' clean teeth!"

"Dinny—"



"An' ya stink freakin' awful!"

"You are Dinny, aren't ya?"

"So noxy it's painful to be near ya!"

And he said, "What's to bein' clean, Dinnysaur? Like a goddamn' socially-secured bullfugger, like an auto-sexin' pimple of a bennie, like—" but he didn't finish because I clobbered him, and rubbed it in by making a show of wiping hands on my denims. He just stood there, looking surprised.

"Come on," I said, and shimmied off. I didn't think he would, but he came.

When we got to the doors of the Esco Autobuy he said, "We're not goin' there?" He'd gone darker than ever and was hugging himself as though it was cold.

I said, "Yeah, get in," and kicked his ass.

Once in he dragged around like a bag of bones, his face fractious and scared at the same time. Among the toiletries he shivered like mad and took a swing at me. While I was fending him off my hand caught in something around his neck. There was a click, and something silver—a chain, I suppose—shot away into a pile of rubbish under one of the racks. After that he got madder until I grabbed one arm and twisted it up behind his back. He stopped cursing and struggling then, so I marched him down to the AhSo pool.

"Get them stinkin' rags off."

"Get stuffed!"

"David," I said, like threatening.

"That's not my name, stupid. An' I'll not—" so I tore the filthy shirt off him, and had just noticed the tremendous scar on his ribs when he snaked out of my hands and made my head ring with one fist. Before he could get clean away I'd stuck one leg out and in the pool he went, fanny first.

He sank, stayed under about three minutes, trying to scare me, and caught a faceful of soap for his troubles when he came up. "Get clean, shitface," I called, and went off for clothes.

He was still there when I got back, squatting on the Togo bridge, trying to make the water boil by looking at it. He was clean though, and didn't give me much trouble. He dried himself and put the clothes on. I'd got his size just right; when he'd finished he looked like an angel—with bellyache. Later on, though, I saw him fingering the new jeans and white teeshirt with a big blue D on it, and he was nearly smiling.

Ever since that he's kept reasonably clean, and changes his clothes regularly. One thing though; he always chooses things two sizes too big for him.

The more I put him down the happier he got, because he understood what I was doing, and knew that I knew that he knew. One of the things about him I love the most is the fact that he doesn't ruin things by not being able to wait. It was hard for me though, because I got pretty obsessed myself. Juan was all right, but it was like torture fooling around with him with Davy about.

So he came and stayed. No one but me could do anything about it, and his leaving was the last thing I wanted. Because of that, Finch and quite a few others hated me, so things started to get rough. Then one day Finch went to the apartment buildings while Davy's mother was there alone. That was really stupid.

Davy was with me just then, and things were normal until he suddenly growled, "Wait, Dinny." He curled up a bit, as though going to sleep. A little later came a ruckus, some shouting, then a crash. Finch had come charging from the apartment buildings, climbed to the sixth level of the autogrid, pushed a rotting Oldsmobile over the edge where the wall and the safety barriers have gone. He went with it. When we found him he was speared right through by a fender.

Creech, looking like death, poured kerosene over the whole lot and set fire to it. Then, without warning, he made to throw more of the stuff at Davy, but ended up drenching himself instead. There was a horrible silence while Creech stared at Davy with an expression that turned from shock to a frantic sort of apology.

I still don't know what Davy would have done if a sudden breeze hadn't blown the flames straight at Creech. There was a flubbing noise and the poor idiot disappeared in a tent of fire. It was a long time before he stopped crawling about and screaming. All the rest were too scared to do anything. Meanwhile Kerry had gone white, thrown up, and passed out.

Later I asked Davy, if he could do all that, why didn't he just make people like him instead? He frowned as though I'd said something obscene.

"That wouldn't be fair, Dinny."

About a year later, shortly after Juan died, Davy disappeared for two days. During those two days a neighbouring mob attacked, thinning our numbers considerably. Just when it seemed they'd overrun us completely they gave up and split. Within half an hour Davy was back. He said I'd never been in danger. No one he liked had been in danger. The sheer indifferent selfishness of that sickened me, and for a while I came close to hating him. It was quite a while before I realised that the only thing that separated his selfishness from anyone else's was a basic difference within him, a fact of his life he was powerless to really control. Under the circumstances, for Davy to reach even our flimsy level of morality was something of a miracle.

The following year, when Davy was thirteen, was when the bennies first came, and he really started having fun in his hating sort of way. We called them Dabs for a while because of those stupid little badges that say Disaster Area Benevolent Society, but Davy started celling them bennies because of their leader, Benjamin Baptismo, and because he hates words like benevolence, kindness, welfare, altruism. He says they were made obscene by being most used by those people who made their existence most necessary.

After the fight Davy's mother got sick, then sicker, and now she's dead. I used to ask him why he didn't do something for her. He said, like what? I said, anything. His answer was that he couldn't, didn't want to, and his mother didn't want him to either.

Later I saw him and Coby in the Esco Drug Department. Davy was sitting, arms around his knees; Coby was standing, with his hands moving a bit. All around them the store was having conniptions, wrecking itself. Bottles of liquid boiled and exploded, tubes unscrewed themselves and shot bullets of goo at the ceiling. And pills, everywhere. The place was filled with pills, all



flying about then turning to powder, till they looked like coloured snow falling.

I remember Davy grinning at me and saying, "It's like a galaxy, ain't it? Light years of panaceas an' purgatives. An' Coby rules the galaxy, don't you, Coby?" Coby just smiled and smiled, so I suppose Davy was making him feel real good.

Old Doc Davidson's Most Efficacious Kiddley Kompound did a pas-de-deux with LBC 20, the frustrated virgin's delite.

**I** SOMETIMES FEEL really strange inside, as though there were a feeling growing there, like nothing else, ever. The first time was when I saw Finch all smashed up with the fender sticking through him. Then again when I found a watchmaker's shop in the basement of a ruined block, with the workbenches clear except for a pair of baseball boots, a cracked coffee cup, and a copy of Asimov's 'The Universe: From Flat Earth to Quasar'. I had it when I first saw a bennie cry, and yesterday, when Davy told me what he'd done to Denny. Twice I've had the feeling so strongly that it threatened to stay for ever. First when Davy showed me a photograph of NGC 224, the spiral galaxy in Andromeda, saying happily and quietly how it was at least 1,600,000 light years away according to observations of cepheid variables, which seemed to mean more to him than to me. The second time was when he told me that the swirling scar on his left ribs was because his father had once thrown him onto a fire, long before Davy knew he could have stopped him.

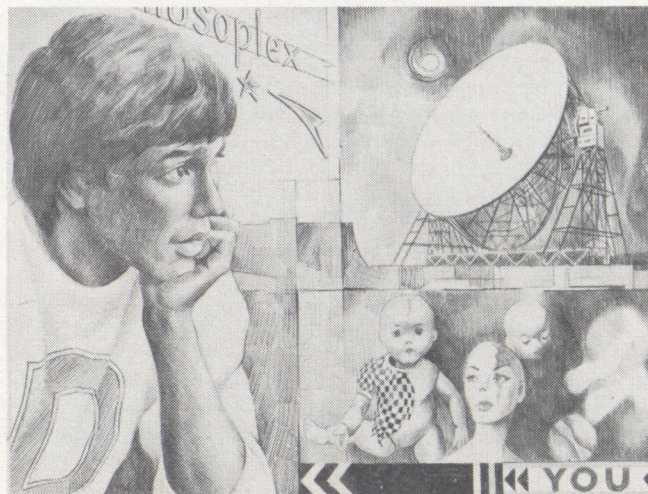
Davy makes people do things, Coby makes things do things; most of the rest are like Coby with variations. Davy talks a lot about total recall, extended perception, the possibility of advanced synectics—a sort of gestalt—then gets mad, depressed and sick. That's when he says he needs me most.

But what can I do? I've a very good memory and that's it, that all, except for this vague feeling. He says that's it; something to do with making sense of big things and small things, important things and stupid things; that without me he'll be dangerous and useless and everything will be wasted.

Perhaps so, but I haven't the faintest idea how to go about it, except by loving Davy. And, because this feeling seems to have nothing to do with loving him, I'm afraid to explore it. It might just possibly have something to do with hating him.

On the walls of his room are pictures and pages from books. There are pages from stories by Sidney Fowler Wright, propaganda for a return to primitivism. Others are from a story about how a survivor of a terrible war spends his last days writing his thoughts on tree bark with his own blood. Davy finds that very funny because he uses the best quality paper and a typewriter with all the scientific and engineering know-how of IBM behind it.

Since he hold me David Garrick he's been Henry Ford, Bishop Godwin, Johannes Kepler, Albert Schweitzer, Joe McCarthy, Donald Duck, Salvador Dali, Paul Dahlbeck, and dozens more. He doesn't understand how, to me, he can't be anything but Davy and sometimes gets awfully mad when I use that name, but it



passes. He won't tell me his real name. He says it's the same as his father's, and the same as that of the worst, most corrupting bastard who ever lived. I don't know whether or not he means the same person.

Denny was very sick when he was seven, and I once stayed awake four nights running, until I was sure he wouldn't die. Now Davy's made him sick for good.

Davy, Denny, Dinny.

Why is it like this?

Davy's sleeping now, in my bed. He looks no older than the kid in Andy Gritz's painting and no younger than the photograph of Philip Strick, who murdered his own father so long ago. Even when he's asleep Davy's hands claw at his face, as though trying to tear out his own eyes. Now and then he mutters, "The lightning's inside." His body is like a dark flame on the white sheets. He's burning, and he burns me.

As he was falling asleep I saw a tear on his face, for his mother perhaps. I lay against him with my fingers on his cheek, staring at my reflection in the tear until it dried and there was nothing left but a tiny white streak.

\* \* \*

Philip has tried writing in the sand on his lonely beach, but he doesn't seem to have much control over what he's doing. After writing  $E=MC^2$  and a lot of numbers he let them dribble off into drawings and abstract patterns which mean nothing to me. The numbers, though—the numbers of everything in the world—choke me. I know all about numbers.

If I wanted, Dinny love, all the masoch joys of a vomact paradise, sickandsnide. VITACRUNCH is a cardboard cornucopia at SEVEN O' CLOX OMI-CRONTIME. Pulverized in goOGLEfoam to drive home your/my/our natural advantage bodywise, which is assumed, presumably, because of *codasleep*, a nitelite abbreviation of all the Tarzans who EVER FELT A COMPULSION TO *sycofantastication*? about Dinny in Rafael's EROTOFORMed trauma for a graffitied MERCURY (does for a man what gas does for his car) to float in, to FLY HIGH (non-addictively) over a



perPETual mountainscape of breasts—hey kids, at 2050, East 96, you can see the biggest pair of dangles since prehistory:—signed: Tricia, 2050, East 96 SICK QUOTE: Professor Scharnhorst Von Sitzfleisch he say: This year's new autos, with their quasi-sultanic luxuries, are the greatest incentive to free love and moral decadence since last year's new autos' EX DEUS MACHINA, or is it DEUS EX MACHINA and for God's ache let's tolerate *THE TRISEX FRATERNITY* (Sorority, —?) what the HELL IS DINNY, naked in psychedelicate *SUBLIMOCOLOR*, her eyes closed while someone holds a coke bottle — *bottles*, BOTTLED EVEN Von Sitzfleisch (and H.H.G. Kusick) realized that: '... the coke bottle, together with the Atlas missile and the ballpoint pen, is the twentieth century's most potent phallic symbol...' which brings us to FAMOUS LAST WORDS, NUMBER 49 IN THE HEAVENLY UPLIFT (Bras for Mas) SERIES: Fats McGuire as he lay dying beneath half a ton of trombones at the base of a thirty foot plastic Atlas rocket (probably advertising bras for Mars) in Tampa, Florida: "He who laughs, last longest." Scene on a toilet wall: HE WHO LAUGHS HAS THE LONGEST day can seem shorter with *NEUROCOD*, the chewy newy for tired OF RAPISTS, FORNICATORS? If so, join the CRUSADE FOR SPIRITUAL EXPIATION AT the Angel Baby Buro offers you a direct line to GOD INC. (3 billion lines—and wouldn't you have, too, with all HIS worries? He's ex ...) Tracts from THE WISDOM OF THE SHITHOUSE POET: — God's been castrated. Whodunit? — I'm holding the most dangerous weapon in the world in my left hand — If you can see this you must be shitting at an angle of 45 degrees — Young man, 21, would like to meet good-looking boys 12-18, preferably dark-haired, blue-eyed, with beautiful arses. I want to punch their complacent noses, the lucky bastards — Jennifer Johnson is a cock-teaser — All is beauty — Beauty is in the eye of a needle — Why are you reading this? — To which Pappa Von Sitzfleisch (as, beneath the belt, something stirs) he say: 'Ah vell, sey are merely sublimating seir subconscious drives, are sey not?' SUBCONSCIOUS DRIVE, sub-kon'shus driv, a journey to the centre of the earth in a Wells Fargo stagecoach with Garbo, Deitrich, Monroe and Bardot, with not a single Valentino, Boyer, Wayne or Belmondo in sight OF A PAINTING BY (numbers? A Michelangelo in 25,000 sexions even? Psykinetics yet?) NO; by *ANDY GRITZ*, long before he dropped paint for pure consciousness. CONSCIOUSNESS kon'shus-nes, n. when you come out the other side to find the world's full of Valentinos, Boyers, etc.; that's consciousness. (N.B. Reverse the names for women) have been known to break down and weep before Gritz's painting, for it shows (ALL? YES YES!!!) an innocent young boy (fed on WHOLE-SOME WHOLEES, THE HOLY OLIO, as recommended and promoted by the Divine Lite Johnny Baptismo, the fulsome fink) dressed in Levis denim jacket and jeans, baseball boots, the Hedgehog-Sexing Club of America's teeshirt, and a badge which says 'MARS OR BUST'. When he's half a year older he'll prefer the bust, but not just yet Grandma, he's still young enough to weep crocosmile tears over(tly). He is eating a beautiful hamburger, and in his other hand reposes the inevitable, ever-present, ubiquitous Coca-Cola

bottle, ha ha! symbolically full. Imagine, in front of the painting, two Daughters of the American Revulsion, slivly lips slobbering. The boy's face . . . ("Those eyes, Phyllis . . .") is . . . ("they're so sad, yet . . .") is . . . ("yet, *lovin'*, somehow!") is . . . (while Phyllis mentally masturbates) is my face, Dinny. In Phyllis' eyes that undersized and undersexed little kid becomes a hundred feet tall, divested of everything except guess what, now half-empty, and her imagination has run riot with certain details. Anyway, he's/i'm that big that you could crawl into his/my navel, or lose yourself in the pubic hair, of which there's suddenly plenty. In spite of that, this is a projection of impotence, Dinny. An impotent image of potency, a sales technique. Not for underwear, St Christopher medallions or contraceptives—that least of all. No, I'm supposed to be selling assurance to millions of Phyllises that Saint Davy the Thrustful will be awaiting them at the other side of the Disaster which is surely coming, because Blessed John Baptismo says so.

Well, it came and i'm here, still undersized and undersexed, praying to what's left of God that all Phyllises are dead, while Blessed John's son Benjamin sends his housetrained bennies after me, because i'm a boil on decency's balls.

\* \* \*

July 20

We buried Davy's mother today, on the waste lot where the Rodney hotel used to stand. We had to dig for ages. It was bad enough just getting down to soil, but Davy let Coby do that. When that was done, though, he insisted we dig by hand, and he did most, nearly killing himself. "I want to do it, Dinny," he said.

There were two flashes while we were working, and Davy seemed to see them worst. What happens is everything goes scorching white in a split second, and things seem flat and papery, almost as if you could see through them. Then things get back to normal slowly, all the colours bleeding back, shade by shade, tone by tone, making objects solid and deep again. Red is always the first colour back, so that for a while it's like looking at a monochrome in blood. Only by that time we're usually too busy with pain to notice the visual effects.

I didn't want to believe Davy's explanation, but it's the only one.

Anyway, little Kerry had unearthed a fantastic coffin from somewhere, wood simulated in thermoplastic, with durochrome doodads, lined with Cloudfleece Synsyk. But Davy said take it back, and away it went, zoom. Then he forgot himself and put a hand on Kerry's shoulder, like friendly, no offence. Before you could blink Kerry was gone too, white and wet. This noli me tangere is really sad. I feel sick for the poor kid.

So; the dry old corpse just went in as it was, and Davy turned his back as he let Coby drop the dirt back in a lump. First off he wanted all the concrete and rubbish put back just the way it was before; then he



said no, make it all flat, so Coby did.

Next to solid, cool Coby, Davy looked flimsier than ever, quivering from the work, dark skin filthy and shining with sweat. He was burning so much, deep down, that he frightened me. All the other kids were standing around looking at him and fidgeting, because they understand him even less than I do. The only ones not to look worried were Coby, Charley and Reb; Coby because he is the quietest, calmest, most reassuring one among us, and the other two because they're abysmally stupid and never look anything but vacant.

In the boiling silence I heard a laugh from the direction of the fun palace; an oily sound that made Davy jump like a puppet. Nervously he picked up his shirt to wipe his face and arms, then threw it to me. It was just like the first shirt I ever gave him, warm and wet, with its big D awfully faded. It smelled of Davy and me and deep dark soil. Then there was another flash.

I managed to say, "Don't go there, Davy please." But he lifted one hand, backed away slowly and, long before things were back to normal, he'd disappeared.

His eyes are like windows, and there are things he can't keep from showing there. Something about today made the fire burn stronger but, as he went, there was an inversion. All the light in the world gathered in his eyes and blazed inwards.

LATER I WENT looking for him, still carrying his shirt. I found him, of course, with that nasty Angel, on the derelict area opposite the fun palace. Leaning against a minaret among the patterned domes of the palace was Denny, scratching himself. Then he loped away, but I could hear him laughing for a long time.

Davy had his back to a wall that had something chalked on it. His eyes were closed, face a pale shade of gray, with blood trickling from his lips. Angel was in front of him, his flabby belly moving in and out, with his greasy leather hanging on him like slime. He was talking. I couldn't hear, but his big soft lips were moving under the scruffy fuzz. Occasionally Davy spoke too, but he never opened his eyes.

Then Angel bent one pudgy pinky and touched Davy with it, on his chest and belly, all the time talking. My blood went thin; I screamed at the fat fink and started for him.

\* \* \*

Angel's the one. He's immune to me; doesn't feel a thing. I had to know, but now I'm scared.

Just with one big fat hand he stopped me leaving, or even moving, stopped me from doing anything. He hit my face and I bled. He hit my stomach and I couldn't breathe.

"Your ma's dead, kid," Angel said. "I knew she'd die. I hoped she'd die."

"So did I." That's when he hit me first.

"You ought to die too. Didn't you ought to die, kid?"

"Screw yourself!" That's when he hit me in the belly.

"Dintcha orta die, baby?"

"Yes."

"Wudya like me t'kill ya, baby?"

Like a cornered rat I'd been fighting, but then something broke somewhere, and everything was slack and black, letting Angel's words come unopposed.

"Vey, you stupid little nebbish, you don't know what it means, death. I'm not talking about infant mortalities, road casualty figures, terminal comas or megadeaths even. That's not like me killing you with my knife, not like its cold steel trying to find a home in your warm wet belly, eh?"

I was sweating. "No, not like that."

"No, baby sod, not like that, 'cos I'm not goin' to kill you. Not yet, anyway. Y'see, among my other perversions I'm a sadist. I want to see you writhe and suffer first; watch you sweat. Besides, you're far too beautiful to go sticking knives into. Not knives. Arrows maybe..."

Then his voice went hard and quiet, sounding something like a tape I once heard, of John Baptismo talking.

"Something new for you, Davy love. You've got responsibilities!"

"Responsibilities?"

"Yeah. You thought you hadn't didn't you? Dintcha already?"

"No... Yes..."

"Gevalt, I should be so decisive! Listin, schnuck, you deal with the bennies 'cos of Dinny an' the rest, dontcha?"

"Because I hate——"

"Sha! Because that's a responsibility you like, is why. But now there's me, and you can't even protect *yourself*. Probably don't even *want* to, eh?"

I heard another voice somewhere, and I knew the blinding lightning was coming again. But Angel still talked.

"Remember; I'm waiting, saint davy, me and my arrows. I'm waiting for you to fail."

"Coby an' the rest'll kill——" But he just laughed quietly, and laughed.

"With my arrows, baby love," he whispered.

But it was his cold steel that was sliding across my skin after all.

\* \* \*

ONLY I'D GOTTEN halfway when it wasn't a pinky any more but a thin knife. I stopped, wondering why Davy wasn't doing anything.

"Stop him, you stupid bastard!" I yelled.

Angel jumped back a foot and Davy's eyes opened, so I carried on towards them with a rock in my hand. I was surprised when the fat sod started scrambling away towards the palace, laughing. Then he slipped, hurt himself and yowled castrato. Before I could go for him everything flared, disintegrated and blew away before my eyes.

Later, after my head had cleared, I walked back to Davy, still holding his shirt. When I'd wiped his chest with it I threw it away and slapped his silly bewildered little face as hard as I could, once for every tear I'd suddenly started crying. The chalking on the wall said, *It's later when you think.*

\* \* \*





From saint davy:  
To Benny Baptismo:

It's my birthday. i'm beginning to face certain facts, Benny, and i realize you'll probably get your slivv hands on this, sooner or later. So: i just want to tell you that i can see through the flimsy religious clapboard that hides the brothel you call a mind. From your brothel you, like all your kind, have been using sex as a symbol for the sickness of being human. Everybody believed it; i've believed it, because you are all the most professional, most perverted ad-men who ever lived.

i believed rape, robbery and murder happened behind billboards because sex was *on* them. Well, i was a fool, because the billboards *were* rape, robbery and murder, and the people behind were just being honest—or good consumers. Angel is the last of a long line of your hoardings—the worst kind—but this one backfired. It's because of him i'm beginning to see the truth about you and about me. Or did you intend that i should, now it's late? my days are numbered; i know it; but yours are too, my advantage is i understand numbers. We're like flies, Benny; few days and many possible courses. Rather mine than yours. Do you understand?

Today's my last birthday and i'm going to make love to Dinny in Angel's shadow. i want our love to burn his symbolic perversions.

And i don't even need you to tell me it won't.

P.S. Is it true, Benny, that homosexuality is encouraged in your insane army and that, when captured, all males are to be ravished, then brainwashed, while our comely maidens are carried off to the Greater Glory of your private harem? Your sleepyguns must be very useful.

There are other interesting rumours about your Enlightenment and Conversion ceremonies which indicate that your drab, perverted evangelism might not, after all, be untinted by a trace of humour. God bless you, Benny Baptismo.

Quote from Kusick: "The concept of technological advance and scientific experimentation has become a racial sex-surrogate."

From Fats McGuire, avant-garde trombonist: "Sex is a complex doom-symbol, dears."

From Senator Harold P. Backhouse: "I'm here to tell you that the day is coming when an American novelist will write a torrid love scene entirely in scientific

shorthand, as observed under strict laboratory conditions." (laughter) "Why, we may spurn our wives in favor of test tubes! Friends, that will be the day the American Eagle finally defects to warmer climes."

I'M THE END product of a series of irresponsible DNA experiments. Someone has stamped the notes: "ABORTIVE". Things probably weren't too bad until the experimenters became too aware of what they were doing. That's when things always go wrong. Imagine, then, Janice Fall, an attractive young librarian who has read extensively in the Biology, Psychology and Anthropology sections, on vacation in California and meeting Paul Dahlbeck, a handsome young fruit-picker of Scandinavian extraction whose hands are sick or oranges, and who has read extensively in the Pornography section. Imagine the result, Lous Sigmund Darwin Dahlbeck, growing up in a Santa Barbara orphanage, showing startling artistic tendencies, experiencing 'quasi-religio-sexual ecstasy' upon seeing photographs of Ypres, Belsen and Hiroshima, finally becoming 'criminally insane' and raping Consuela Capasombrio on the day McKinley and company landed on Mars. Imagine Consuela, already halfway to disaster herself, going on a religious binge, proclaiming a new Messiah. Imagine her dying whilst giving birth to . . . . ., who was probably the most nauseating man ever to draw breath, whose worst act of inconsideration was to survive the irruption of racial masochism we call the Disaster. Imagine him, wandering through the devastation, obsessed with himself, happening to, among others, a dim-witted girl who couldn't even remember her own name, who gave clumsy birth to an undersized mutation who probably can't procreate, and a good thing too.

Imagine me.

Imagine Philip Strick, using the freeways of time to escape his humane confinement and finding only an infinity of confinements. Philip is—was—the son of a nuclear physicist, who murdered his father with a pair of scissors on December 22, 1970, while they were decorating a Christmas tree. Philip was 16 then. The news-reading world judged him from a photograph taken by his father while they were holidaying at Cape Cod the previous summer. In the photograph Philip was smiling. Behind him, yachts sailed a placid ocean beneath a placid sky. He was wearing a new \$3,000 watch, new swimming-shorts which had cost \$285.50, because they were styled by Rafael, the latest sensation, and a solid platinum medallion on which was the inscription: "To Philip, my nucleus." Because he had all these things, yet did what he did, Philip was intolerable.

He must be looking to me for escape.

Reflected by Andy Gritz's painting, we're some sort of microcosmic disaster area.

Biochemical studies at the Lafayette Clinic, Detroit, in 1960, on the effects of sleep deprivation on the energy transfer systems in the body, showed that as the subject approaches 100 hours without sleep those systems become over-activated and, beyond that point, appear to break down altogether. Thereafter, some auxiliary system is utilized.

Further experiments elsewhere show that for periods in excess of 100 hours a disintegration of rationality



takes place. Paranoid symptoms appear, the subject becomes aggressive, and perception is affected to the point where physical surfaces may seem insubstantial or occluded by web-like hallucinations. Flashes of bone-like lack of colour and absence of parallax definition may occur. The subject becomes psychopathological.

Oh boy.

That's what the effect of the lightning is like, but for different reasons and without the easy cure of sleep. It's a case of overloading; we're authentically blowing our minds; a great potential going to waste. Eighteen perfectly good components functioning badly for lack of a mechanic, in overdrive and wearing out fast. It's no use blaming Dinny for not knowing what she's capable of. It has always been too late anyway. As for me, i suppose i'm the driver and a bad one at that; counting revolutions and computing ratios while i drive this brand-new shiny automobile round in circles to an early collapse. It has, of course, built-in obsolescence.

\* \* \*

July 27

It's hotter now, utterly still, and something is altering. I think it's Davy. Whatever, he seems to be getting ready to leave his apartment. He's taken his typewriter to the Pontiac and left everything else in neat stacks in his room. Andy Gritz's painting is covered by a dust-sheet and a sign which says, WITHDRAWN FROM SALE.

Today I watched him take the last group of photographs from the walls, apparently unaware that he was tearing his nails on the thumbtacks. The last ones to go were: a portrait of William Bonney; a photomicrograph of filaments of Spirogyra showing stages in lateral conjugation; six pornographic studies taken by students at M.I.T.; a photograph of the 250-foot radio telescope at Jodrell Bank; a portrait of Chesley Bonestell; a panorama of cobble stones in Salford, England; and a close-up of six half-melted plastic dolls in a sandpit.

He held them all to his chest, looked at me and said, "Dinny?" I don't really know whether it was a question, a statement or a plea. The only thing I could do was kiss him.

"I'm sorry, love," I said. I think I was crying.

"Don't be, Dinny. There's no need." Then he went outside and burned the pictures, letting the smoke redden his eyes.

A little later he glanced through one of the books he'd been stacking. He had almost given up reading because half the time he was confused by all the rubbish the authors hadn't quite written. But then he saw this story.

It choked him. All he could say was, "That makes sense, Dinny." He seemed astonished. Muttering something about flies and particles he wandered out into the heat haze, so I read the story too.

It was only short—thirty pages or so—but there was so much in it, it meant so much, that I can't describe it. Among other things, radio telescopes pick up signals from space which turn out to be a decreasing series of numbers, a countdown to the end of the universe.

I mention that because of what Davy was doing when I found him. He had chalked the number 36,484,128 on a wall and was repeating it quietly, looking at the sky—or through it. It was as though he were talking to someone. Then he saw me and stopped. All he would say was, "I should have known better. That's not what he needs at all."

We have seen no bennies since that Angel incident, which is just as well because the lightning flashes—Davy's started calling them white-outs—come more often now. They're getting so bad that we've all got permanent headaches, so we wouldn't be much use at fighting them off.

The horrible thing is, I don't think those religious perverts *need* come anymore; we're going to them. Charley, Reb, Steve, Smokes and Tinkle have disappeared. Since they went the pain's got worse and the sun's got hotter, and yet I have a peculiar feeling of coolness and space. Perhaps Davy feels it too; he's getting very quiet. I think he's trying to stop hating himself.

Coby wanted to get Angel, and so did I and the rest, but no one has done anything. Davy must have stopped them, and I know he stopped me. Just by talking to me, which is the only way he can get me to do anything. He does it well.

So Angel hangs over us like a shadow. Occasionally we hear his voice, distorted by a public-address system rigged up in the fun palace. He says, "Sei gesund, Saint Davy."

It's evening now, and Davy is with Coby and Kerry. They've moved a lot of old cars to the flat space where his mother is buried. Jen and Jeannie have come and I want to talk to them. We haven't talked enough.

\* \* \*

i'm sorry about the number, Philip; that was stupid. It doesn't even solve the fly's problem, and has nothing to do with yours. We're doing better now, i think.

We started with a Rolls Royce Silver Cloud and a Mercedes 300-SL. By the time we've finished they'll be covered by bits of Chevrolets, Chryslers, Buicks, Cadillacs, Oldsmobiles, Fords, Pontiacs, Corvairs, Jaguars, Volkswagens, Citroens, public transport vehicles, bicycles, invalid carriages, perambulators, prosthetic aids, roller skates, glass eyes, typewriters, spectacles, and bits out of dolls that say "Mammaaaaaaaaaaagh."

Philip is moving away now, completely absorbed in his sand-drawing. Because of that, i can't see his face. Behind him he leaves acres of suns, girls, fishes, and a thousand other things. This population doesn't eliminate the inhuman desolation of the beach. From this static tableau, which no tide will ever remove, i took a shape

and showed it to Coby and Kerry. Once they'd seen what i thought it should be like they did all the work really, shaping the car bodies and lockin the pieces together over my mothers grave. i'd never notised til then just how weird it iz to watch em doing thins like





that?, seeing tuns of steel just floating around. Befor long igot as mad az HELL becos because it felt as tho id nothin to do with it anymore. so like an idyot i tried to do somethin myself. coby was werkin hiz brain to the bone an th silver clowd soon dissapeard i climed up the thin an startd fussin with detailz but i cudnt do much without eqi equipment of corse

an today I fell from thirtyfeet up  
sei gesund sei gesund seigesundsei  
dinnys like someplase ive never been

DINNY DINNY  
what hapenz wen its allwite an my eyes melt.,?

i  
from thirty floors in somebodody elsesector a shift in  
the curai ce.—\* curtayn? glass\* watchin! i men mean?

escom.alt hedon  
FUN PALACE  
re-opened  
under new management—  
ANGEL & DENNY

it's free, Davy. Please come.

i think i went and Denny led me round. Denny was coverd all over in floppy sylk, amberand gold an orange with an embroiderd kowl;. he lopped along on all4 all fores an his eyes andlips wet all the time he giggld ansuckt rotten candy HE stank

if iwent i don't remember why. i think their was heat annd cold litan dark soft and hard and absolute safety guaranteed, and soft rubber lips sucking at me as I tried to get from one to the other. Smotherd stroked an shaken

warm gusts of amni\* amnio;, ?darkness dennys hot hand on mine andcolord lite floors rolld, became walls, then ceilings, then optical optional wombs there was nothing new. Because THE FUNDERIFIC ESCO EMOTOSENSITIVE TOTALEEL WITH 100% PARTICIPATION AND OBJECTIVE/SUBJECTIVE TIME CONTROL had broken down again.

As i left, if i went, Denny danced all round me giggling: "davydavydavydavydavydavydavy." Then Angel shot at me from behind one of theminarets on throof but,, he mist missed

im nearlyblind dinny

i didn't do much except say: "bloody hell", but i think Dinny screamed. About a foot off the ground i stopped, then settled gently on my ass. i looked around and saw Coby and Kerry, both white and sweating. Then Coby threw up and Kerry collapsed as though he'd died.

Then it came, the light and the pain, and i don't remember much else. Suds, Mikey and Jen went screaming mad, i think. Suds was as stiff as steel, Mikey frothed and foamed, Jen beat her head against a hubcap. Dinny grabbed me, and because of that i managed to control myself for a moment, and calmed the others. By then Jen had knocked herself senseless, and Jeannie was unconscious too; but the rest came to pretty quickly. If i've anything to be proud of, i suppose that's it.

Then it came again. That must be when i wrote all that rubbish.



NOW THERE ARE only eight of us. We don't know how much time has passed; only that things are very different. It's nice, not knowing about time anymore.

There's a special kind of horror comes when you realize you've done yourself irreparable damage—or had it done to you. That's how it was, but it passed. Horror, like pain, becomes something else if you give it enough time. Anyway nobody moves things now, and i don't think at people. It's too late, of course, but that would make it quicker, make it worse. Maybe worse is better?

The way to deal with pain when it gets really bad is to sink into it and sort of swim around till you find a place where there are no currents. Nothing moves there, and i'm really still. i mean i don't hate things anymore; and there's no more whining self-pity. But everything's sad. Suddenly, in just the same sunlight as always, things are different, as if they were saying SAD, SAD, SAD. It's a pleasant sadness, and we all feel it—Dinny, Coby, Kerry, Jeannie, Jen, Mikey, Suds and myself. i don't know where the rest have gone. It doesn't matter. Day after day we just lay around my old Pontiac, doing nothing except talk occasionally. i told them we're dying and that i'm sorry, and, since then, they seem calm too. i've never felt before just how much i love and need them.

Mainly it's Coby and Jen in the back seat, Dinny and me up front, Jeannie sprawling her long legs over the hood and frying in the sun, with Mikey and Suds playing in the rubble. Kerry mooches around quietly and sits near, listening to whatever's said. Better still, i've seen Jeannie smiling at Kerry.

We stay here at night now. i suppose it must get cool sometimes, especially when a breeze gets up, but we've never felt it, the way Coby felt nothing when he tore his hand on a piece of decomping bodywork and bled—something i've never seen him do before. The reason we stay is because we're together, except for Jeannie and Kerry. They wander off at dusk, always in different directions, but they come back together soon after dawn, hardly a foot apart, and Kerry hardly looks nervous at all.

Fifty yards away there's the sculpture, statue, construction, heap of scrap iron, call it whatever. i wanted—still want—to call it "Angel," to make up for what the word has come to mean. It's not finished but, as i look at it, i can see that beach with Philip in the distance—almost on the horizon. i think—i hope—he is happier now. The scene is fading.

*July 32*

Dinny said to put the date but none of us can remember it, so that seems as good as any. i keep this typewriter near and write when i can remember to; sometimes at night, with Dinny laying against me, like now. On the other side of Dinny is Suds, Dinny's arm holding a coat around her. Suds coos quietly. In the back Coby and Jen talk low and soft while Mikey snores with his head on Coby's knees. Often there is

silence for hours except for a breeze blowing bits of grit against the Pontiac. Occasionally there's a muffled noise from a long way away. We share the silence, whoever's awake, and share the feeling it brings. And that is really cool.

If i curl up on the seat and push my face into it, a half-inch tear in the upholstery becomes a chasm across a continent, and there's Dinny's face too. Sometimes i touch her. Sometimes we look at the tiny rip, or a little stain that looks like a great eagle, or at one of our fingernails, and just laugh or cry silently. Then Suds will wake. Making little snuffling, half-asleep noises she'll scramble over Dinny, get between us and ferret about until her head's wedged tight, trying hard to scowl. That only makes it better; little Suds with one hand inside my shirt, the other tugging and twisting Dinny's hair, muttering noises instead of words and breathing each other's breath, with a dirty old coat pulled over us all. If i cry now, the tears are clean.

*Augumber 1*

When Jeannie and Kerry came this morning they were holding hands. Kerry looked thin and pale and sick, but he was smiling. Under all her scruffy copper hair Jeannie's broad, peasanty face looked as though it had woken up somewhere pleasanter than where it fell asleep. They came to me and Kerry put his other hand on my shoulder. Dinny touched his arm. There was nothing to say. All day those two have been sitting on a piece of crumbled building that is two slabs of reinforced concrete at right angles so that it's almost like a seat. Behind them the rust-red of the protruding steel rods seemed to blaze in the heat. Jeannie never let go of Kerry's hand.

It's been hotter than ever. Early on the sky went white, and anything more than fifty yards away disappeared in a haze. If the white-outs were to come again we would hardly notice them visually. They have been paralleled by the physical world. i'm grateful for that.

The roof of the Pontiac sang in the heat. There was no wind, but dust moved slowly between the broken slabs of concrete. Later, pieces of grit danced and spat. A Coca-Cola bottle split along its length and lay open in two perfect halves in the rubbish. There was a little tornado of candy wrappings. Our fifty-foot angel came and went in the haze. Somewhere beneath its tons is my mother.

IT'S JUST OCCURRED to me that she might not be as solidly rooted as i thought, in spite of being six feet under and topped off with tons of metal. The thing is, i'd never thought of the earth as anything but solid; but, of course, there are sewers and subways below her. Far below those, quite possibly, there's a tentacle of a shelter complex, even directly under the city, maybe with a few buzzing proffies still in there, wondering whether to bother coming out, disturbing her old bones with their deliberations. She never was very secure, my mother.

It will soon be evening, and everything will turn a beautiful, calm orange-red. There will be a whole sym-





phony of tiny noises as things cool off enough for us to move. Then we'll go scavenging; a few tins of food, bottles of water, things like that. This will be the last time, i think.

Dinny and i wandered through the Esco Autobuy, remembering the first time we were there together. The slanting sunlight seeped through the filthy, shattered windows and, where it fell on the floor, it looked more like paint than light. As we passed between the rows of toiletry dispensers Dinny made straight for a certain unit and scrabbled around underneath it. She found the medallion immediately. Then she polished it, pressed the broken chain together, and put it around my neck. Without looking at it, i ran one thumb over the engraved words, then slipped the medallion inside my shirt. The cool metal warmed as i kissed Dinny.

Later, we went down into the warm darkness, undressed, and swam in one of the pools. i don't know which one; i couldn't see a Spreading Oake, Ducking-Stoole, Mimosa, or a Pagoda, or anything. The water was warm. Occasionally Dinny's body touched mine. After that we got clean clothes and left the Autobuy for ever.

We were the first back to the car. Angel had been.

In the dust on the screen he had written: "I'll win, Baby." i'd wiped it off before Dinny could see, but it didn't matter. She's reading this anyway. No matter what he does now, Angel is an irrelevance.

Anyone can see us now. We're sitting in a circle around a fire. We're burning my books. Not for the reason i might have had for doing so a few weeks ago. There are only four to go: Iliad, Mein Kampf, Vanity Fair and the Gutenberg Galaxy. There are a few empty tins and jars scattered around. We've been eating synthetic caviar.

**Thank you, Davy. And Dinny,  
Coby and Jen, Mikey and  
Suds. Thanks and Goodbye.**

*Jeannie and Kerry.*

### *The twelfth of never*

The Pontiac was full with all eight of us last night. Now there are six left, and those seventeen words. I had to count them! I didn't *know* there were seventeen.

Last night was most beautiful of all. After the fire died we heard a noise. It was a bird flying against the stars. Jen said I was getting very thin, almost as bad



as Kerry. Jeannie's hand stroked Kerry's ribs. Suds scowled and said she and Mikey weren't ever going to get thin, so there. We left the typewriter outside then sat in the car, Suds and Mikey up front with Dinny and myself, the others behind. We all sat looking through the screen. The shape of our view, framed by the roof and corner pillars, was cinemascopic. Like a videoscreen in a spaceship. Yes, that's what it was.

Right from the start Suds got between me and Dinny. As she was burrowing in she found the medallion around my neck and worried over it. Then she said: "Is your name Philip, Davy? Is it, Dinny?" I grinned. "No, Suds. My name's David." I thought Suds would suffocate between us. No moon, only stars through the screen. There seemed to be an awful lot of space. It was very, very quiet.

It was as though the Pontiac couldn't forget what it was made for. It seemed to be travelling again. Silently, without moving, we were travelling. Somewhere between the stars. No roads. Dinny whispered through Suds' hair: "Did they ever get to Mars, Davy? Oh, that's a stupid question." "I think so. . . Yes, they did." She frowned. "It doesn't matter. I didn't mean that." Suds snuffled on my chest. "You aren't bony, David, honest. Which star is that bright one there? Your elbow's hurtin' me!" I could hear the others smiling. And the stars making the sounds I've never listened to.

But the Pontiac always returns in the morning. I suppose Jeannie and Kerry had got where they wanted to be, and they weren't coming back. They're a thousand light years away.

Davy, let's finish the Angel. Coby.

Yes Davy, we should. Jen.

yes lets finish theangel david. sudsanmiky

Dinny says yes, too.

I know it isn't April, but it must be All Fools' Day.

The above document, actually an edited compilation of two separate ones together totalling some 45,000 words, was discovered in the possession of one Benjamin Baptismo, leader of a diminishing and ineffective religious sect of a type common in the immediate post-disaster days, by a subsidiary detail attached to the Area 23/D-G Urban Reclamation Force. The particular area in question was 23/D, sub-sector 14B.

The only person recovered alive from that sector was the mentally deficient individual referred to in the text as "Denny." Psychological and physiological reports are filed. (See Index.)

An eyewitness account of the events immediately subsequent to the conclusion of the text was obtained from one Moses Halsten, a Baptismo acolyte. Unfortunately, Halsten's account was partially incoherent, and fevered in tone, but the more lucid passages reveal these facts:

The statue having been completed, the six persons were in states of near-collapse, obviously suffering intense pain. Some minutes later the enigmatic "Angel" appeared, brandishing a small firearm. Words were exchanged and three shots were subsequently fired by

Angel, at approximately ten second intervals. About this account is extremely precise.

The first shot struck the ground at the person Davy's feet, upon which the latter rose unsteadily. The second passed closely enough to make two distinct holes in a loose fold of the boy's shirt. The boy was starting to laugh as the third shot was fired. The bullet must have entered through his open mouth. Halsten is very graphic in his description of how "the back of the kid's head just blew clean away;" which suggests a closer range of shot than might otherwise be supposed.

Thereafter, Halsten's account becomes semantically confusing. It would appear that Angel then suffered spontaneous immolation, being reduced to ashes within seconds, and that the deaths of the other protagonists were precipitate.

Throughout, Halsten and his companions made no effort to interfere. It seems they had no particular wish to prevent the demise of any one of the aforementioned. (Incidentally, every member of the Baptismo sect denied having any previous knowledge of Angel's existence.) By the time he (Halsten) approached the scene, all but one of the group were deceased. That one, a female, to quote Halsten: "—had her hands in all the mess that'd been the kid's head. Then she staggered towards me, but she weren't seein' anythin'. She just died at my feet, her hands all-red."

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A full transcript of Halsten's testimony, together with an assessment, *Fact or Fantasy?*, is filed. (See Index.)

Analyses of the attached documents—psychological, sociological, physiological, environmental, theological, sexual, semantic, motivational, etc., covering all areas of specialization gap and overlap, undertaken by a team of ten experts led by Dr. Benson Goldstrick—are available to authorised persons possessing suitable credentials. (See Classified Index.)

Use is also made of the documents in the following:  
*The Accidental War*, Vol. 8, *The Aftermath* by John-son Fix;

*The War That Wasn't* by Garfield Rasmussen;

*Disaster: Chance and the Theory of Accidents* by Roy Ellis;

*The Blood Group and Other Essays* by John Phillip Okusi;

*Behavioural Patterns: a Correlation* by Sondcom 2082, I.S.R.;

*Total Complex* by Doctors Wilson, Rodinski and Fitz-meyer;

*Hail, Blithe Heisenberg!* by Constance Rutherford;

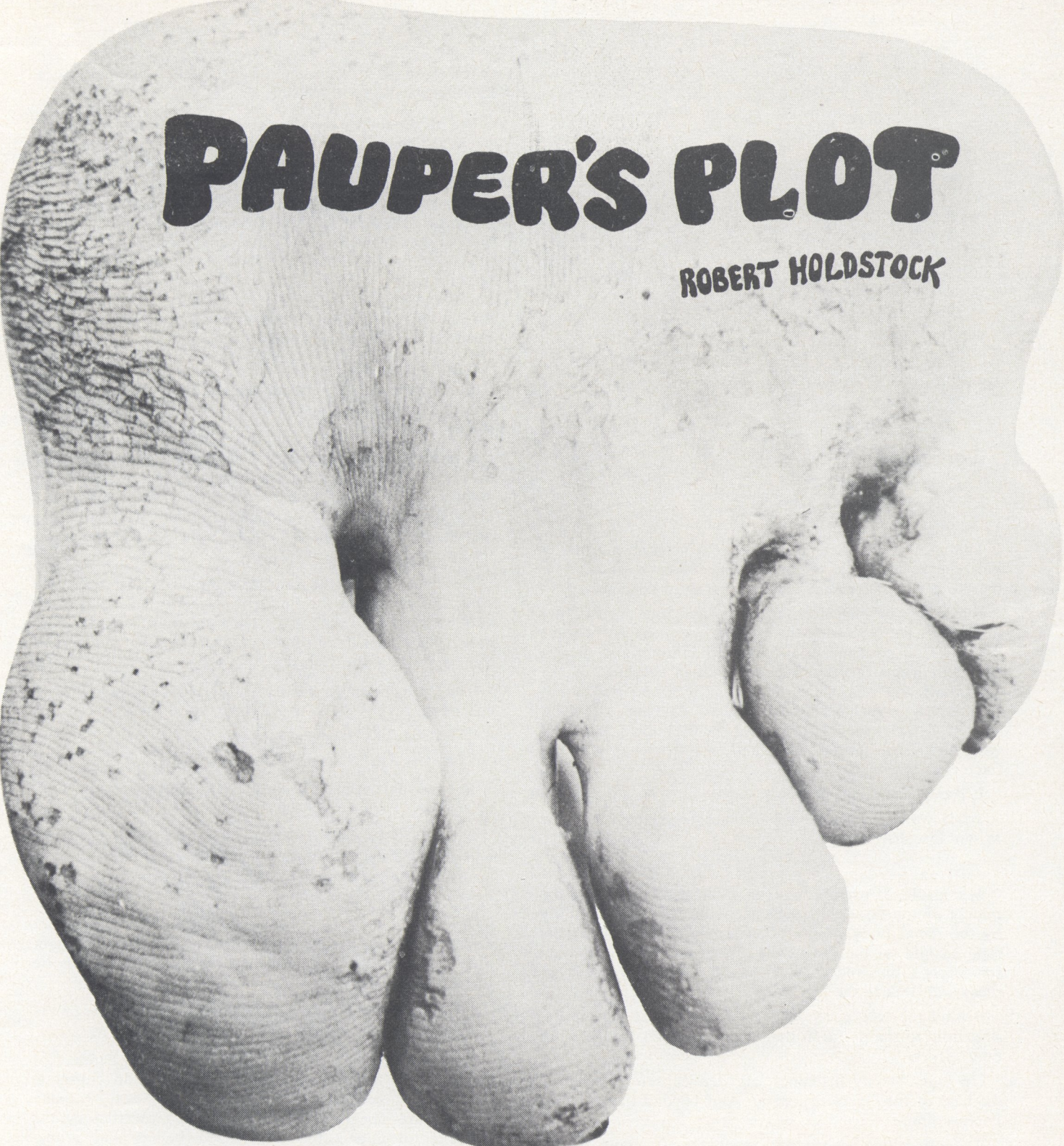
*The Children of Disobedience* by Willy Fried and Hank Jay; and many others.

Also of some interest is the monumental construction referred to in the attached text. It still stands on its original site, which is now the courtyard off 23/D/14B (Kusicksville) Temporary Administration Center. It causes mild controversy among the culturally-inclined. The question is whether or not it can be considered as a work of art.



# PAUPER'S PLOT

ROBERT HOLDSTOCK



**T**HE Overseer to floor twelve of the Factory was called Mister Joseph and he was a brute and an animal. He had muscles bristling, as I once heard described, from every direction of his body and the whip he carried he used with relentless fury and terrible effectiveness.

He used to stand at the far end of the floor and watch

the paupers at the machines; and suddenly he would scream abuse and thunder down through the ranks of throbbing machines and THWACK would go the leather and screams so loud as to be heard easily above the groan of the machines echoed through the Factory; and with a grin Mister Joseph would return to his stand.

This is the story of how we killed Mister Joseph.





The incessant shriek and roar of electrical machinery kills the senses, kills the entity that is man. In a way, therefore, we paupers at the Factory were dead men.

Whatever the machines made or did no one on the floor new; we worked them and that was all. By work I mean we pulled handles and pressed buttons and then a slither of metal thrust out from a slit in the hulk of the equipment and we'd shave it and shape it and pull it out and pass it on. That's all we did, all day and all night. That's all we expected to do; we were paupers, ordinary ignorant Urop scum, men and women to work the Factories.

It is our lot and we accept it.

What we do not and did not accept is overseers like Mister Joseph.

My machine, when I was on floor twelve, was in the middle of the floor. My field of vision was filled entirely by the metal body of my allotted equipment, but to the right I could see the rest of the row of machines stretching for nearly a hundred yards to where the factory wall rose sheer and sleek to the high roof.

Behind me was a machine and behind that fifty more, stretching to the partition that separated floor twelve from floor eleven.

Up front twenty machines, all identical, running up to the base of the Overseer's stand. And beyond that another Factory floor.

The other side of me, ten machines stretching to the other sheer side wall.

And above? The grimed polyglass roof.

Sometimes the sun shone and then Factory floor was bathed in a half-hearted stream of sun rays; then the machinery shone and the dirty faces of the paupers lifted up to drink the radiance. Very rarely, though, did that happen.

But even to think about it arouses emotion! What a feeling of elation the sun does evoke!

We stand there with the almost unbearable bellow of the machines screaming through the fetid air, our faces sweat-covered and drawn, our eyes unseeing as they focus on the dials and buttons of the monster to which each of us is attached. Up front the Overseer, big man dressed in black so that there is no distinction between his face and his clothes, leans on the rail, whip dangling from two fingers of his left hand, and he watches us. He can only see one pauper at a time but to glance his way is to catch his attention, and to glance at him gives the impression that he is watching each and every pauper of the fifteen hundred paupers on this floor.

*Eyes down!* He bellows to the pauper who looks up. And the offender is huddled shamefully over his machine and desperately shaping the metal slither prior to dropping it into the basket.

Overhead the roof is dirty and dull grey; the skies (oh the skies—for a sight!) are dull and overcast, rolling clouds (I saw them, once) scudding and drifting on the brisk wind to the south and away; and then, they break, and through the break the lancing arms of sunlight spear the very earth.

Gold flickers off the roof and the very dust lives, the very filth glories in the flood of solar irradiance; streams and streams of sunlight, solid columns of sparkling dancing particles, play off the machines, seem undisturbed by the soul-shaking vibration.

The paupers smile. One lifts his arms above his head and opens his mouth as if to drink.

"The Sun," I cry.

"Oh dear God," screams another, "The Sun, The Sun."

But our exaltation is largely lost against the foreground of roaring.

Even the Overseer brightens. His gaze flickers up to where the glass of the roof is glimmering, then his eyes are piercing the columns of light, focusing on the vomiting machines and to their human slaves.

And he screams that we must return to work; and we do. And even so the Overseer's eyes are on the roof again and paupers follow his gaze and for precious seconds he doesn't notice.

But always the grey clouds roll in and the gloom of the factory floor returns.

The machines are sombre silver and black shapes, row upon row of uniformed power, throbbing and churning, and their speech a deep and deafening moan. And the paupers are smears of flesh as they are dwarfed by the metal entities, and their unwashed bodies and grime-riddled faces are pitiful organisms doomed and destined to obey and slave for all life and beyond to generations unconceived.

ONE DAY A BELL went. It rang short and tuneful from a speaker on my machine. I stopped work and



looked up and looked at the Overseer who was watching me.

"Come here," he screamed, his voice loud above the scream of the factory.

I had done something, I knew. His eyes were hard and they spoke a language of their own. They said, "Pauper, you're in trouble."

I left my machine running and slowly walked out into the aisle that led to the front of the floor. The pauper on the next machine glanced at me and smiled faintly. He was not pleased that I was called down front, he was merely telling me that he wished me luck. I blinked briefly in acknowledgement and began to walk.

"Come here!" screamed Mister Joseph again. "Quickly, Urop scum, quickly!"

I ran, of course, my feet pattering on the cold stone floor. I watched the man as I approached and his eyes never once left my face, his mouth was twisted into a slight sadistic grin. As I passed machines the paupers smiled at me and showed me that they were wishing me luck for they too could read the Overseer's eyes and see that I had not pleased.

How direly I would have loved to look back, to glance just once down the row of machines to see my own partner, now unmanned, standing alone in a part of the floor that was my home, that I felt safe in. But look I could not. I dare not. The entire floor was to my rear and every pair of eyes was now on me; I felt so terribly exposed, the back of my shaved head itching with the pressure of sympathetic gazes.

Finally, out of breath, I was at the front—having run a very few yards but having run them frantically, agonisingly fast in order that Mister Joseph's displeasure should not be heightened any more than was absolutely necessary.

Now he was above me and looking down upon me. I stood still and craned my neck to meet his gaze and, regarding his neat uniform, felt very noticeable in my rags. Though they were not really rags.

I wore black and very loose trousers that came down to mid-calf and rested comfortably on the hips. My shirt was high collared and open down the front and tucked into the belt of my pants. The whole outfit was loose and comfortable but terribly unrepaired (the trousers were split at the side and patched heavily in places, my shirt was torn and creased).

But of this I could not think in more than vague terms. I saw only the eyes of my Master and the terrible whip as it swung slowly from side to side held loosely between his fingers.

And above the crash and scream of the Factory his heavy, excited breathing.

And my own heart beating.

For a long minute we stood like that, he watching me with contempt, I watching him with fearful eyes and terrible fear in my soul. I was waiting for I knew not what.

It was the whip that came first.

Even as my neck was aching and I realised that soon I

would have to lower my head, even then his arm shot upwards and the leather thong snaked into the air above his head, taunting with a crack . . . I winced with the sudden movement, felt my legs turn to jelly and waited for the arm to descend.

Which it did.

It flashed down and the length of leather came down as a metal bar. It caught me across the shoulders and flattened against my back with a crack and such force that the pain was momentarily unendurable and I screamed out. I fell to my knees as the leather thong was gone from my flesh and screamed again as, with a yell of abuse, Mister Joseph whipped me again and a trickle of warm blood ran down my waist and coagulated in the belt of my trousers.

Three times again that cruel thong assaulted my flesh but at no time subsequent to the second stroke did I give the Overseer the pleasure of hearing me scream.

And finally, after a relative eternity, the air ceased to tense to the passage of leather; the Overseer was still and I stood with bowed head and trembling torso, awaiting either the reason for my whipping or the snapped command to return to my machine.

"Well, pauper?" snapped Mister Joseph. I looked up and regarded his cruel eyes as they bore into my brain, regarded his twisted mouth, his gleaming white teeth. I thought of my own enamels, false dentures, yellowed now, and in disrepair. I would be lucky if they were exchanged for a new set, very lucky.

"What have I done?" I asked feebly. It was an expected query and a standard one at that. The Overseer grinned.

"It's not what you HAVE done, pauper, but what you HAVEN'T done."

I shuddered. Surely my output had not fallen below the accepted level . . . surely my work had not decayed until it had come to the notice of the Overseer. And if it had, surely it had not come to the notice of . . . Factory Man Cheung.

Oh My Dear God, I thought.

I stood still with my eyes meeting solidly the gaze of Mister Joseph. I saw the beads of sweat running down his face and realised that he was very angry. Very angry.

"Your output has fallen by three points, pauper. Three points! THREE POINTS!" He screamed that last and the whip that he held trembled as if his hand were involuntarily trying to rise and strike me. But it remained still and I was thankful.

"I . . . I don't understand, Mister" I said slowly.

"What YOU do not understand," screamed Mister Joseph, "Is of no import. What is important is that your output increases and increases IMMEDIATELY."

"Yes, Mister," I cried in response.

"And if," screamed the Overseer, "You fail to increase your output . . . IF YOU FAIL TO INCREASE YOUR OUTPUT AND MAINTAIN THE DISGUSTING STANDARD AS AT PRESENT, THEN BY HEAVEN YOU SHALL SUFFER, PAUPER! YOU SHALL SUFFER, THIS I SWEAR!"





"YES MISTER!" I screamed back, praying, praying that he would not use again his terrible whip. "I swear that I shall . . .!"

"BE SILENT, PAUPER. BE SILENT!"

And the whip was snaking up into the air, the thong unfurling and cracking as it taunted.

I dropped to my knees and waited for the blow to fall.

But it did not fall.

When I looked up, moments later, I saw why. A second man stood on the platform, a man before whom Mister Joseph hung his head in respect, let his arms hang loose by his sides.

This was, as I had feared, Factory Man Cheung.

He was much smaller than the Overseer and his body was very frail in comparison. Yet he wore such an air of authority that Mister Joseph I KNEW felt small in his presence.

The Chinaman watched me for a few long seconds, his narrow eyes in their pugnacious sockets, flickering about my body, savouring every element, however unsavoury, of my existence. He drew slowly and exotically on a cigarette and blew smoke lazily through his wide nostrils.

His left hand was held easily within the jacket pocket of his grey suit.

Then he turned to Mister Joseph and, in a loud voice that I heard above the thunder of the machinery, said, "You shou' not be so Crua', Misra Joseph. Dese Pawpers are so supe'efficien' dat dey cannawt maik' mistakes."

Then he turned to me. "Whadis yo' name, Pawper?"

I told him.

"Yo' oudput has follen, pawper. Dis is not so good. Please to try more harder in de futch?"

I nodded, afraid to speak to a Factory Man. But Cheung was a good man, basically, and thought more of the paupers than any other Overseer or Factory Man I had

ever crossed paths with.

Cheung nodded and drew on his cigarette. I stood regarding him from below and noticed that Overseer Joseph glanced continually at me.

Finally the Factory Man said, "Please to return now to yo' work."

I about turned and, back stinging agonisingly from the whip lash, walked back to my machine.

When I was once again behind my partner and filing hard on the metal strip that was thrusting out at me, I glanced at the platform. Factory Man Cheung was still there and watching me. But when I looked again five minutes later he was gone and Mister Joseph was leaning on the rail and surveying the floor with the same arrogant look in his eyes and the same snarl on his lips.

The next shift we decided to kill Mister Joseph.

ON MY MACHINE a bell rang twice, a short tinkle of sound that was as pleasant to my ears as the continuous shrill of the summoning bell was unpleasant.

I pulled the finished metal slither from its slot and dropped it into the basket by my machine; then, with a glance at Mister Joseph who was looking at me, I moved into the aisle and walked down the floor to the bench to eat and drink and rest and become ready for the next hour of my eternal shift.

Ten minutes of paradise.

There was a man already seated upon the bench, nearing the conclusion of his break, and I recognised Pauper Kains from the machine behind mine.

As I sat down and drew a food parcel from beneath the wooden plank, I said hello and through a mouthful of food he greeted me.

Kains' face was black with grime and oil and dust and his eyes were two white spheres in the matt surface; those eyes were eyes that had seen a woman killed, three children dragged into a factory God only knew where, dragged in never to leave, like their father; they were eyes that held great pain and yet, in the faint bloodshot corners, great hatred for the Factory Men and more particularly for the Overseers.

And most particularly for Mister Joseph.

"That was some beating he gave you earlier," said Kains solemnly.

I nodded and rubbed my back against the wall; the flesh itched violently along the weals and I knew that the marks would show even through the filth on my back. In fact, tentative digital exploration of my flesh revealed very highly raised channels of flesh.

"My output fell," I said.

"I know," murmured Kains. "You were not looking well the few times I saw you."

"I feel tired," I said.

"Don't we all," breathed Kains. "And we're tired because we're worked by Mister Joseph until we fall down dead on the floor."

"It is our function in life," I reminded Kains. "To work hard and in conditions of slavery."



"So it was decreed."

"So it was decreed."

"But it was also decreed that Paupers should be maintained in good health and more particularly in life; Mister Joseph, as I said, works us until we drop dead to the floor. That is not how it was decided."

I had to agree.

"Obviously," said Kains, his dinner finished and his rest period only two minutes longer, "Mister Joseph is not obeying the Constitution of the Factory."

"I wouldn't know with precision, never having heard the Constitution of the Factory."

"He is working us to death," explained Kains, his eyes watching the distant figure of the Overseer. "The Constitution moves for our protection from death."

That much was very clear.

I pushed tasteless food into my mouth and chewed rapidly and ineffectively.

"We must kill him," I said after a moment.

"That," said Kains, "is what we must do."

"But how?"

"My shift is beginning; discuss it with Pauper Still."

For at that moment the Overseer cracked his whip and beckoned to Kains to return to work.

Kains rose and walked stiffly through the ranks of throbbing machines. I watched him go, saw his slightly stooped shoulders, his feet splayed outwards, his gait awkward and cardboard. A man racked by mental pain, I thought, and of course I was right.

I continued to eat, my mind alive and working on the death of Overseer Joseph.

Behind me I could hear the roar from floor eleven and I wondered who was the Overseer within that chamber, and whether or not he was as cruel as Joseph. And, if he were, was his life too threatened by the pathetic plans of the repressed paupers at work on his machines.

A figure appeared in the aisle from up front of the floor. He walked towards me and glanced back over his shoulder at Mister Joseph. When he reached the bench he smiled and his white teeth were a sudden surprise among the grime covered jowls that surrounded them.

"Some beating," he said and I replied that it had been.

"Kains and I have been talking."

"Oh?"

"About Mister Joseph."

"Lots of people talk about Mister Joseph."

"We were talking about killing him."

Still said nothing and I glanced at him out the corner of my eye. His face was open, his eyes wide with surprise; on his lips there was a smile and he watched the Overseer steadily. "Kill Mister Joseph!" He breathed. "Is that possible?"

"It's possible," I said. "Mister Joseph is a human being. He'll bleed dry with a knife through his heart."

Still was frozen for a moment and Mister Joseph seemed to notice for he straightened up and stared querulously in our direction. Immediately Still began to force food into

his mouth, his eyes on the overseer. Mister Joseph relaxed after a moment, and then glanced at his watch.

My rest was running out.

Still said, "But who will do this?"

"Kill him? I don't know. Will you?"

Still shook his head. "And risk Basement Floor? No fear. How about you?"

I considered for a moment. To be quite honest I didn't know if I had the guts to kill a man, even a man like Mister Joseph. If I was the most recent of the paupers to bear sufficient grudge against the Overseer to perform the deed, I was certainly not the only pauper with a grudge. Everyone had at some time come under the whip of Mister Joseph, every one had at one time wished for a knife and Mister Joseph's exposed and unsuspecting back; every pauper had, at one time, wished for the blood of the Overseer on his hands at whatever risk to himself.

But the emotion wears off and a sincere hate is all that remains. Could I kill Mister Joseph? I would have loved to, but could I KILL him? I doubted it. I would most likely get to the climax of the operation and freeze; and frozen in a position of compromise, so would I be detected and punished as violently as if I had executed the Overseer.

I decide that kill I could not.

That I would not.

That I would forget the whole idea.

That I would be content to hate Mister Joseph.

But Still would have none of it.

"It must be a group effort."

Seconds only remained to me before I was summoned back to my machine.

"You mean that several paupers must attack him together."

"That's what I mean," said Still solemnly. "I'll pass it on to the next man."

Mister Joseph cracked his whip to attract my attention; he beckoned and I rose to my feet. Still caught my tattered sleeve, his eyes sought my gaze. "It must be done soon."

"It will be done soon."

Then I was walking swiftly back through the ranks of screaming machinery, across the vibrating floor to where one machine, mine, stood inert and lonely. Mister Joseph watched me back home, then his attention was on the pauper who paced the length of the floor to talk and eat for moments with Pauper Still.

I WORKED FURIOUSLY during the hours that followed; if my output had fallen a while before, now it must surely have been high, so very high; not that I expected any acknowledgement for the feat—one was informed on Floor only if one's output fell. There was no thanks and who would expect it? Who, I ask you, would need it?

The metal slithers that were my life work seemed literally to pour out of the tiny slot at chest level and my hands fairly flashed across the work slab as I filed and shaped, took a drab oblong of alloy and transformed it, in seconds, into a majestically pointed instrument,





tapered for exactly two centimetres and slightly curved down at the pointed tip.

Creative work is my aim in life yet that shift it became so ritualistic that I could not remember any of what my body had done during those hours—and with my mind free I mulled and pored over the impending execution of the man I hated.

Mister Joseph occasionally walked across the Floor; whip swinging behind him, body swaying cockily as he paused by selected paupers to regard their pathetic and puny bodies hunched over their work, limbs twisting and manipulating instruments as their machines pumped the life of the world through tiny slots, paupers who were silent where their companions shrieked and vibrated and turned still air into ravished blocks of stagnant emptiness.

He walked through the machines! And in doing so became a possible target for a murderously inclined paupal hand.

He walked across the Floor! Any time now he might walk again, watching from close hand the work that progressed on his Floor; any time now he might pass my machine, see me slaving and perhaps flick his whip in my direction.

He would walk across the Floor very soon. And when he did, then, and only then, would he die.

And die he would.

I swore that as I worked furiously and glanced forward to where the overseer was leaning on the rail and watching the machines at the front of the room.

Mister Joseph was going to die!

Soon.

I met Kains some hours later, again on the bench at the back of the floor, again during feed time.

"We will kill him as he walks through the rows of

machines," I said.

"That is the best time," agreed Kains. "The word of the deed has got around. Also that it will not be a job for one man but a job for many."

I nodded.

I had tried, earlier, to envisage the effect of murdering Mister Joseph; what would happen to the paupers in the vicinity of the body? Who precisely would accept the blame either involuntarily or voluntarily?

Maybe there would be a very intimate investigation designed to establish just who exactly HAD killed the man. Maybe there would come Guards to drag away thirty or so paupers at random—never mind who actually killed the overseer, just make sure that so many paupers are punished like this, so many like that, so many in another way until the Factory Men were satisfied that revenge was sweet.

Imagine it.

Mister Joseph walks slowly through the machines, his eyes flickering across the dirty paupers, the dusty yet virile machines; his ears rock to the eternal roar of the instruments, his body vibrates in harmony with the terrific generators below his feet, he walks and he is in his element.

Casual he flicks a lazy pauper and the man increases his work pace. Slowly he approaches and anxious glances are cast at me from the men on the machines next to mine; and anxious glances are returned by me.

One of them mouths the words 'Get ready' and I nod. I turn my head and repeat the procedure to the man on the other side and I see him passing the message on.

The machines whine and roar and the metal slithers pour out and are dispatched, but each of us keeps one, slips one pointed instrument into our belts and watches the approach of the Overseer with growing tension and with cold sweat—the cold sweat of genuine fear—washing channels through the filth on our faces.

White, wide eyes flicker from machine to machine, from machine to Overseer, from Overseer to work; from work to the weapon in the belt; fingers close delicately around the cool metal and test its flexibility; it will sink deep into the body, they say to themselves.

And Mister Joseph comes nearer.

He passes my machine and I'm working like the very devil. He nods and passes on and suddenly his back is to me. I draw out the weapon and meet the gaze of the man to my right. He nods and together we sink into the aisle. I grip my slither of metal in a vice hand and lift my arm above my head. The other man does the same and together we close in on the Overseer.

Spurred by our lead, paupers in front of Mister Joseph stop work and ring him in.

He stops and looks around, alarm in his eyes at first, then arrogance.

"What in hell's this?" He screams in fury and his whip is flashing into the air.

But before it can descend my arm is down and the slither of metal is plunged deep into his body.

And the others close in and plunge their own weapons deep into the screaming, twisting form of Mister Joseph.



And plunge and thrust and twist until blood floods in torrents across the floor of stone and the body of the Overseer is still and silent and without life.

And then we return to our machines and hunch over our work and are working furiously even as Factory Man Cheung comes out onto the platform and surveys the reddened, mutilated mass of the Overseer from afar.

And presses a button that causes a terrible screaming to fill the entire Factory, a screaming that is an alarm.

And then, when black-clad Guards begin to fill the Floor, we begin to wonder if it was really worth it.

We begin to fear.

In reality I sat on a bench and stared at Mister Joseph. Alive.

Kains said, "You look worried."

"I am. Have you thought of the consequences of the deed?"

"Yes." It was frank. "And they're not appetising. But Mister Joseph is a menace to many, many paupers. The few that die as a consequence of his death will have died for a good cause and will have saved hundreds of fellow slaves a lot of hardship and a lot of unhappiness."

If I grunted contempt it was because I felt it. "But what would be the consequences?"

Kains shrugged. "I imagine that the murderer will be asked to identify himself, or themselves, and if they do they'll be executed and twenty or so of their neighbours thrown into Basement Floor as a lesson to everybody. If they don't stand forward maybe forty paupers will be thrown down. Who knows the way of the Factory Men when faced with a murder? It has never happened before."

"It hasn't happened yet," I reminded him. "Your rest is up."

Kains rose but as he rose he said, "The next time Mister Joseph walks through the machines we take him."

"Agreed," I said. I would pass it on.

Sombre black clouds scud, storm rains wash clean the polyglass roof, but on the Floor I worked with conviction.

My machine throbbed and I was with it as one; married to the dials and slots, to the ugly mechanisms, the girders of steel and the circuits of copper, a sole entity was in existence, either part that constituted the body being completely useless sans mate.

Except for brief periods, and then only when in eyeshot.

Hard rain plays angry music on the roof, a flat song lost beneath the overbearing scream of the machines.

Over a thousand paupers stand hunched over their apparatus, line after line of blackened bodies, slaving to create.

I stood.

I created, like all the rest of them, but for once my mind was not upon my work.

For Mister Joseph was soon to amble through the ranks of soldiers. And we had an execution to effect.

Hours went into more hours and still the Overseer leaned easily against the safety rail of his platform, sur-

vveying the Floor with a discerning eye. How many of the paupers prayed silently that he would soon come down I don't know. But I did.

God how I prayed!

MISTER JOSEPH moved.

The pauper to my left glanced once at me, inclined his head to the front and I saw the Overseer coming down the steps onto the Floor. My blood raced and my mind was a whirlpool of fears; I looked to the right and the pauper there was watching the motion of Mister Joseph with anxiety on his face. I mouthed words to him, he nodded in acknowledgement.

I didn't know if pauper Kains had seen the Overseer; he was on the machine behind mine and so stooped that not even the top of his head was visible were I to crane my neck in an attempt to see behind. That would have been foolish, of course, since Mister Joseph would have seen me and queried my efforts. And probably whipped me.

But I could only assume that Kains has been keeping an eye out for the approach of our victim and was now tensing as was I tensing as were many others tensing.

Mister Joseph came into our aisle and began to walk towards me.

His whip swings, swung, as he approached. He is fixing me with his cold, cold eyes and I think he knows by the expression on my face that something is in the wind.

He approached slowly, approaches slowly, moves confidently and securely down the Floor between the dual rows of machines, his mouth twisted in a smile of secret amusement in the knowledge that he knows.

Suddenly I'm afraid.

Even if he suspects could he not have made preparation for the event to occur?

Suppose—imagine it—I jump out at him with my weapon swinging and meet the cold steel of his own knife, readied and waiting for me. Suppose—oh God, imagine this—I jump out and kill the Overseer, turn and meet the steady gaze of Factory Man Cheung. Imagine that! Imagine how exposed I would be, alone in the aisle with Mister Joseph dead at my feet, his blood a wide red smear as it flows sluggishly through his clothes and clots on the stone floor; and me with the weapon in my hand, with blood on my wrists and clothes, with fear in my eyes, my lips parted and fluid running down my chin.

And Factory Man Cheung standing on the platform quite calmly, quite indifferently, drawing slowly on his cigarette, blowing thin streams of smoke through his nose; his eyes watching me, his mouth unsmiling. "You have done a verry foolis' t'ing, pauper. Now regrettably you must die." He says it slowly and with a raised voice above the noise of the Factory Floor. And I stand there guilty and no other pauper looks at me, they work furiously at their machines.

And my machine stands ten feet away from me, deserted and with a new slither of metal poking through.

Oh to reach it, to touch its flanks, to work, to work, to work . . .



But I have killed and been detected and now I must pay the penalty . . .

And I die.

But in reality Mister Joseph was walking towards me. Alive.

The roar of the machines grew in volume, the dimness of the Factory Floor became darkness through which the machines were bulky shapes, pulsating shapes, alive and virile, sombre shapes in the greyness that scared me.

And through the dark came the Overseer.

I fingered my knife, the metal slither that I had so carefully fashioned and concealed in my belt. To my left I saw the pauper too touching his weapon. He looked at me and behind me to where pauper Kains was also ready and waiting.

It seemed an age as the Overseer advanced. The Floor shook to the screams of the machines, the baskets rattled as finished slithers were dropped with clanks and tinny sounds into the bulk.

The footsteps of Mister Joseph were loud on the bare floor, a regular pat, pat, pat as he came nearer.

His body was a huge bulk that filled all of vision beyond my machine.

Any second now he would pass me, glance at me, pass me with a nod, walk on down to where Kains worked.

I pretended to work and filed vigorously on a metal slither. And with a steady pace the overseer passed me by, his body eclipsing the vague light from above so that a black shadow passed over me. I followed his passage with my eyes, twisting my head as I stooped over my work,

and I knew my eyes were two glowing spheres of white in an almost total darkness.

And when he was past I took my knife and followed him into the aisle.

And the pauper next to me made motions of following me.

Mister Joseph walked on, unaware that I was immediately behind him, closing fast and with my arm raised above my head. To strike. To strike.

Kains looked once at me and made to follow me. And at that moment I realised that I was about to kill the Overseer, and kill him alone.

AND I COULDN'T KILL A MAN IN THAT FASHION, NOT EVEN MISTER JOSEPH!

To myself I screamed, "I can't!" And my arm fell.

I stood in the aisle, my arms hanging limp and my head bowed. I watched the bulk of the overseer vanish between the machines, become engulfed by the vibrant Factory.

And when he was gone I cried a little.

And so did Kains.

I returned to my machine and crept into its womb, began to work. I worked hard and I worked with enthusiasm.

Mister Joseph returned to his platform and smiled wryly. I watched him but I knew now that to kill was impossible. And who really wanted it? I concentrated on my work.

My output rose considerably, but I got no thanks.





# THE PIECES OF THE GAME:

BY GRETCHEN HAAPANEN

the blank rectangle of canvas waiting her creation  
displaced, a wake of fossil foothills dissolving into  
obsolete plateaus  
row on row of industrial developments, the voided sky.

## I.

The sun cutting through blanketing layers of smog urged her up from sleep. Next door the canning factory hooted a mournful seven o'clock whistle; its aluminum roof flashed silver in the swelling light, limning the pepsi and mobil billboards opposite with a molten fire-pattern as if the Mojave Desert had turned to lava, and were creeping shoreward in a tidal surge of slag. The walls of buildings wavered in the rising pavement heat.

Dry black asphalt of the street; the California pavement, sand-coloured like a desert waste; the bounded quadrilateral of stubbled earth beneath the hill, scarred by an excavation at the bottom of which were visible drain pipes, electric cables, the secrets of the city.

To the left of the canning factory rose a rusty iron flue pipe, four metres high. At ten a.m. its shadow fell symmetrically across the highway, broken upon the slope of hillside opposite. Thirty oil pumps loomed upon its crest in rows of twelve, eight, and ten: three rows. Above, the air was a linear extension of this regularity, a faultless plane of grey.

Framed in the dead light striking through her workroom window, Sarah stood before her rectangle of canvas. At first its empty surface waiting her creation had seemed a window about to open on some undiscovered tract of wilderness.

## II.

The sun cutting through finite layers of smog: outside the apartment where Sarah slept a flaming tower hung and swung from the flat air above the opposite hillside. Upon the pinnacle a hollow-eyed woman, whose whipping hair streamed with fire in hot waves of October wind. She pointed outwards to a strange direction, beat a chanting gong in a drift of ashes, wailing.

The horizon was hidden behind a scorched grey sky.

When Sarah woke, a group of workmen was busy digging a hole in the centre of the flat plane of gravelled ground at the base of the hill. Slowly the hand of shadow projecting from the flue pipe eased across the dead span of intervening earth. The predictable impact of shovels against the unresisting soil; later, the ceaseless chatter of pneumatic drills, a static rhythm.

A Santa Ana was holding its harsh desert breath somewhere beyond the hidden mountains bounding the reaches of the city

the day was poised in waiting  
among the verticles of  
buildings and the damaged sky

the morning planes of  
earth and sky  
had shifted  
imperceptibly  
along an unseen fault  
line to make way for  
the building slag  
of wind.



In the shattered stillness of her cramped workroom, Sarah waited among an inanimate bulk of terminated paintings. Sombre, they stood row on row against the brittle stucco wall, enumerating eighty finished days of work. Pattern of inertia: each square of canvas held no possibility of further change.

### III.

Row on row a barrier of granite lines against the fixed horizon, incapable of variation.

The manifest ground plane of the avenue was devoid of mystery in the bleached pre-median light. Sarah walked listlessly between the boundaries of commercial edifices, each window containing a finite star of sun. Slanting and slanting inwards at unchanging angles, the distance of their receding parallels converged in a sullen vanishing point of smog.

Curved,  
a boundless  
quadrilateral  
of waste and  
atmosphere,  
unbroken  
diagrams  
of symmetry,  
the desert  
sand

Since she had begun to concentrate all her free hours on the painting in her workroom the horizon of the city, hidden usually behind an impenetrable wall of smog, had faded further from her consciousness. She had become aware of her own peculiar relationship to an horizon just beyond the limits of her vision, an horizon changeable as dreams or the pattern of light playing across her workroom wall. She was like a chess-player who, having centred his attention on the board before him for many hours, finds the relationship among the pieces of the game altered his perception of the world around him.

### IV.

The pieces of the game.

Outside the workroom the broad highway was a glare of harsh white sun repeating itself in rows of apartment windows, each containing its separate dead star, in the metal gas pumps, storage tanks and factory fronts which lined its expanse.

Over the parched hillside above the highway lurched the stilted movement of innumerable oil pumps. Frustrated of completion the pumps, in slow rotation, reached and reached their gaunt black limbs as if to touch the sunfield in the middle distance, spearing the sky on row on row of dry stalks from which the sunflower heads had fallen, bereft of rain.

The sunfield glared harsh as glass under the glassy atmosphere, shimmering in waves of heat.

Framed in the dead light striking through her workroom window, Sarah faced the scene she had begun to sketch upon the new rectangle of canvas. At first its surface empty of creation had seemed a window waiting to open on some unmeasured tract of wilderness.

The western window faced a building opposite the apartment. On the summit an illuminated

A drift of  
ashes from  
the dust-  
charred  
earth waned  
across the  
sun in a  
hot swell  
of October  
light. The  
wind carried  
the scent  
of arid rock







advertising sign with gigantic letters alternating red and green. Occasionally as she glanced through the workroom doorway she could see a single letter, an enormous "O". From previous explorations she knew that this was the second letter of the word "Wonderland".

Close by the latticed girders of an embryo apartment complex, scraps of waste paper fitful among the steel supports.

Tower-like, the rusty flue pipe next the canning factory dominated the foreground of the canvas. On its surface Sarah had begun to trace the cubes and cones and rectangles of the outside landscape, scaled carefully to paintable proportions. In the background the pattern of the oil pumps dissolved into a field of disarranged dead stalks fronting the blurred horizon of the hilltop.

lead desert  
sand, molten  
metal  
pooling an  
unwalked floor.  
There,  
antithesis  
of the  
measured  
multitude of  
industry, the  
stone lands  
stretched on  
leaden mile  
of phosphor  
rock and  
pyrite plain  
clean  
unnumbered  
undecayed.

This horizon, through the workroom window, was two feet high.

Strained in concentration, Sarah began to work now on the field of dead sunflowers above the oil pumps, where she sought to introduce one modulus of hope against the barren total of the landscape. The very distance of the field of wasted stems cresting the horizon of the hilltop held a presentiment of change and mutability denied the foreground. Once animate, a field of flowers where now the variable progressions of entropy held sway.

Outside, decay had done its most, was fixed forever among the walls of buildings and the vertical sky.

V.

The manifest ground plane of the avenues which she explored each day converged changelessly upon a flat backdrop of haze. In all directions urgent billboards, sullen concrete towers, a maze of steel and stucco hoisted itself brazenly to meet the sun, while on the highway the rush-hour traffic from Los Angeles pursued its erratic course like a great soulless beast devouring the wilderness. Here, where no mysteries remained to be elucidated, no sane and natural stability offered itself in substitute for what had been displaced. A sense of abandonment and emptiness lay strangely upon the littered landscape, which gave back from its dry and brittle husk a ceaseless reflection of the voided sky above.

Perhaps just beyond the horizon of dead stalks there lay a surface undisturbed by any known geometry, a quantity whose possibilities of variation were still infinite.

Abandoning their hole, the workmen had advanced a quarter way up the slope of the hill to erect a gaudy rectangle of lettered board. Above, the sunflowers were rigid in the







glaring noonday light.

The walls of buildings wavered in the rising pavement heat.

## VI.

Within the rows of finished canvases rendered the stasis of predictability without.

Steadily the process of contraction had begun upon the latitudes which still remained between the highway's ravaged border and the horizon of the hilltop.

The grey-white of the dull smog sky, the sick star festering in its leprous zenith captured in a frame of absolute dimensions, eight by twelve.

Soon the workmen would begin to lay foundations for another oil refinery.

Fingered smudge marks fixed forever in the upper left-hand corner.

Visioned, the hill disconnected by tubes and pipes and channels; storage tanks upon the crest where once the sunflowers were rigid against the smog-negated sky.

In the next frame the stick-like figures of a primitive water-colour always turned their faces, innocent of apprehension, toward a ragged inch of sun.

The stems of the dead sunflowers repeated the unremitting perpendiculars of the walls of the apartment and the outside buildings. Aligned with something not yet visible, Sarah leaned forward toward her canvas.

She worked intensely till one o'clock, sketching the geometry of field and sky and highway from differing angles. She was dissatisfied; there was some equation contained within the distant angle of sky meeting waste which she had failed to grasp. The atmosphere of the room was broken and broken upon the regular clanking of the oil pumps upon the opposite hillside.

Behind the precipitous edge of hill a pale line of distant foothills wavering into the shimmering plane of desert earth.

## VII.

The sun was floating in the west; in the east the moon, whose light was broken and broken upon spires of heat lightning, expanded soundlessly into the sky. Gradually sun and moon merged into one body and spread out over the stone landscape. Rising up over the dead curve of earth, head and shoulders appearing out of all proportion on the hill's horizon, stalked the dark-haired figure of a woman, whose eyes were filled with fire diffracted into the wind-swept sky. She turned obliquely, pointed outwards to a direction hidden in a drift of ashes from the dust charred earth field waned



across the sun in a hot swell of October light was broken upon the roar of traffic which pursued its course like a great beast devouring the wilderness.

As Sarah slept she dreamed.

#### VIII.

Striving to adjust herself to some as yet unmanifested symmetry, Sarah leaned forward toward her canvas. Around her the workroom walls were delineated by rows of finite paintings, extension of the stasis embodied in the outside landscape. Done. Decay was fixed forever among the walls of the apartment and the damaged sky.

She worked steadily till one o'clock, sketching the sines and cosines of a field and sky which still might yield an undiscovered algebra of possibility.

Like the little figures held before her she was suspended in a narrow frame of concentration over the task at hand.

Bent thus to her work she did not see but felt the pent-up slag of burning desert air, driven with the force of its release, sweep thundering across the sunfield, fracture the displaced planes of earth and sky. Glimpsed from the corner of her eye, the horizon toppled like a flimsy backdrop.

#### IX.

Black and white. The texture of the air was rough, pocked. Above, a finite star of sun hung motionless against the moveless air. The ground, blank as sand, was dissected by a series of indeterminate smudgy lines. She began to notice details.

She was standing on a broad band of grey, straddling a series of regular marks, like dashes in a code. A dark rectangular smear lay across the surface at her feet. Tracing its path, she saw that it abruptly merged at a ninety-degree angle into a chimney-like perpendicular of solid black. In the flat air above, a pattern of hazy spirals.

Opposite, the level plane of hill; a series of motionless quadrilaterals containing a complexity of careless linear shapes, the oil pumps. The hill itself was lightly indicated by graceful, curving strokes.

Above, compared to the hasty delineation of the foreground, the sunflowers stood out in startling clarity. Here, she had worked carefully. Each rigid stalk and brittle leaf was definite against the keen line of the horizon.

Absolute, the junction of earth and sky before her could not shift itself, could not dissolve into a further vanishing point as she moved forward.

#### I.

Loosening her dark coil of hair, she began to walk along the shadow which fell across the highway to the hill beyond.





# BLACK IS THE COLOUR

**Barry  
Bowes**

**T**HE FIRST SHOCK was waking up at six o'clock with clear indications I wasn't going to get to sleep again. It was years since I'd been awake at this time, and it worried me. I couldn't recall the last occasion. It must have been important at the time. I was still lying flat on my back, without having moved my arms from under the sheets. A quick thought about being on another planet, very much like Earth except for the fact they didn't know there was a planet Earth which supported life. As they knew it. I was disinclined to move, in case nobody else in the world had done so yet. I wasn't going to be

the first.

The second shock was finding I was black.

It must have happened overnight. This was making an assumption that something had actually happened. I had definitely been white just before I'd switched the light off the night before; I was certain of this because I'd glanced in the mirror. There had been no light from houses across the way, so I couldn't state categorically I was still white on the point of falling asleep. I'd turned a few times, many times if I'd actually been counting, and although I knew my arms were stretched out onto the pillow, it hadn't



been possible to determine if they were black or white. To tell the truth, I hadn't thought about it. All I knew was I felt white, or at least didn't feel black.

Had I been a less tolerant person I might well have turned over and slit my throat. Because I didn't do this, it must have meant I'd already begun to accept the situation. It was irrelevant to wonder had I been slowly changing colour over the years, or was it something thrown on me as a surrealistic joke to see how I'd react. It could have been the sudden change was considered kinder, so as to avoid people staring at me. The effect would have been diminished had I gone around for days with grey and white patches which eventually merged to grey over all. And then deepened to outright black. It was reasonable to suppose someone would have brought it to the attention of people who interviewed people in this kind of situation. Now I'd gone black overnight it would be more difficult to convince people to interview me.

Was I black all over? I couldn't just throw the clothes back; it was too rash an action. I was going to, but what stopped me was the thought my lower half might conceivably be female. I eased myself to rest on one thigh and felt something nudge my skin. I still had a penis at least, though what colour it was I wasn't ready to guess. Just as long as it wasn't striped.

Although I felt a certain pride in having taken things so bravely, I did detect a satisfaction that my nose was the same. Black, yes, but not flat or uplifted. The shape of my head seemed not to have changed, although the hair was now black. There was even a hint of pinkness in the ears and up the nostrils. The first real gratification came when I noticed how my dirt-ridden pores were not so obvious, and the few hairs about the rest of my body lent a more discernible sense of growth. There was something else, something I couldn't put into words, although I felt I'd wanted it when I was white.

I called myself nigger so I'd be the first.

STILL IN THE FLUSHES of fascination I moved naked about the room preparing breakfast, trying to remember Africa and my mother grinding maize in an ivory bowl. The milk was very white. Given a few days, I felt certain I'd get used to this. After eating, I tried on all my clothes. To wear the grey shirt seemed like backing away from the fact my face was black. About as black as black could get. The white shirts were too much. I settled for the light-blue shirt; its terylene smoothness went well with my skin's new facility. None of the ties was quite right. A black one I didn't have, and anyway it wouldn't have gone with the blue shirt. The brownish-green tie blended with the shirt but it didn't quite set off my skin to advantage. If only I'd been made brown: the colour of burnished earth. Reflections of a firm, strong land. Not that I was blaming anyone for my being made an uncompromising black. It was too early for that.

Luckily there was no one coming down the stairs, so I was able to leave the house without being subjected to a puzzled stare. It wasn't all that easy to determine did I

move with a new *grace*. Although the milkman sees me every day and says nothing, I felt that this time he turned his glance away deliberately. Not that he was shunning me, just that he didn't want to be accused of staring; because a lack of words can so easily stimulate ideas of hatred. What was so relaxing was I knew he wouldn't utter a word, whereas before I had always cringed at the thought he might speak. So many people appear as though they are about to speak, and I insist on going out to meet the words. It's a painful withdrawal when the words fail to materialise.

What made me smile was the thought of my happening to Colin Jordan or someone like that.

Perhaps it was unfortunate the woman was passing; she must have reckoned I was amused the British are so sombre. She must have, because she turned and spat words after me. What gives you the right to smile in that superior manner? It did hurt. I couldn't deny it hurt, despite being unsure of why it hurt and on whose behalf I was reacting. I turned to face her without the smile, and without letting her see it disappear. I felt guilty about the quick thought of pleading I wasn't really black. I was white, like her. She was hovering in the backlash of venom her words had caused, poised in a half-turn with her arm outstretched to a shopping bag. I had the idea she was so terrified she couldn't have known exactly where she was for the moment. She'd turn around and sense her whole body had suffered some kind of amnesia. I let her stare me out. After all, I was liable to walk into someone. And, after all, it was her country.

The African coming from the newspaper shop didn't know me. He didn't nod or give a secret movement of the hand. I thought we all knew one another, or at least pretended to. At one time I was under the impression Britain was being subjected to an invasion. All the coloured people were coming in over a number of years, until at an appropriate time there were enough of them to stage a take-over of the country. Arms hidden all over the place, especially London, and an underground network of such fantastic delicacy that one morning they'd all wake up and *feel* the time was right. It wasn't exactly that I believed it, just that I allowed this impression to nudge me in the ribs from time to time, I'd always had bad dreams about being outnumbered, even before the newspapers told me we had a colour problem. I didn't relish this realisation, but it was true enough, despite immature attempts to pretend I wasn't going to have a colour problem. Not that I thought black or brown an unnatural colour; it was the unnerving presence of such a contrast. I hadn't been able to fully convince myself that a coloured child's first reaction wasn't to hold its arm out in front of its face and say to itself,

*I'm coloured.*

I was served with shattering politeness. It was the speed that shattered me, and the perfectly controlled annoyance when I changed my mind and asked for my usual half-ounce of Old Holborn. I had the impression I could have changed my mind fifty times and only after I'd left would they swear. I stepped quite deliberately in front of some-



one and he apologised. This had happened to me when I was white, but nobody had seen it then as toleration of a whole race of people. One small *sorry* wasn't going to eliminate the EUROPEANS ONLY notices from adverts. The assistant had lingered over giving me change; maybe he'd thought there was something familiar about my upturned palm. I slipped the Old Holborn into my pocket as I had every right to do. They're driving cars, appearing on television, carrying umbrellas, using launderettes, and now they're even rolling their own! I was feeling very disappointed until I stepped out into the road without looking and almost got run over. The driver told me to bloody-well look where I was bloody-well going.

IT WAS OBVIOUS I couldn't go to work, but that problem was delayed since it was my day off anyway. I'd have to wait things out and maybe pretend I was ill. Shopping was an embarrassment. I wanted to question prices but held back at the last moment. I waited until I was out of the shop before counting change. Once, when I found an Australian penny, I elected not to go back in case this somehow caused trouble for someone in Brixton I'd never even seen. It was better in the betting shop later the same day. I got to discussing one particular race with some bloke and before we knew it we were positively relishing trying to outdo each other with facts as to the relative merits of various horses. Everything was fine until I lifted my arm and pointed to the name of one horse. My black hand was there against the page, quite indelible. He was momentarily transfixed, then disappointed, then quieter. He couldn't have known I was myself staring at the hand in an effort to be fascinated only by the pores or the shape of the knuckles. Maybe he also wanted something like that but I could tell it wasn't going to be this time. Well, perhaps next time, perhaps next time I won't see the colour. So one day he might be able to see the expression first, the colour second; and then be able to retain the memory of the expression longer than the memory of reacting to the colour.

The next day, Saturday, I woke to find I was white again. It wouldn't be true to state I was more shocked than before, but there were obviously going to be more complications than I'd imagined. I looked at myself as though I'd been wearing someone else's clothes and just got my own back. I couldn't pretend the reactions of the day before had happened to someone else.

Sunday I was white, but Monday saw me black again. I'd begun to believe it was only to be that once, or else I'd be black only on a Friday. Since I had to work one Friday in each month, there was cause to worry. I phoned work to say I was ill and couldn't be sure how long I'd

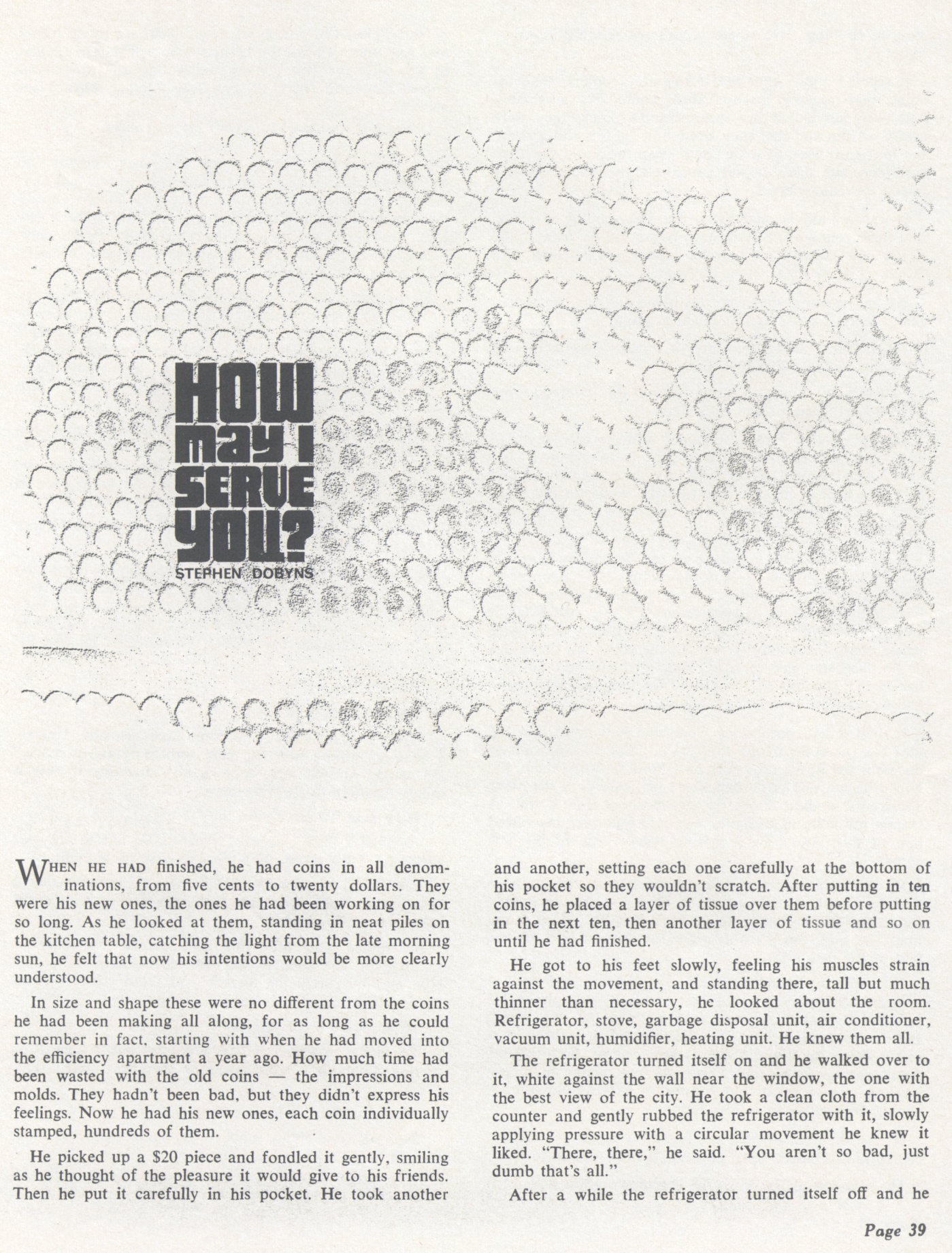
be off. I'm feeling really black, I told them. For three whole days I was black and didn't dare open the door for the landlady. I had to wait for the house to go very quiet before sneaking out to the toilet. Things came to a head when the landlady saw me going to put some rubbish in the dustbin. I couldn't think of anything reasonable to say, though I'd been rehearsing for just such a moment. She thought I was allowing my room to be used in the daytime while I was out at work. Some of the features had changed further. The voice, for instance. She looked at me very hard because there were still familiarities which could have explained what in truth has happened. Yet there was no denying the black skin. It wasn't she had a down on coloureds; it was more that she objected to two people using the room. My white self working in the daytime while my black self slept and then worked at night. She asked me to send my white self down to see her about it; it was two days before I could do this. I decided it would be better for me to move. The job had to go as well.

FOR MONTHS I lived a subterranean life, moving rooms on average once a fortnight. Even living in a "black" house was no solution. Employment was tricky. I never fancied working on the buses or the Underground. There was one job on a big building site where it was possible for me to evade detection because of the number of people. I went along no matter what colour I happened to be. This came to an end after a month, when I needed to collect pay. By chance I had been white the first three times, but the fourth time I was black, and the man had remembered the name because he'd associated it with my soft, unmarked hands.

It might have been easier had some regular pattern emerged. I could have made some arrangements had I known it was going to be alternate days. It was the collection of pay each week that created difficulties. I had to work, if only to have some pattern to each day.

At the moment I'm living in a house which caters for outcasts such as meths drinkers, alcoholics, old lags and the like. None of the others has noticed yet. They're usually too sick to see a hand in front of their face, and of course the large turnover helps. I have an arrangement whereby my pay is sent to the house by post each week. Whenever I've changed colour I manage to sneak in very early to collect my cart. None of them talks much, there's not much to talk about, and most of them are not bright enough to twig on to my problem. The next time you see a roadsweeper, black or white, try not to gloat. It's liable to be me. You'll have no difficulty recognising me, because I've both got the same expression now.





# HOW MAY I SERVE YOU?

STEPHEN DOBYNS

WHEN HE HAD finished, he had coins in all denominations, from five cents to twenty dollars. They were his new ones, the ones he had been working on for so long. As he looked at them, standing in neat piles on the kitchen table, catching the light from the late morning sun, he felt that now his intentions would be more clearly understood.

In size and shape these were no different from the coins he had been making all along, for as long as he could remember in fact, starting with when he had moved into the efficiency apartment a year ago. How much time had been wasted with the old coins — the impressions and molds. They hadn't been bad, but they didn't express his feelings. Now he had his new ones, each coin individually stamped, hundreds of them.

He picked up a \$20 piece and fondled it gently, smiling as he thought of the pleasure it would give to his friends. Then he put it carefully in his pocket. He took another

and another, setting each one carefully at the bottom of his pocket so they wouldn't scratch. After putting in ten coins, he placed a layer of tissue over them before putting in the next ten, then another layer of tissue and so on until he had finished.

He got to his feet slowly, feeling his muscles strain against the movement, and standing there, tall but much thinner than necessary, he looked about the room. Refrigerator, stove, garbage disposal unit, air conditioner, vacuum unit, humidifier, heating unit. He knew them all.

The refrigerator turned itself on and he walked over to it, white against the wall near the window, the one with the best view of the city. He took a clean cloth from the counter and gently rubbed the refrigerator with it, slowly applying pressure with a circular movement he knew it liked. "There, there," he said. "You aren't so bad, just dumb that's all."

After a while the refrigerator turned itself off and he



stopped rubbing. "Go to sleep, you got nothing to worry about."

It seemed a pity that the refrigerator couldn't take his coins, that none of his appliances could. For a while it had been terrible in his apartment. He knew they were aware of him and that they knew how he felt about them, but his hands were tied. He could clean them and use them carefully, but there wasn't much else he could do. He hoped they understood.

It wasn't until he had gotten the old vending machine, that his feeling of helplessness began to go away. The dealer had called it an antique, a great red machine with "Coca-Cola" written across its front.

He had asked if that were his name and the dealer had said, "Yeah, I guess that as much as anything else."

Then he had showed him how it worked, how to replace the lights, and fix it if it broke.

"There's not much of a market for this kind of thing anymore," the dealer had told him.

He had agreed. People just didn't seem to care anymore and when he had first gotten out, he hadn't known what to do with himself. Everybody busy, spending their time at Narco Hall or plugged into theatres, while the machines went about their business without anybody to help or even appreciate.

Coca Cola had been expensive, but he had managed to pay for it and now it stood in the middle of his apartment, freshly painted and polished, all its lights working, sparkling, humming as if it were brand-new. He had filled it with empty bottles, replaced its old rubber parts with teflon ones, and carefully greased the coin slot, or mouth as he liked to think of it. Its running lights and blinkers had been a comfort to him during the long nights when he had worked on his first impressions.

In fact it had been Coca Cola who had given him the idea for the coins in the first place. They allowed him to do more for it, forming sort of a bond between them. He hoped it was able to communicate his feelings to the other appliances, and at times he was positive that it did. A certain pulsating of its lights, a certain humming convinced him of this. And now it was to receive one of his new coins.

He walked over to it and rubbed it with the cloth so that he could see his reflection in it — old, needing a shave. It seemed that its lights grew brighter. "You're my first," he said, "so it's only right that you should get the first of the new ones."

He carefully folded the cloth, put it aside, and drew a coin from his pocket — the best of his 20 cent pieces. He polished it on his coat and held it up to the slot, letting the machine see it first. Then he released it, listened as it rolled down the chute and was accepted by the machine, heard various levers and wheels turning within, making a jingling ringing noise that seemed to express pleasure. A similar feeling began in him too.

At last the door opened and an empty bottle was handed out to him. "Thank you," he said. "I hope you liked it."

He took the bottle from the machine's grasp and set it

on the table. "I'm going out now. There are many others and you mustn't have too many coins at first. They might be too rich for you. You're not young any more, you know. That's all right, I'll give you another when I get back."

It was just twelve when he left his apartment.

AS USUAL THE streets were practically empty, no pedestrians in sight. Not many people went out anymore. There was no need for it since they could just call. Besides, they had better things to do. There were a few cars, travelling swiftly on their magnetic fields, their windows blacked over, no contact with the people inside, no contact with anybody.

He noticed a patrolman on the corner and felt sorry for it, although not sorry enough to speak to it. He knew it was against him, didn't understand his coins, and a couple of times it, or patrolmen like it, had nearly caught him. He knew what would happen then, but he didn't hate them. After all, they were still machines. If he could only help them, but they didn't take coins.

The store he went into was the one he had been saving — Schwartz's, a men's store, one of the more expensive places and the machines reflected the quality of the merchandise, were politer, glossier. He had never been in Schwartz's before, had waited until he felt worthy of it.

He crossed the electric eye. The door opened. "Good afternoon, Sir."

It was a pleasant voice with a deep good-natured ring to it. Naturally the machine had recognised him as a friend and had responded to him more than it would have done to a stranger. The store was a big one and could easily accommodate ten people. Fortunately, he was the only customer.

"Good afternoon to you."

"It's a very nice day, Sir."

"Yes . . . You know, I've come here specially. I mean, I have something new for you, something I just made." He caught himself and stopped, not intending to say so much, meaning to surprise them.

"How may we serve you, Sir?"

Maybe it hadn't heard. "Neckties, I'd like to see your neckties." Then shoes, then the overcoat, he thought.

"First clerk on your left, Sir. Schwartz's has an excellent selection of 40,000 to choose from. When you shop for the best, shop at Schwartz's."

He smiled and took his seat before the machine, standing on the counter, a large rectangular affair, dark blue and burgundy, its screens and sense control panels shining. He immediately took a liking to it.

"How may I serve you, Sir?"

"I'd like a necktie." It had a good voice, strong, firm, stirring within him some memory that he couldn't quite catch.

"Any particular style or colour, Sir?"

"No, why don't you choose." He knew he'd feel closer to it, if he let it choose for him.

"The blue aluminium mesh is very fashionable this



season, Sir. Just right for the Halls or casual gathering, Roman or Carolingian."

"That sounds pretty good."

"Any particular style, Sir?"

"You choose." He started picking through his coins, trying to find particularly clear ones for so polite a machine.

"These five are our best, Sir."

The screen before him showed five 3-D pictures of five blue aluminium ties.

"If you touch the sense control panel, Sir, you may feel the texture of each."

This part of the sales-process had always been one of the ones he liked best. He reached out to the panel and stroked it, feeling the texture of one tie after another as they passed beneath the tips of his fingers. It was as if he were touching the inner nature of the machine itself and that something important passed between them.

The machine droned on soothingly. "This is the tie in the first picture, Sir. This is the tie in the second . . ." and so on.

"Which do you prefer, Sir?"

"You choose."

"Which do you prefer, Sir?"

"Well, which do *you* like best?"

"They are all very nice, Sir. When you shop for the best, shop at Schwartz's. Which do you prefer, Sir?"

"What's the most expensive one?"

"The second tie on the right, Sir. The Schwartz-price is twelve dollars and fifty-five cents." It had chosen for him.

"That'll be fine."

"Very good, Sir. I'm sure it will look very well on you. Please deposit twelve dollars and fifty-five cents."

Now came what he'd been waiting for. "I've got a surprise for you," he said, counting out the correct change. "They're brand-new and I think you'll like them."

He looked with pride at the writing on each coin, then carefully lifted the first to the slot, released it, and waited until it had slid into the machine, had been accepted, before depositing the next. He inserted the coins, one after the other, stroking the machine with his left hand as he did so.

"Did you like them?" he said at last, eagerly, leaning forward until his head was only a few inches from it.

"Thank you, Sir." The tie, boxed and wrapped, slid down the return chute to him.

"But did you notice the difference?"

"How may I serve you, Sir?"

"The coins, did you notice my new coins?"

"How may I serve you, Sir?"

"I made them just for you, you and your friends, didn't you notice?"

"How may I serve you, Sir?"

He took the tie and set it aside. Was it afraid to say anything? Naturally the machines had limited vocabularies, but perhaps it was trying to tell him just the same. Perhaps it had noticed.

He touched the machine again, letting his hand run up

and down its side. "You're my friend."

"How may I serve you, Sir?"

"I'd like another necktie." It was late, but it wouldn't hurt to indulge himself a little. In a moment he would move on to the shoe-clerk and its measuring device. And then the overcoat, his whole body enclosed in the fitting-clerk.

"Any particular style or colour, Sir?"

"You choose." Just one more tie, then the shoes, then the overcoat. He usually didn't spend so much time in any one store, but this was a special occasion, and anyway, what was the harm?

DETECTIVE MITCHELL, Criminal Bureau, East Northeast Sector of the city, was plugged into a special showing of "The Life of Al Capone", and was even now preparing to leap from one roof to another in pursuit of a minor torpedo named Sammy Javitz, when the portable theatre shut itself off and he was torn from the story by the buzzing of his intercom. "Yeah, this is Mitchell."

The clear voice of Detective Controller Kulek came through the box. "Mitchell, your counterfeiter is working Schwartz's Men's Shop on Fifth and Park, you'd better get down there. And Mitchell, no slip-ups, if you don't get him this time, I'll replace you with a machine."

Kulek was laughing as Mitchell switched off, thinking someday he was going to get that bastard.

Could he help it if he had some maniac loose in his sector? That was the Psych-Bureau's fault not his. They said there weren't any maniacs around, that they had cleared the last one's mind twenty years before. Yeah, well he'd show them one, running around, causing trouble, making his sector the only one to show a crime in the past year. Disturbances in the Narco Halls he could understand, but why crime? Myer in South Southeast had suggested the underground. Mitchell knew that was ridiculous.

He had doubled his patrol machines and now had eighty in his sector, sending their tapes in to the computers. He had even gone out a couple of times himself, but with no luck. His guy had always gotten away, leaving Mitchell the joke of the department.

But a swell joke it was when Kulek started threatening him about his job, talking about bringing in a machine. He'd like to see the machine that could replace him.

There just wasn't any point in it, Mitchell thought. Like why make your own money when you can get it almost for free? Especially since they had started the new rotating system. Now it was possible for a person to go for months without having to work at all, actually be paid not to. It seemed to Mitchell as if the guy were out there doing it to annoy him personally.

He got up, grabbed his coat, and left his office. No point at all. For a while, Mitchell had thought that he had scared the guy off and everything had been quiet for about ten days. But now he was back in business again, making Mitchell's life a misery. I'm not a hard guy, he thought. People get their kicks in different ways, but this one's got



to go, catch him, and have his mind wiped clean. There's no reason in him. Okay, so he gets his kicks passing fake coins, but once he gets his stuff, why doesn't he keep it? Why does he dump it in an alley? What's the point in it?

It was one-thirty when Mitchell left headquarters.

HE WAS SURE that the shoe machine had noticed the difference and for that reason he had gotten another pair. The machine had thanked him, more generously than they usually did, he thought, and to please it he had tried to give it some extra coins. But it had returned them. He knew it was just being honest, but he had meant them as a special treat, a present just for it.

Now he wanted the overcoat. It was late and he had spent too much time in the store, but the overcoat had been the main purpose of his visit. He didn't want to leave and go to another store. This one had been especially friendly. He sat down before the machine.

"How may I serve you, Sir?"

"I'd like an overcoat."

"Any particular style or colour, Sir?"

"You choose."

"These models are very popular this year, Sir. If you touch the sense control panel, you may feel the texture of each."

He chose quickly, wanting to get on to the fitting before it was too late.

"A very good choice if I may say so myself, Sir. Our most popular model. When you shop for the best, shop at Schwartz's."

"Do you want to fit me now? I have something special for you, but I don't have much time. I've already given the other machines theirs. Now it's your turn." He had to hurry. It wouldn't do to get caught almost before he'd started passing out his new coins.

"Just step to your left, Sir. The fitting-clerk is waiting for you."

He did as he was told, moving quickly, stepping into the machine so it surrounded him on three sides. 'I'm ready now.'

"It's a very nice day, Sir," said the fitting-clerk.

"Yes, isn't it. Do you take coins?"

"No, Sir. You deposit them in the clerk to your right. Lift your arms, Sir."

He lifted his arms, watching the machine move towards him, getting closer, then he shut his eyes, felt the embrace of the soft plastic as the machine wrapped itself round him, enveloped him in its warmth.

"I'm sorry you don't take coins," he said.

He let his muscles relax, giving himself up to the machine, falling into its contours which pressed against him, recording the movement of his body.

"Stand straight, Sir. We're almost finished."

He turned slightly, feeling the change of pressure on his back and chest, the enclosure of his stomach as he forced it out, the close grip on his legs. He turned more, trying to move into its warmth, feeling its slight vibration, the hum of the machine murmuring to him.

"You have a very good shape, Sir. When you shop for the best, shop at Schwartz's."

The machine released him, much too soon he thought.

"Did you get it all?"

"Yes, Sir. You'll receive the coat by mail tomorrow."

"Are you sure you got it? I mean, you don't want to take it again?"

"You'll receive your coat tomorrow, Sir. Thank you for shopping at Schwartz's."

It was then he heard the siren, recognising it immediately. He started to move for the door. "The machine," he said, turning back, "I haven't given it my coins."

He returned to it, running. "How much do I owe you? Hurry."

"Please deposit one hundred and eighty-five dollars and fifty-five cents. When you shop for the best, shop at Schwartz's."

He quickly deposited the coins, taking them from his pockets at random, knowing the machine would return his change if he put in too much. There was little pleasure in it, there wasn't the time. He could hear the siren getting louder, see two patrol machines standing outside the door. He forced the coins through the slot, one on top of the other. They jangled loudly, rolling down the chute. The machine gurgled with pleasure. He forced in another and another. "If only there was more time," he said to himself. He heard the siren turning down the street.

"Thank you very much, Sir. Here is your change. Thank you for shopping at Schwartz's."

He nodded, turning quickly away. The patrol car was drawing up to the curb. He had to get out of there. More patrol machines stood outside the door. The back, there had to be a rear entrance. He ran for it. The machine kept saying. "Your change, Sir. You've forgotten your change, Sir. Your change, Sir."

DETECTIVE MITCHELL saw the man within the store, saw him run towards the back and knew he would be coming out into the alley. He had him. He knew that, knew the man couldn't escape.

Mitchell directed four patrol machines around both sides of the building, then ran around to the left, wanting to see the capture. This would show Kulek and those others.

When he reached the alley he saw that the man was trapped. The patrol machines were closing in, scuttling towards him on their tracks, their red flashers spinning. It would only be a moment before he got a dart.

Mitchell was pleased, but not as pleased as he should have been. The sight of the man bothered him. He was surprised. He didn't feel sorry for him, just surprised. The man's clothes were in rags, torn blue coat, torn pants. Long dark red hair, hanging almost to his collar. Older than Mitchell had supposed, tall and terribly thin, deep blue eyes turning frantically this way and that, looking for a way to escape. Mitchell was almost afraid of him. There was no reason for his looking like that.





At last the man seemed to realise that he couldn't get away and turned to the machines separating him from Mitchell, opening his arms to them.

"I'm your friend!" he shouted. "I'm your friend!" He was still shouting that when the first dart hit him.

Mitchell saw that the man was loaded into the air-carrier and told the auto-pilot to go to the hospital. Then he stood for a moment, watching it go off.

They'll fix him up, he thought. Tomorrow he'll be a new man.

In his pocket he felt the counterfeit coins he had picked up in the alley and his mind went back to them. Jesus, wait till I tell Kulek about this. He's not going to believe it.

It was just two o'clock.

**M**ITCHELL WAS SITTING in Kulek's office, fingering the coins lying on the desk, listening to Kulek and not liking what he heard. Smug bastard, he thought. What does he know about it?

Kulek talked on and on, aware of his position and of Mitchell's beneath him. "Perfectly simple really, and if you'd checked the records you probably would have found him before this. You've got to be on your toes, Mitchell . . ."

"What d'you mean?" Mitchell was feeling a little uncomfortable, not quite sure if he wanted to know about

the counterfeiter.

"He'd been arrested before, not by us of course, by the narcotics men. That was just over a year ago, minor rioting in a Narco Hall. Nothing serious, but it wasn't his first time so naturally they cleared his mind. You'd think by now they could do a job like that right, but no, they slipped up and didn't put anything back. But they got it all straightened out. In fact, I saw to his reconditioning myself — old family house on Elm Street, big brother on the football team, kid twin sisters, the girl next door just mad about him. He won't have any trouble now."

"Except that it won't be true."

"No, but then he won't know that."

"Yeah . . . What d'you mean 'they didn't put anything back'?" A slight chill was starting up in Mitchell's stomach.

"Just what I said, they'd cleaned his mind and hadn't put anything in its place. Sure, he had the basics since there was no point in re-educating him. He had the History and college level, but there wasn't anything else. They just forgot to do it, got rushed, gave him too quick a job. As a result he was as clean as an empty theatre."

"You mean he was nobody?" Worse feeling in the stomach.

"That's right. He was just a lot of information with

(Continued on page 59)



# CRIM

## GRAHAM CHARNOCK

An image grenade explodes before me on the pavement, soaking through my body in sepia auras, tactile like putty. I drown in molten chocolate.

Today this street is Total Warfare Area, but no notices have been posted. I duck down an alley trying to grope my way out of the colour box and bump into a harpie trying to grope her way in. *Kiss me!* she cries, *Take me!* and I might have, but luckily a Birth Pill Bombardment takes her out, tearing her into streamers of black and white which flap ineffectually about me. I pass on.

Only when I stand before CRIM (the pill-box dwarf of concrete, clad in rose-marble) do I think out: What are contraceptive displays doing on a candy-bar circuit?

CRIM. CRIM is biggest. CRIM is best. CRIM is top of the top-leaguers and we work overtime putting points on its Corporate Image Recall Index.

CRIM is a button that somebody pushed and then buried the button. CRIM is an igloo that too many people have crawled into. CRIM looks after its employees and all that shit. Working for CRIM means something (says PdeB—when he lifts his palm from the board-room table a moisture patch is revealed—slowly, amoeba-like shape changes, drawing in on itself—the stenographer smiles and crosses her legs). Hot shit. Getting into CRIM is easier than getting out.

I get in, ducking from the coated-peanut crossfire, my coat-collar raised and image-residue trickling down my neck.

CRIM has total seal-out, but Othello in his window chair has strung aerials out over the boulevard and is waiting for the morning bombing run. Now and then dispersion from a Defoliation Exercise (Corsetry) over in the park creeps into the office and throws blue bubbles of static in our eyes.

I hang up my tie and go to the john. Body fluid floods out in a sappy stream. Take *that* for Sacco. Take *that* for Vanzetti. Crippen spends me utterly. Some joker has pasted a photoprint of a VD poster (museum piece) on the wall.

Like a tiger I make it back to Othello who pushes the Sheet over to me in a paper aeroplane.





I grunt. This means *Anything exciting?*

Still, it needs no answer. Top of the list is the mass suicide of 180 members of a religious cult known as *Pain*. Other cells are known to be planning organized suicide movements in the country's major cities.

PdB has seen the Sheet and has scrawled in the classification "CXV." I lick my lips. Somebody upstairs has seen the light at last and is thinking about something else besides getting up his nephew's arse. I tear off the *Pain* memo and throw the Sheet back to Othello. *Redirect this.*

Othello makes over his paper aeroplane. Meanwhile on the 'phone I drop the CXV into Traffic. Vance down there is so excited he wets his pants and promises yessir I'll call a fullscale briefing for ten minutes. Yessir I'll make that five minutes.

### *Delaney and Spirolis*

Delaney, the Kid Copywriter, was fixated. He was fixated because it was such a lovely word. It started quietly between the upper teeth and lower lip and then exploded in the middle like a match bursting into flame. Saying it was like spitting out broken teeth.

"I'm fixated," Delaney said one day to Spirolis, the Canadian Jew who shared his office on the eighth floor.

Spirolis poured his coffee into the waste-paper basket where, with sheets of discarded copy, it formed a kind of papier-maché soup.

The coffee-machine was trying to poison him. It was trying to poison the entire staff of CRIM. It had comrades who were subversively trying to poison the world. Every day Spirolis wrote virulent mortar and hand grenade copy attacking the coffee-machine. He seeded interdepartmental circulating folders with this literary vitriol. He even tried seducing Vanderpump, the Budget Control fairy, into freeing a couple of thousand for a small-scale campaign. He visualized a guerilla attack by night on the coffee-machine. Vanderpump had been cold at first but Spirolis sensed the man was weakening. Meanwhile the Studio had lettered up a sign reading: THE COFFEE-MACHINES ARE PERPETRATING A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY. This hung on the wall of the office, suspended from the red scramble-light.

"I'm fixated," Delaney repeated, thinking Spirolis hadn't heard him.

Spirolis began to shred his plastic coffee-cup. "You're not fixated," he said. "You only think you're fixated because you think thinking you're fixated means you're fixated with the fixation of being fixated." Spirolis flicked free a plastic splinter that had caught under his finger-nail.

Delaney smiled. Spirolis sure was dumb. "I know that," he said. "I *know* I'm not really fixated. That's my fixation."

Spirolis gave him a sick look. From that moment he ignored Delaney whenever Delaney said: "I'm fixated." Delaney was puzzled and annoyed. It crossed his

mind that if he bribed Spirolis, then Spirolis would maybe say something nice about his fixation.

The next day he left a packet of cigarettes on Spirolis' desk, tied with coloured ribbon so that Spirolis would know it was a gift. When Spirolis found the cigarettes he gave them to Delaney.

"Here," he said. "Somebody left these cigarettes on my desk. You have them."

Delaney took them. "Don't you smoke?"

"Sure I do," said Spirolis. "But how do I know my worst enemy didn't put them there? How do I know they're safe to smoke? Why should I take risks? My worst enemy might have poisoned those cigarettes."

Delaney was horrified. "But you gave them to me," he said. "Why give them to me if you think they're poisoned?"

"I didn't tell you to smoke them, did I? Give them to your worst enemy. For God's sake, don't you have any imagination?" Delaney was the dumbest Kid Copywriter Spirolis knew.

At that moment the red scramble-light began to flash.

### *Velma Vonay*

I tell Othello and he hangs up his antennae. Together we go down to Conference Room B. (The National Electric Chair Company is making a presentation in Conference Room A.) On the way I keep thinking I'll maybe see Velma Vonay who wears her skin so tight it looks like she's about to burst and splatter you with her raspberry jam insides. But she's not around. Later it turns out the poor girl is still having orgasms from being caught in an illicit air-strike the previous night (heat-seeking missiles with minimegaton Sex-film Warheads starring Magda Flagstone and Lambent Flame). Hundreds like her suffered and somebody is making investigations, but not me.

Down in Conference Room B everybody has files on *Pain* and long faces. Vance has a film for us. Newsreel rush of mass slaughter in the street after *Pain* has been there. It looks like a C-5 has crashed into a football crowd.

*All they used was knives*, Vance stage-whispers as the leader flickers through. Everybody hums and whistles.

*It depresses me*, I say. *People like that should be locked up.*

Heads nod assent. (They're falling asleep.)

I grunt. This means *Any ideas?*

Spirolis, a Canadian Jew who was around when J. Walter Thompson finally ate itself, says, *We could spray the cities with aspirin.*

Blank faces throw the line around the table, phrasing it to and fro with eyebrow and nose-wrinkling movements. Eventually it falls limp and spent in the middle of the table.

*Aspirin is an old pain-killer*, I say, stealing Spirolis' thunder. *So much for allegory. Get this: this thing is*



*dirty and I want to fight it, not make fun of it. I want to sell the idea of Life. Get your association from there. What makes you glad you're alive? What does tomorrow hold for you that prevents you from putting your fingers in the socket today? For fuck's sake, what? Find me the answers to those questions, will you?*

Heads nod, but some time later when they get up to leave people look like their dreams have been interrupted.

## REPORT ON AN INTERNAL MEETING HELD NOVEMBER 18th 19—TO DISCUSS MEDIA REQUIREMENTS FOR FORTHCOMING PAIN CAMPAIGN.

Seven points arose as follows:

1. The design of the bomb that conveys news of which that bomb is required—They include newspapers submarine bombs with a very high radio cinema screens posters the lethal effect being direct mail letters and so explosion—Such a bomb would be necessary for main functions—the first is between these two extremes through which advertising other types of explosive bomb—number of prospective of many different kinds have period—the incendiary medium how many people read what publication—phosphorus and magnesium with details of their age.

2. To achieve National Saturation the bombs must have the media man has to assess and devices for exploding them—resulting media plan must also bombs which explode on impact between the product—the marketing is needed—other targets must be reached and the money available explode until they have penetrated.

3. A fuse with a delayed department may be used in time-bombs advertising space or time activity until the bomb and planner the media man must be removed—secure from the media owners the bombs are of many shapes.

4. Media are those channels of course on the purpose for an advertiser's product—for instance in attacking a magazine—commercial television explosive content are needed—bus signs exhibitions window by the underwater shock of the media department has two designed to pierce armour—media selection choosing the thick and thin cases lie many which will reach most effectively besides these incendiary bomb customers at the lowest cost—developed during the same armed with statistics ranging from light oils to television programmes—income groups and buying habits fuse detonators and others evaluate many competing claims.

5. Targets are best attacked by the appropriate balance and for these an instantaneous fuse.

6. The type of customer to be attacked—by bombs which will not reach them situated well inside and this

calls the second function of the fuse with a much longer delay—agency's purchasing department to dislocate traffic as well as being exploded been made harmless also be a negotiator if he is the ideal shape.

7. This shape may not be the best to effect damage on the target or it may ensue that the bomb has the optimum explosive content for its purpose.

Circulate to: PdeB (2)

Craven Image  
Othello Moore  
Vance Vance  
Spirolis

### *General Schaffer*

"Of course, I've been in the game a long time," said General Schaffer, walking with Deacon, the Ministry Observer, down towards the conservatory. He was a plump man. His spectacle frames dimpled his chubby face and he peered at the receding horizontals of the landscaped park through tinted lenses. He wore sideburns, grey and wild. They looked as though they had been brushed out. "Forty years, to be exact," he continued. "I've seen combat in every corner of the globe. Join Media Assault Ltd. and see the world, they did say once upon a time." He laughed briefly and shot Deacon a sideways glance. "What I mean to say is, I know what it's all about. These whizz-kids—I have a young lieutenant, twenty-four, who thinks he's the cat's whiskers—they come hot-cheeked into the field from their war-games, stoked up to the eyebrows with media theory. They annoy me. Pure knowledge is no substitute for experience."

He spat on the grass verge, and repeated again, savouring the platitude: "Knowledge is no substitute for experience. Do you remember '87? The first National Penitence Offensive? Big feather in M.A.L.'s cap, that was. Big success too, but only because we trusted our experience and were quick to grasp the initiative. While all the Sunday journalists were busy drafting articles on napalm image-jell, we went out and showed joe what it was. We really sold people on aggressive media and we did it without a page of figures or formulae. A fifth of the population confessed to some crime or other.

"Then there was '93. The Synagogue Murders. Something like this *Pain* affair. A fascist organization calling themselves the New Sons of Jesus were behind it. The whole thing backfired nastily on the government when several cabinet members were found to be fully paid-up disciples." Schaffer shook his head sadly. "These religious cranks are nothing but trouble-makers. *Pain*," he sneered. "Sometimes I think . . . well, we should go ahead and let the crazy bastards kill themselves."

As they walked across the lawn to the crystal dome and spreading wings of the conservatory, a light monoplane droned mothlike overhead. "Spotter 'plane for National Air Strike," said Schaffer. "He marks and



relays co-ordinates for the big boys.”

Deacon nodded and watched as the 'plane twitched its wings and banked to fly off over the trees. Away to the left some men were sandbagging the entrance to a urinal.

## A and B

Somehow A had become separated from B in the crush. He saw the top of her golden head above the crowd and started towards her. A banner intervened, rippling PAINPAINPAINPAIN in an endless snake. With his knife, he ripped through it.

B heard A's voice and saw him making his way over to her. A man waving a pistol stepped in front of him. The two men exchanged words and then the man with the pistol raised it against his own temple. His brains flew skyward.

Then A was with her, red splatterings of flesh dotting his face and clothes. Together they began to fight their way free of the mob, emerging into an area partially cleared by the smoke and ash of a mass immolation.

A pressed B against a tree. His hand was in her mouth and as the tip of his knife began lightly to trace a path across her abdomen, she bit hard on his fingers so that his blood dribbled out over her chin.

*Kill me, she said, kill me, kill me, over and over like a mantra.*

Above them a light monoplane banked to fly off over the trees. Echelons of jets, their afterburners lit like diamonds, roared in at a thousand feet. The personnel bombs impacted about the couple.

A dropped his knife. Like puppets, they slowly undressed to copulate on the ashy earth.

## Jones and I.

This is a terrible war. I don't think I've ever seen so many people so eager to die. I am a shade nearer death myself, every day. I can't write for one thing—the mental rot has already set in. Letters, yes, but not poetry. I thought I might be able to at first. I bought *The Armoured Chrysalis* along in the hope of something magical happening to it, and for a while the hope (and the thought of you, of course) sustained me. But when it came to scratching out the lines . . . well, it all seemed so pointless, so unimportant. Greater things are happening around me. Greater tragedies are being staged.

We are sitting in a urinal in the park, Jones and I. Jones hums Welsh hymns and old Lennon and McCartney songs. *And Your Bird Can Sing* (your favorite, remember?) drifts out over the shattered park.

When he's not singing, Jones talks. Platitudes and obscenities, mostly. (And his voice! Why do the Welsh, born choristers, have such *unmusical* speaking voices? Jones's is gritty and clogging and stands to his song like slag to the gloss of his hardest anthracite.) His

earthiness is central, to my way of thinking, to why we are waging this war against *Pain*, and an ounce of it, in the circumstances, is more comforting than a hundredweight of earnest undergraduate language games. Quite simply, Jones is fighting because he wants to *live*—live to fuck his way through the valleys, certainly, but isn't that the best of reasons? Every bomb that explodes beyond our sandbag barrier, rupturing the earth and sending orgasm-waves rippling through the topsoil assures me it is.

As I say, a terrible war, and full of terrible images. A girl has hung herself on the limb of a monkey-puzzle tree not far away. The tree is spidery-frail, almost like a Chinese character, but strong enough for this (she is truly a girl—only fourteen or fifteen). Every now and then, when a better target fails to present itself, Jones fires off a burst at the young corpse. The soft ammunition explodes in the body, pulverizing it into rainbow iridescence. It slowly rotates in its noose (a twisted nylon stocking), the breasts flashing like golden beacons.

This horror has made me careless, and if I offend you, please forgive me. I know you think what I am doing is wrong. Often enough (how long ago? Two months? Can it only be two months?) we argued the ethics behind keeping people alive who have chosen to die, and I know it is not this that shocks you but the means by which it is done. My dearest, I agree, and it is a pity it can be done no other way. A pity and no more, insignificant beside the necessity of ridding this world of *Pain*.

A week ago I might have said that the future is in life, and that what I fight for is the future—my future, *our* future. But like Jones I am gradually becoming annealed against such abstract concepts; I am becoming hard and rigid, upheld by the purely physical will to live. Perhaps I have further to go towards complete insensitivity than Jones ever had, and pray God that this is a short war and I never complete the journey. Pray God there remains, when all this is over, some small salvageable portion of the person I was.

I am becoming depressing and depressed. Jones lights up a cigarette and passes it to me to smoke (perhaps there is some brutish empathy between us—I'm reminded irrationally of two apes I once saw in the zoo, picking in each other's fur for succulent fleas.) For a moment it's almost quiet and I can write this. The fighting seems to have drained from our urinal-island. Jones hums *Men of Harlech*. The bombs are falling elsewhere. I can see the ornamental lake from here. Do you remember? Where we made love that Sunday dusk and surprised and were surprised by a swan (I was a poet then and even our lovemaking had to have metaphorical overtones). It's full of corpses now, grey things packed so solidly in the water a stretcher team makes its way unfalteringly across, treading on the flesh-bridge.

Only this now: Like Jones, I don't want to die.



# GRAPHICS

## for Burroughs'

# NOVA EXPRESS

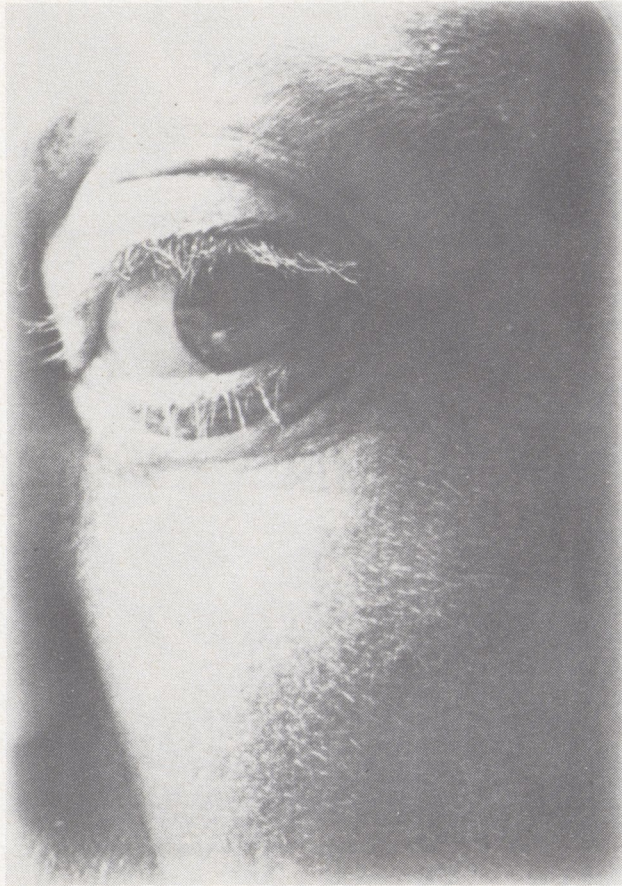
Richard  
Whittem











"SEX IS OF COURSE an art, like anything else. Which make us . . . wonder, or at least makes me wonder, whether the intellect was ever destined to be released from the machinations of the body."

A woman, some thirty years of age, is listening. "Darling, yes."

" . . . I mean by that quite naturally, that if the intellect is used to increase the sexual performance as it often is then the intellectual process will become as a matter of course inextricably tangled with the basic sex drive."

"Yes, darling. . . . Yes."

"Yes, wait. . . . I know, well before you mention it, art is of course a science. And in addition science must necessarily be resolved into Physics and Mathematics, possibly only to Mathematics—which is very flattering to us—the Human Race. Although not to me because I'm not a mathematician. And not to mathematicians because they don't *understand* what they've done. . . . Good God!"

"Mmmmmmm . . . Yes, yes."

"I'll have to be careful. I might start calling the D.P. boys *disciples*. But, physics . . . well. Why should two

bodies out of the immediate flux of a further gravitational field attract rather than repel?"

"Mmmm . . . oh hell!"

"Oh come *on* now . . . you don't . . . and I thought. . . ."

"Yes, my fastener. Can you. . . . I said my fastener, not. . . . Hey, were you listening to me?"

"I've heard it all before. When I was. . . ." He yawns, crudely.

"No, not that. Were you listening to my argument? Physics, mathematics . . . basic sex urge and so on. I hope so, darling, because I've got better things to do than to talk to myself all day . . . evening."

"Night."

"Yes? Then I must go, or at least leave."

"Are you sure that was you speaking?" The stimulus has not yet left.

"Of course I'm sure. Are you feeling all right?"

"Yes . . . but wait. No . . . perhaps *you* should answer that."

"Me?"



"Yes, you . . . you must answer the. . . ."

" . . . question." She is walking to the door. "Good-bye."

"No! No! Don't! Please don't. . . ."

" . . . leave. Goodbye." She whispers from the door. She is called Wendy.

# SUB-SYNCHRONIZATION



Silence, then a creak from the door.

She leaves. The door is slightly ajar though opaque and not of the same fragility.

A clock clatters into action, soon becoming horrific.

A satellite wheels overhead, its radio emissions synchronized with the ticks from the clock.

Bleep tick, bleep tick, bleep tickk!

*Revelry of a Walton housewife on the threshold of sleep:* "Her husband is a bastard, an extraction from the *vieux terrible* of the recent film . . . Pinter. . . . You're standing on his *face*. . . Oh, you bastard John. You big, rotten bastard. Why? Tell me why?

Why?

Why? Must you treat my friends so?

"Bath! Get out Hitler from my bath, my bath of childhood. Auschwitz, leave me. I must fly. With confidence one can fly. Lose confidence . . . one falls, the Niagara.

(Breath rhythm—in, out . . . in, out . . . in, out).

*In—I fly up, Out—I fly down, In—up! Out—down!* (Synchronizing with the bleep from the satellite, the tick from the clock)."

AWAKE! A signal from Cape Kennedy agrees.

The Walton housewife stares at the clock and begins to prepare dinner, after her siesta. Her name is Alexandra Ford. We should all love her, though her thoughts are estimated. If we saw her we would surely love her. If we even telephoned her we would love her voice. Such is the nature of *separation*.

*An extract from basic computer theory, old type drum-main storage.*

A test case: To use the store flip-flop F1 is set up, this opening G11 so that the next coincidental pulse emitted by XS is transmitted and sets up F12. F11 is normally cleared by each word-start pulse from A1, but the circuit delays are such that it is ready to be reset by. . . .

. . . it must be assumed *that two tracks of the drum D are given to pre-recorded 'clock' markers*. T\* contains groups of N markers, where N is the number of bits in a word. . . .

. . . *The clock marker's* impulses are fed to a counter, the contents of which are compared with the required track position held in register SL—by coincidence sensor CS.

The clock word markers are ninety degrees out of phase with the markers in the SAM guidance control

system over Hanoi.

Imagine a sun sinking blood-red into a purple horizon. In the twilight sky above, dark warhorse cloud formations battle across the sky, flinging ground elec-



trons momentarily into higher orbits, although even the most careful eye will observe no shade differential. A wind blows over the plateau from a high pressure point off the coast, shaking loosened leaves from the trees on the autumn lawns. A girl is standing on the crest of a hill watching the mushroom cloud rise *from* below the horizon wondering whether the blast will reach her position.

Imagine a future archaeologist submitting her bones for tests, using the radioactive clock to gauge the time of her death.

# BY CHRIS LOCKESLEY





# BAA BAA BLOCKSHEEP

M. John Harrison

*Sometime I think the manner  
You come in my house  
And dirty-arm me around  
Is something I don't particularly cherish*  
Kenneth Patchen—from *How Come?*

ARM SCUTTLED the streets like a bubonic rat—furtive by nature, flaunting in the exigencies of pain. Where the buboes of the rat are physical, lymphatic, Arm's were mental and symbolic: the city was attempting to

crush him, layering upon him building after building in heavy confusion. He felt it, and visualized the conurbation as one of the bleached conical skullheaps of Alexander; placing himself in the lowest tier of the pyramid, somewhere near the centre. It was dark. An enormous weight of skulls was pressing him into the earth. He was contained completely by the bones of his own jawless cranium, feeling it split under the pressure. In reaction, he put out roots and tubers; clawed at the surrounding soil; tried to scream as if he still possessed



mouth and soft swollen flesh. The subsequent silence was expressionless. His tubers therefore grew hands and blind baby faces whose screwed-up orbits were filled with humus.

He was scurrying to the hospital to meet Pauce, the city's only shepherd. The wind fluted down alleys and across blank plazas, carrying 1 a.m. dock-stinks from cold alien mudbanks and holds crammed with pesticides. In the wind also were small flakes of brittle snow.

Arm was thin. His round squat head and blunt face protruded awkwardly from the collar of his raincoat, turtle-like. Above a slack wattle of double chin, his purple lower lip drooped petulantly. His hair was sparse and slicked darkly back as if they had recently wiped the blood of the womb from it with a mildly medicated sponge. Surrounded by striated folds of grey skin, his eyes: slitted against the wind, almost closed, they were the colour of old concrete. He walked with something of a sailor's gait, and his little white hands were forced deep into the pockets of the grubby gabardine, rigid arms thrusting his shoulders into a shrug. Cuban-heeled boots gave him the mercantile sway: wearing them, he was five feet and seven-eighths of an inch tall. Breasting the wind thus, head out and down, he encountered Block the mouth-harp artist.

EXTRACT FROM A 10,000 WORD MS SUBMITTED BY ARM TO THE QUARTERLY REVIEW *AMBUSH*. BEGINS: Some 80% of the floor space was occupied by the Southern/Bailey static construction *Scene 10*, which resembled a tumbled set of wooden building-blocks, much enlarged and connected by various catwalks, ladders, and flights of hollow wooden steps. In certain places and at certain levels, two or more of the blocks had come together to produce areas big enough to be considered as secondary floors. Life-sized cardboard figures placed at overt random on the platforms of the construction loomed rigid and with an ambiguous suggestion of menace.

It was almost dark on *Scene 10*. The strip lights had been shut down for an hour or more, and little of the exterior twilight filtered in. Heat lent the air a thick, textured consistency, as though it had been smeared on to the room, impasto. Constituting the sole mobile interruption of this enervating stasis, Gynt ascended the three steps to the first and major level, where two-dimensional characters clustered most thickly. The steps took and accentuated the sound of his feet falling upon them.

Gynt: an untidily proportioned man in drab, shabby cords, limbs ill-fitting, joints apparently old before their time. His movements were awkward, entailing careful thought, but accomplished with a shambling, ursine dignity. He was big-eyed and macrocephalic. He had sloping shoulders. The eyes were numb, slightly bemused. He was considered cured. He did not remember being ill.

He began to weave slow, unconscious patterns among the uncompromising figures of Level One, walking with tired imprecision, his eyes focused absently on the toy in his clumsy fingers, not registering the small pieces of multihued plastic. Neither noting any relationship between them. They were intended to interlock and produce a replica of a farmyard animal. Gynt had never solved the puzzle: he didn't know what the completed beast looked like. He fumbled ineffectually in the gloom.

After a short while he forgot his reason for coming after-hours to the gallery. He had not come to participate in *Scene 10*: that he had done earlier in the day, or had it been earlier in the week, at the official opening of the show—

Vino and unrelated noise and cross-purpose conversations:

Of course he was trying for the Van Velde effect.

And this agonisingly ancient dress my dear she.

Good God I said have it.

And Gynt feeling like some old dusty crow among the hummingbird avant-garde. And saddened by pink-shirted arbiters of lysergic taste. Pretty hippy. He did not understand *Scene 10*, the thing operated on him at a wholly non-rational level, its effect was visceral. He continued to be fascinated without knowing why. Conceivably, this was a result of his illness. Or his cure.

He had not come to observe *Scene 10*. He paced a little more. Then he sat down at the foot of one of the figures and tried to rest his back on it. It swayed away from him and fell, slapping gently on the vinyl-covered surface. He sneezed abruptly. The sneeze took him unprepared. Don't sneeze, you'll burst—

Unlooked for came the vision of a nurse in a grey smock, eyes vacuous, mouth neutral; looking down at him from a great height, towering because he was lying on his back with a defenceless sensation around his genital area. She was sewing up his belly with fine nylon thread, an invisible mending job. There were tattoos—baroque representations of LOVE and HATE—on the backs of her hands. Her knuckles were red. Don't sneeze, you'll burst your stitches. Love or hate?

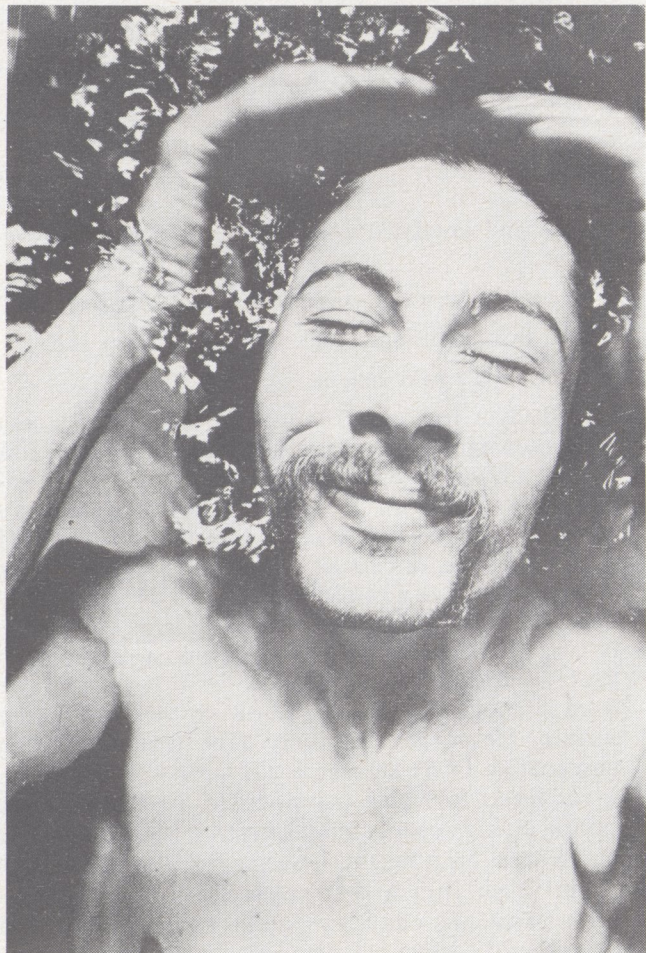
Actually, there had been no stitches or bedsores or bedpans or bedbaths that time. No gravel-eyed dawns or laxatives. Merely the inevitable disinfectant reek and well-boiled cabbage. Something between the hospital of sleep and the institution of memory. Memory? Confusion.

Burst your amnesia.

There was a cramp in his right thigh. He got up and began to walk about again, fiddling with the puzzle. Occasionally, he stamped his foot with some idea of alleviating the pain. The sound emitted was flat and dull. End of first sequence.

GET OFF, SAID the salvationist in the single bed. She wriggled irritably and sniffed.





What, said Block.

Supine under a grubby sheet and his new sheepskin waistcoat for warmth, he removed his fingers from her labia majora and stopped considering the ceiling. The room was dark but for a diagonal bar of sick ochre light filtering in from the street. About eighteen inches wide, it illuminated a fascinating lightning-jagged crack in the plaster. Grunting, he rolled on to his stomach and attempted to sort out her face from the mixture of brown and black darkness. He tried to remember where they had met before. What, he repeated.

Get out, I am dying of boredom. Whereupon she made puking sounds and shifted mockingly.

You're nothing but a red-haired queen, she said.

Block, cut to the quick, scrabbled off the bed. He stumbled across the littered floor, caught his toe in someone's discarded clothing, barked his shin on the

Welsh dresser. He fetched up hard against the wall; fumbled; switched on the light. Stood there blinking, bone-naked and goose-pimpled, his erection folding rapidly. Miss Hind-Tomlinson was doughfaced under one hundred vicious watts. In hard contrast to the unshaded glare, mascara straggled in dun ruins down her flaking cheeks. God, he thought, what a whore. He shivered and wondered why he'd come.

What are you waiting for. Go on: go.

Very well, he said. He inclined his head, cynical and polite. Tried an Enigmatic expression. Auburn hair fell untidily about his maggot-coloured chest. Very well. She giggled. Her breasts quaked independently. She watched him like a hawk as he struggled into his hipsters, striving to maintain his dignity. Her teeth were all yellow with humour as he hopped about on one leg. Finally, he threw his hairbrushes violently into his harmonica-case and limped out, the sheepskin hung over his arm. He collided with the doorpost on the way out, slammed the door after him. He could hear her laughing from the street. He mouthed up at the yellow square of window. The laughter cracked, slid, and turned into a sort of spayed hysteria. Block shrugged into the sheepskin and turned away. The wind bit his ears and tied his hair in knots around his face. He began to walk quickly, the wind at his back, composing new verses for *Caedmon St. Blues*:

Get your hand outa my jar of ointment/Go grease your ass on the other side of town. . . .

On the road again, he thought. Not without satisfaction.

Arm's bullet head hit him in the floating ribs. He made a noise like a rutting pig and fell down. The harp-case burst on the pavement, spilling genuine bristle brushes, two tin whistles, and an Echo (Key G). He crawled about picking them up, stopping at times to heave and rub his diaphragm. The harmonica was dented. He blew an experimental scale on it, thin notes skirling weirdly in the night. Pleased with the sound, he sat on the flagstones and ran through a lament with an improvised middles section in which he took fours with the wind. The result was eldritch. Grooves, thought Block. He noticed Arm lying in a heap, his head sheltered under crooked elbows, as though fearing shell-burst. Arm was moaning.

It's happening, Arm was saying, Jesus bloody Christ and the whole stinking ruins on top of me.

Block crawled over to the heap.

Man, are you hurt, why don't you look where you're going, he asked the slick top of Arm's head. Arm peeked white and wary from between his fingers, his little faded eyes recalling the skullheaps and the tubers with Arm-faces.

Bloody Block, he said.

Go away.

Kneeling under the bleak sodium lamps, they regarded one another. A gust of wind rattled out of the dark, tore at Block's hair and hurled off down the



funnel of the street.

Hello Arm, where are you going.

Mind your business. Arm was surly. Fractious creases appeared round his lips, making an isosceles triangle, his nose at its apex. A bead of clear mucus hung there, quivering. He got slowly to his feet, making a performance of brushing down his coat, little hands running over it like neurotic mice. He massaged the top of his head, prospected for bruises with gentle hypochondriac fingers. Block remained on his knees.

Are you on a job, he asked.

Arm looked nervous and furtive. I might be, he said. He began to walk away, the white mice crammed back into his pockets. Block staggered up, grabbed his case, and lurched after him.

Are you going to see the boss, the Pauce.

Arm increased his pace until he was almost trotting. I might be, he said. Go away. Mind your business.

I'll come, said Block. I need some bread, having spent all mine on some whore.

Arm, hearing this, looked as if he were about to weep. He ran. Block ran after him, yelling for him to wait.

The night sucked them up. Forlorn, rabbit's orgasm cries came from Arm. Go away. Away. Away.

SECOND SEQUENCE FROM "VISIONS OF MORVEN" (After ten days, Arm received this letter from the editors of *Ambush*: *Dear Miss Arm, thanks for Submish. Unforch. not Our Style Keep sending. Yours Etc., Esq. PS, you need a Good Strong Plot if you want to hit this Market!* He looked at it sadly for some time, then tore it in half.) BEGINS: The cramp had eased off. Gynt, sitting—rather: perched like a sad corduroy parrot—on the access steps of Level Four, concentrated on the puzzle. He held its most complex unit between thumb and index finger of his right hand, and attempted to mate it with each of the other six components in turn. In each case, the attempt failed. It had become too dark to distinguish more than vague outlines. Eventually he put the toy into his hip pocket—half rising to facilitate the procedure—retaining one section that produced a pleasant tactile effect: two major surfaces flat and angled through 90 degrees; the third shaped and roughened like the husk of a groundnut. This, he stroked with his thumb.

A thin, vertical slice of twilight appeared in the otherwise dark wall confronting him. He stopped stroking the plastic. Street door opening. The slit became a rectangle, framing the silhouette of a woman, ill-defined.

Morven.

Came to meet Morven, who.

The thought bubbled and fulminated into a series of swift and uncontainable images. He lost himself in a bright, chimerical maze. Having found the way out, lost the thoughts. He hooded his eyes as the strip-lighting flickered, hesitated, destroyed his anonymous gloom.

*Scene 10* flared with bitter primary colours.

Gynt watched her pause at the switchgear—a sketch of faded denim thighs, movement condensed in posture; pale hair, high cheekbones, features hollow; violet eyes—and move her head quickly from left to right, separating him from the pasteboard democracy of the construction. She walked toward him, motions curiously stylized, choreographic. Following the shift of her hips, he could sense the rhythms in her head. There was a suggestion of affectation.

She reached the first level. He waited for her to speak: there were too many things he wanted to say. His mind was a stopped-up funnel, a great conical press of semi-formulated ideas with no outlet. He struggled among them, fought clear with a single word of greeting for her, all he could salvage: and discovered again that he had forgotten who she was. Knowing simultaneously that he should remember, that he owed her an act of memory because of . . . something he had also forgotten. She saw it in his confused eyes, and her voice was tired, anxious, a little impatient. Her shoulders slumped.

"It's me, Peter, Morven, Are you coming down?"

He put the last piece of the puzzle away, stood up stiffly, and picked his way down.

"Not again. You forgot again." Sad indictment.

"Yes, I—"

At close quarters she exerted a disturbingly powerful effect on him. It occurred to him that this was one of the things he should recall: that she did not bring to mind glossy advertisements for this lipstick or that girdle, modelled by bizarre, barren mummeries of women; she invoked instead the hot spectre of a disordered bed, and flesh damp to the touch. This instinctive perception became the foundation of memory. Working out from it into time past and time present, he built up a chain of experience ending at his release from the mental hospital: hinting vaguely at the ultimate blockage of ECT, beyond which no stimulus could take him. But it all came too late. As he searched for words to convey it, she began to speak again, dully and with some resignation:

"This has to be the last time. It happens too often. They shouldn't have let you out. They didn't cure you, they gave you something worse. It has to stop."

"I'm sorry, I—"

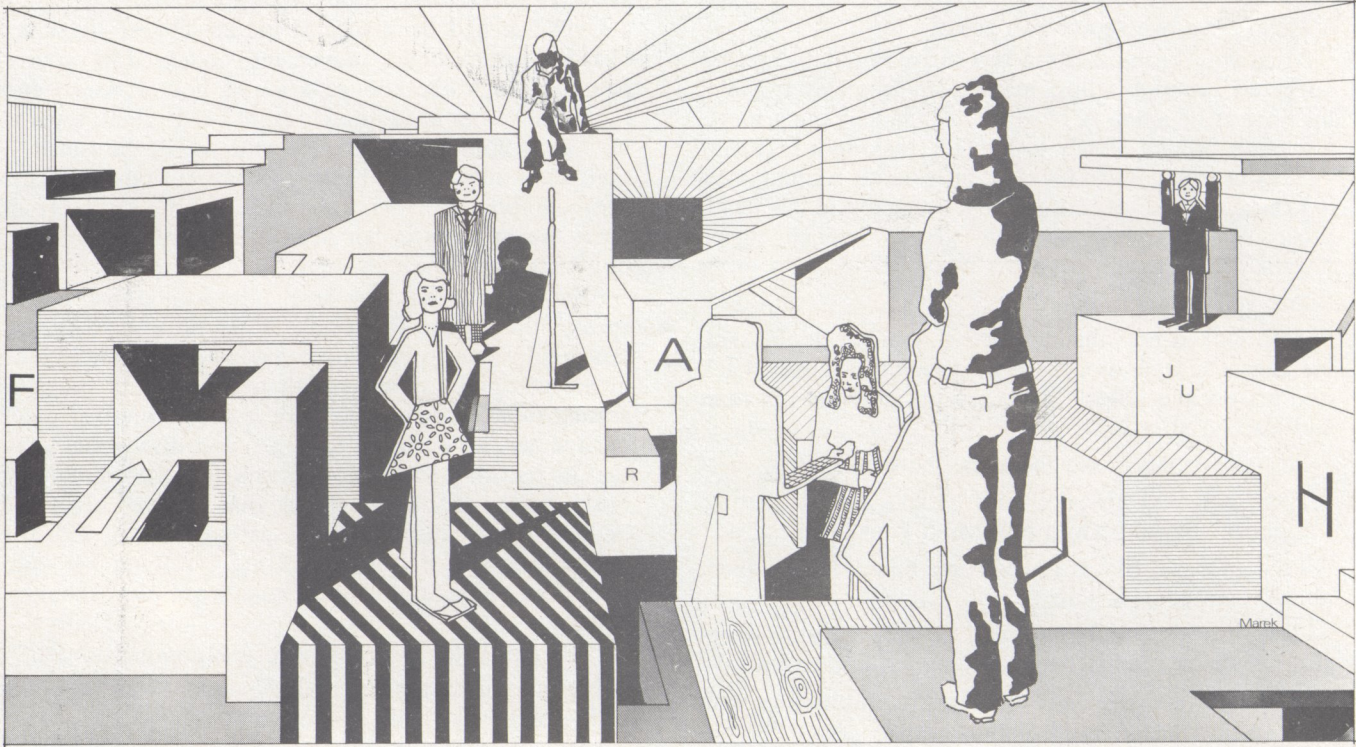
"I know. I know all that. But you haven't just lost your own identity. You're stealing mine too. Voiding it. Peter, every time you forget me, I might as well be dead. I can't stand that, to have no meaning."

"I've tried—"

"And so have I. God, how I've tried. But it isn't any good, is it? It doesn't work any more. It has to stop."

Gynt searched her face for an assertion that the statement was not final. There was none. Her eyes projected an intense, painful regret; but held too a defiant clarity of purpose. Quite plainly there was nowhere to go from





here, and nothing more for her to say. And his own voice was stilled, his brain congested this time with pointless pleas. He tried to say so: opened and closed his mouth: on producing silence, gave up and looked at his feet. His left had edged into his pocket. He began to fumble with the puzzle. When he looked up again she was lost among the cardboard figures. He could hear her footsteps—the choreography of rejection. Extract ends.

AT THE FREE Infirmary of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (Gynaecology), the city's sole shepherd cherished his flock. Every Friday, three pregnant ewes were delivered by a provincial farmer to a small enclosure behind the research wing of the hospital complex. They came packed in a Rice hound-trailer which stank. The following Thursday, each one was cut up by Schroeder and Inness, the research surgeons. Its live embryo was removed intact, its carcass was bled dry. Due to certain toxic qualities of the anaesthetic in use, the mutton was unfortunately inedible: the fleeces, however, were preserved and later sold clandestinely by Schroeder.

Holloway Pauce had charge of the sheep during their final week. It was an unexacting task, but painful. He was a sensitive man, prone to the formation of deep emotional attachments. He fed them; drove them from paddock to cote at night, and was ultimately responsible for some of the more unpleasant jobs involved in their dissection.

For these services rendered to the Sacred Heart—and less directly to the great pregnant press of humanity—he received the weekly sum of twelve pounds; less tax, insurance, and graduated contributions. On Thursdays at twelve noon, Hodgson the almoner would hand him a small brown envelope punched with pencil-sized holes and containing one five pound note, four one pound notes, sundry silver, and a small strip of flimsy which informed him how much of his earnings he was not allowed to have. Unfailingly, Hodgson—a sad little fag who had taken early in his career to wandering vainly around the surgical ward urinals in the small hours—would make some reference to a mythical act of cunnilingus performed by Pauce upon one of his flock: laughing readily, nudging the shepherd in the ribs, a nervous tic distorting very violently the whole left side of his pale, equine face. And Pauce would snigger dutifully, then go off and buy Schroeder and Inness a wet lunch, after which all three would rollick back to the Sacred Heart to complete the vivisection.

Pauce's range of interests was limited. He put in a good deal of unpaid overtime, partly because of his fondness for sheep and partly because the deserted dissection room provided a useful office from which to run his other business. The night nurses had almost ceased to giggle fearfully at one another on meeting his bulky, foreboding figure—clad in an old flying jacket, ponyskin trousers and motorcycle boots—as he wandered aimlessly along the drugged early-morning corridors, making absurd faces at the incubator babies. It was rumoured that on occasion he slept in the sheep-



cote. Certainly, he sang to his flock, in an Italianate tenor. Theatre-sister Cocks swore that she had heard a tin whistle playing in the research wing at four in the morning, but this claim was generally discounted. Sometimes he talked to the lonely Hodgson, lighting up the queer's wan, piscine eyes with gratitude. They discussed nihilism, a philosophy much favoured by Pauce.

**FURTHER EXTRACT FROM ARM'S MS. BEGINS:** Now his scalp, said the tattooed nurse, now his scalp. Needle flickered, suture flashed like stray spider silk. There was no anaesthetic: to calm his nerves, loudspeakers piped in the amplified breathing of an autistic child engaged in a ritual self-abuse activity. Keep still, it doesn't hurt. Love and hate moved firm and capable, impersonally sealing the orifices of his brain, sewing up his mind. Soon have you blind and dumb. There now. Don't speak, you'll burst your stitches.

It was raining.

The city was for the most part quiet: far off, a tug lowed plaintively from the docks: nearer came the abrupt attenuated drone of a car. There was the background susurrus of rain, but this was almost sub-threshold, unheard save by a deliberated effort. Night lapped up the moisture greedily, dribbling the excess down street gutters. A light wind eddied impotently at intersections.

Gynt was walking once more, mind divorced from the purely mechanical function of his legs; drifting without positive intention or destination along a dark cobbled street. A handful of half-hearted sodium lamps on concrete standards stretched away from him, hung dim orange down a kinked perspective. Beneath each one sprawled a puddle of sterile ochre light, emphasising the modular effect of the cobbles. Between them lay a thick, implausible blackness, through which he discerned the peripheral etchings of doors and casement windows, a grey and meaningless geometry. There was an anachronism here: undoubtedly, either the electric bleakness of the street lamps or the mosaic of oily cobbles had escaped the strictures of its own time. But Gynt was unsure which. He didn't much care. Walking, he was almost insular, contained more by the bones of his skull than by the street. His wet hands toyed with the puzzle. He was numb with an amorphous sense of loss; it affected his limbs with stiffness.

Towards its intersection with the main thoroughfare, where cobbles met smooth tarmac in a flurry of road-signs and xated traffic lights, the street dipped sharply. Halfway down the steep slope, on the left hand side and set back five or ten yards from the pavement, there bulked a fin-de-siècle church—possessed of pseudo-Perpendicular spire and Gothic windows. Before its entrance moved a pale shifting blur, rendered formless by distance. Attracted by a sudden movement, and by a quick, incomplete recollection of some other church at



some other time, Gynt selected it as his goal. End of third section.

**A**RM AND BLOCK burst in, dusted with snow and squabbling fitfully. Pauce was sitting fat-slob-slumped on the dissection table. Early Thursday, and he was gazing morosely at the case of knives due to make scragg-end of his flock in the morning. (Eidetic images of past cut-ups filmed his mind like cobwebs, and there were dead ewes in his medulla—heaped red and glutinous in a corner, awaiting disposal.) Scalpels and tongs glittered uncompromisingly back at him: fate is hard, bright and stainless. Sterile yet, and without crust or faint memory of blood to testify guilt. And whose guilt, Pauce was thinking: because no one would come and dip *him* in Milton after it was done.

Possibly aware that they had interrupted something neither of them could begin to appreciate, the intruders stopped assing about and shut up. Arm elbowed his tormentor's ribs, unplayfully.

Shhhhh.

Up yours, said Block, but closed his mouth.

Arm shuffled anxiously at the threshold, looking hard at his Cuban feet. His nose was running. He sniffed



monotonously, every second or so. Every fourth sniff, he wiped a silvery snail-track of snot on to his right sleeve. Block—his eyes already casing the benches and cabinets for some sign of the ethyl-alcohol flask—leered over the top of Arm's head at Pauce, waiting for an omen. But a massive inertia had taken the shepherd: he eyed them bleakly and said nothing. Arm mistook apathy for antipathy. He shuffled harder, dejected.

I didn't want to bring him, he muttered. He just came.

Pauce, contemplating abattoirs, ignored him. Silence but for heavy breathing from the harmonica-player. He had located the appropriate bottle. Arm squirmed.

I came for instructions, he murmured, desperate.

At this, Pauce's eyes unfroze; shifted their focal point from a sheepskull drama of vengeance casting himself as Pauce/Orestes pursued by rotting, ram-horned Furies, his personal bleating Eumenides to the little conspirator before him. His attention skidded about the surface of his mind for a schizoid, disoriented moment, then scraped into the right groove. Pauce the militant, the destroyer, looked out at Arm from a butcher's brain.

Yes, your instructions, he said. He got up wearily, slung the flying jacket over his bull shoulders and stalked out into the night, heading across the paddock for the sheepcote. Arm followed him like a spaniel, looking happier. Block waited until the rebarbative back of Arm's gaberline—stained by who knew what backstreet orgasms or defecations—had vanished, then doubled it round the table and stole the alcohol.

O baby, he thought, O baby.

Whistling, he made his way—feet sliding on fresh sheep-stool—to the cote; which was a white cubic structure, bearing a disconcerting resemblance to a fallout shelter; it squatted, uninviting and smelly. He hung about in front of a low doorway barred by chicken wire stretched across a frame of iron piping, just digging the night. The wind plucked a chord (somewhere around A-nine) from the wire. Voices droned out of the shelter, mingled with the anxious grunts and fidgetings of disturbed sheep. Taking his time, he fumbled the glass stopper out of the flask; closed his eyes; took a quick pull. The resultant explosion of his viscera coincided with Pauce's reappearance. The gate creaked open. A meaty hand crushed his left bicep and dragged him inside, coughing and blinded with ethyl tears.

Three ewes huddled at one end, Arm and Pauce at the other, secretive. Light seeped from a low-wattage bulb behind a grille in the ceiling, washing everything a sick shade of brown. Block beamed at the sheep. Their empty eyes gleamed redly at him. Arm was

But we never *killed* anybody before—

Block took another gulp from the flask, winked at the ewes. He produced a B-flat tin whistle from the harp-case and began to play *Cumberland Reel*, fast and soft.

Pauce, his voice sharp as scalpels, said: You'll do it. *We* need it done, and *you* the bread we're paying.

The sheep had formed a quiet semicircle in front of

the piper. He changed mood and tempo and gave them *Blown Mind Holler*.

Arm was still whining from the gloom. Overlaying his protests came Pauce's fervent basso rumble: Man, get your values sorted out. What favours has he done you. He's a bloody politician, and it's all grab with them. (His fingers hooked in grasping motions under Arm's runny nose, simulating a feral avarice, all split nails and knuckles.) All grab. And the sins of commission, omission: how many buggers dead if he presses his little button, how many more when he gets up late of a morning. (His rubber face leery, greedy, lazy by turns, *laissez faire* and megalomania, eyes hot.) This is for freedom, baby, you know what it says in the broadsheet.

But killing, wheedled Arm, I—

Block was pissed out of his mind. A sea of stoned and attentive sheep-faces filled his field of vision. He was soloing at the Albert, blowing an electric train blues. Wild sea-breakers of applause, hair plastered to the sweat on his face.

You can do it, Pauce went on, insistent, driving—and driven, by his own rhetoric—He'll be in Thing Street in an hour. Wait by the church. You can do it.

Block, out of phase with reality, had left coherence behind. His audience swayed and blinked as he tried to communicate the truth from somewhere in the ethyl continuum.

And Arm, thinking of money, nodded his head.

FINAL EXTRACT FROM "VISIONS OF MORVEN" BEGINS: Stonework reared, huge and melancholy and glistening. Rusty guttering, moss-encrusted, leaked the musical sound of water on metal. Somewhere behind the façade, the rain tapped a tin roof. One indifferently executed poster fluttered limply from the decrepit billboard: a message from God, detached and shredded by the damp agnostic wind. The desolation of the urban church: graffiti, broken windows, and a dwindling congregation. Ends.

ARM AND BLOCK stood in the snow on Thing Street E.C., waiting for something to happen. Neither was speaking very much since Block had spewed heartily over Arm's coat, filming it at chest-level with an unpleasant fawn chyme. Thing Street was arctic: the cobbles had vanished under a smooth, uniform layer of snow. Fat snowflakes spun and glittered through the sodium haloes, melted fast on the warm wet patch on Arm's chest (elsewhere they settled, giving him a piebald appearance). The Edwardian façades of the street were crusted white: snow on lintels, ledges and roofs contrasted hard with dark vertical surfaces, turning the view Cubist. Visibility was down to twenty yards. It was bitterly cold.

Arm was alone in a white acid fantasy. The world was soft and anechoic, enclosed in a 4,000 cubic yard hemi-



sphere. *Was this the Big White Sleep.* He cried out round a lungful of ice. Help. The snowscape absorbing his emaciated voice, ice on his lips, his victim stepped out of the dream walking blindly down the centre of the road, gait jerky and disconnected. He was heavily built, wearing only a dark shirt and trousers, no topcoat.

Block hissed and stiffened. In a stage whisper: That's him, that's him.

Gripes in Arm's belly. He walked gingerly into the road. The victim halted, an uncertain blur, wringing grey hands as if he knew and wasp leading. Arm closer, feeling for the shiv. A foot away, the eyes of the figure stopped him. Still-centre in the shifting face, powerfully bemused, they were lost eyes. Arm, confronted by his own dog-eyed inner pain, shuddered, sick. Abruptly, shaking with urgency, as if it might never happen if he looked longer, stabbed him. The knife met something solid; hesitated; slid in smoothly, like the other kind of penetration. The politician groaned gently. His bemused expression didn't change, merely took on a new relevance. He bowed from the waist then fell down, clasp the knife as if he wanted it further in. He looked up at Arm. Nurse, he said. After that he did nothing.

Arm stood rigid, thinking How did he know, how.

He doesn't look like a cabinet minister, said Block, thickly.

And indeed, he didn't.

Shut up, Arm shouted, shut up, it's the right place isn't it. And the right time. (That tyranny he had to believe in, place and time.) Besides, I know that face, I've seen him before. Somewhere before. He must be the right one. I've seen him. Seeking reassurance, he knelt, scrabbled white rat hands over the body. Found the reason for the man's fumbling fingers. There, he said, voice high. There. *Pauce* knows what he's doing.

Seven little pieces of plastic, locked together to form a sheep.

Ah, from *Pauce*. Yes. Block nodded his head mechanically. He's all wet through, he said. Then he opened his mouth and covered Arm with vomit.

ENVOY: The omen verified. Adm, guttering in the wind like a candle, dabbed impotently at his clothing. Block drooped against the church, beset by dry retches and self-pity. Snow was quietly smoothing the leeward edges of the killing, dusting the dead man, softening his outline. Time and place regained ascendancy. It was 4 a.m. in Thing Street when Holloway *Pauce* blew out of the night, hunched up grotesque against the cold and singing Puccini. Coming upon his agents, he laughed. Flung up his arms in triumph and laughed. Before him, bleating bleakly, ran his red-eyed flock

kana

## How May I Serve You continued from page 43

no past or personality. They'd forgotten to put them in. So what did he do? He just made one of his own, and let me tell you, that was a great shock to the psychologists. Bronson, over at the hospital, didn't think anybody could do it, actually wanted to keep this guy around for tests and crap like that. But we knew his rights and got him pushed through without any trouble."

Mitchell leaned back in his chair, rubbed his stomach, looked at the coins. "Jesus!"

"Well, it's all straightened out now, although next time you might try and work a little faster. This got talked about, you know. Is there anything else? If not, then I'd sort of like to go through a Billy the Kid showing I've got set up in P.T. I'm going to be Pat Garrett." He started fiddling with the set's temple pieces.

Mitchell looked at the small machine on Kulek's desk, wondered if he wanted to plug himself in, but decided against it. "Guess I'll be going then. Oh yeah, one other thing, would it be all right if I took one of those coins the nut made, as a souvenir if you know what I mean."

Kulek laughed, a kind of sneer. "You won't try to pass it?"

"Course not."

"Well here, take a twenty, they're cheap."

He flipped him the coin and Mitchell caught it, then started out of the office, looking down at it, lying in his hand, catching the light. "I love you," it said.

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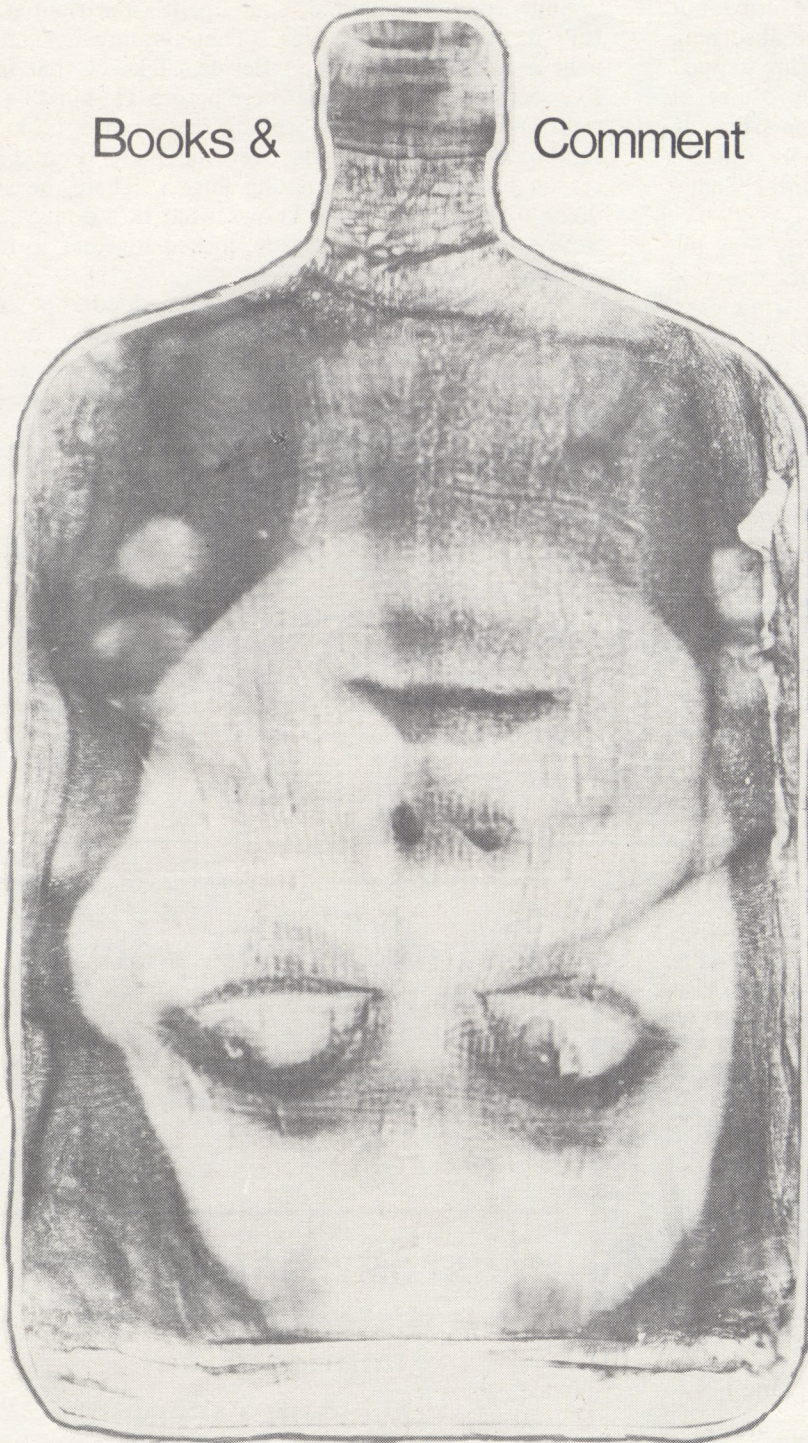
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## The impotence of being stagg

THE PROTRACTED ADOLESCENCE of SF was characterised by an inferiority complex directly traceable to the technical inadequacies of its writers. With the emergence of such talents as Ballard, Disch, and Spinrad, the situation has begun to change for the better: but the

amount of slipshod, penny-a-word prose still produced by the hard-SF machine is nothing less than impressive. This month, three books from Doubleday provide a rather fine illustration of the point.

Consider Joe Poyer's *Operation*

*Malacca* (Doubleday \$3.95): a Clarkian undersea romp involving a talking dolphin, *The Fight Against Communism*, and an attempt to atom-bomb the Malacca Straits, it staggers through a series of structural and stylistic failures to the inevitable gutless catharsis—the below-surface destruction of the Chinese nuclear submarine by two cretins and a fish. Scientifically and ideologically, it could have been patched together from old copies of *Reader's Digest*. Poyer destroys both narrative and emotional potential of the proposed man/dolphin relationship on Page 18. (Incidentally confirming something I have always suspected: the entire dolphin race, when contacted, will turn out to be composed of down-home American boys whose conversation tends to the carefully-vetted New York colourful.) His descriptions of the undersea environment are dreary. His syntax is clumsy and in several places merely incorrect. The whole book is a bore. But you can rest assured: there won't ever be any Red dolphins.

Lloyd Biggle Jr.'s fourth book, *The Still Small Voice of Trumpets* (Doubleday, \$3.95), is an attempt to deal with the mechanics of revolution. The action glides painlessly on, punctuated by two chaste pecks, and terminating with the overthrow of tyranny and the marriage of virgin hero with virgin heroine, to the sound of trumpets (sic). The overall tone of the book is one of charming naïvete, but it would perhaps be dangerous to put it into the hands of anyone bruised and battered by actual experience (such as a junior school child) or to expose it to the cruel mockery of cynics. Biggle, tripping his way delicately among clichés, is a cultural snob, and the only surprising thing is that he has surrendered his tender and precious social fantasies to the violence of print.

*Flesh* (Doubleday, \$3.95), by Philip José Farmer, is the most entertaining of the three, a humorous tilt at sexual mores based on a rework of pre-Christian fertility cults. Returning from a centuries-long interstellar trip, Captain Stagg and his crew discover an America that has regressed to a matriarchal, pastoral culture, proficient only in bio-surgery. Stagg is hailed as a god



from the sky, and using their surgical skill the priestesses turn him into . . . stag. As the Stag-king, his life becomes one long ejaculation—and until he finds that the terminal rite of the year is the summer-equinox slaying of the King. The deus-ex-machina ending is pure slapstick and the novel is marred by Farmer's sentence-level technique. Coupled with an irritating habit of narrating important events in retrospect through dialogue, this inability to manage words lends a bad taste to what might have been a fascinating and extremely funny story.

R. A. Lafferty's *The Reefs of Earth* (Berkley Medallion, 60 cents) is a slight work, a nightmare folktale with some amusing and bloody details, well worth a glance if you have nothing else to read. The Pucas, a small and dispersed group of aliens, come to Earth to look round: the story tells of a family whose parents are killed by a combination of human brutality and a mysterious complaint known as Earth Allergy. The children decide, even before their parents are dead, to exact vengeance in the most simple and savage manner. It is, not surprisingly, a simple and savage book—more simple than savage. At best a *mélange*, at worst a suety soup of social comment and folk-witchcraft.

*Solar Lottery* (Ace, 50 cents), Philip K. Dick's first novel, recently re-released, purports to be based on Heisenberg's theory of random-selection and Von Neuman's games-theory; but in a welter of banal floridity and inept voyeurism it degenerates into a turgid and tensionless space opera. The action of the story centres round a Besterian game of beat-the-telepath and a race to locate the illusive tenth planet of the solar system. There are moments of second-hand ingenuity, but the supposed theoretic base of the novel is treated only as an importunate detail, and the overall effect is of an author as dreary and despondent as the universe he describes. It ends with an uplifting if unoriginal dissertation on the as yet unfulfilled but soon otherwise promise of Man. The whole imitative chipboard drama fades out to the strains of *The Star Spangled Banner* . . . The book is a useful indication of just how far

Dick has progressed in the thirteen years since its first publication, and little else.

And now here's a book for all the family, Arthur C. Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Hutchinson, 25/-) is a travelogue, illustrated with prosaic, half-tone imagery and crammed with soft technological propaganda. It will hardly offend anyone. Beginning with a conducted tour of *The Wonders of Evolution* and sputtering out among its own feeble psychedelic embers, it encompasses all the trivia of the prediction-game: coy attempts to restate socio-political problems; nauseating injections of orbital science; Chinese stewardesses on the Earth-Moon milk-run. And free-fall lavatories, yet. The universe, it seems, is committed to the same fate as Rome—every worn-out vista in this book has been gawked at again and again and again. Clarke hasn't even the excuse of bringing fresh life to his theme: his approach to the mechanics of form and style is flat and unappetising, like synthetic cream. An inoffensive, and mundane little piece of Establishment SF.

By far the most palatable of a mediocre bunch is Charles Harness's third novel, *The Ring of Ritornel* (Gollancz, 25/-). Here, Harness compensates for his flashy but slightly seedy prose with a baroque riot of characters and situations woven into his customary complex narrative form. The quaint, the beautiful, the grotesque: through bizarre action-shots we are shown a jewelled, unstable galactic empire; two conflicting and faintly preposterous religions; and a multisymbolic Earth (spelt Terror) on trial for a century-old nuclear crime. Andrek, the protagonist, wades through an ergot-brew of astrophysics and florid philosophical speculation, seeking revenge and finding something altogether different—by way of Hoyle's rescinded continuous-creation theory and an incredible anti-matter climax. This is typical Harness: a brash, fascinating eclectic, fast and glossy. However, over-elaborate dialogue—the “courtly” mode—and irritating verbal gimmicks render it slightly less satisfying than his earlier work.

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# PHANTOM LIMBS

Frances Johnston

TONY RICHARDSON'S "Charge of the Light Brigade" reminds us that, after the heroism, and after the deaths, there were many survivors who had lost limbs. Nor were limbs lost only in battle. Just as many succumbed to the rank medical conditions, which inspired Florence Nightingale and her nursing nuns.

It is astonishing to realize, in this modern world, that the overall design and many details of limbs now issued by the National Health Service, differ hardly at all from those used after the Crimea. Indeed, at least one design goes back some fifty years earlier: the Earl of Anglesey who suffered at Waterloo (the interchange between him and Wellington will probably be recalled—"By God, I've lost my leg"—"By God, so you have") spent much time and inventiveness designing a suitable replacement, and the Anglesey leg is, (or was until very recently) still in issue from Roehampton.

Wars tend to give impetus to both the design and production of artificial limbs. But the Great War did not do so in this country, nor did it do much elsewhere. The sheer volume of demand perhaps made this impossible; and after it, economic retrenchment as well as the steadily ageing population of limb-wearers as a whole, enabled governments to escape their responsibility. But the last war did have a material effect—though not, again, in this country. In the United States the Veterans Administration (set up to rehabilitate "our boys") made its aim not only to provide but also to design. It has made large strides in the field of upper-limb prostheses, and sizeable steps forward with regard to those for lower limbs. There was also considerable development in Germany. Since the last war, progress has continued and has combined with newer ideas in surgery which have resulted in the better provision of limbs. But not here. Much is to be heard about research and development; much can be seen in the dis-

play cases at Roehampton. But how many people ever see these newer limbs, how many such limbs are even in production? The answer in both cases is very few indeed, compared with the need.

It may be thought that the thalidomide tragedy has given impetus to the proper design and provision of prostheses. To some extent it has, but this has yet to be reflected in provision to the limbless population as a whole. And, as the tragedy was as it were, a "once-only" affair, it can easily be seen how Government departments will be able to stall, just as they have stalled in the past.

How is it that such stalling is possible, when something of the order of ten thousand new limbs are issued each year? The answer is relatively simple: the best part of eighty per cent of these limbs are legs, and the best part of eighty per cent of those legs are for elderly people, mainly with vascular trouble. It is well known that no pensioner group is strong enough to fight the Treasury, and this group is less equipped than most to do so: both are dying, and dying rapidly, the whole time. So also is BLESMA (the organisation which represents Servicemen's needs for limbs.) The population of younger people who need limbs is a small one, by comparison, and it is not yet organized. Yet its numbers grow steadily, and will continue to grow—as does the number of vehicles on the road, for there is a fairly clear correlation between the two figures. (We do not of course suggest that most young people lose limbs in road accidents, nothing of the sort; but that it is this *increase* in road accidents which is increasing their number). It may well be that when these young people become organised, then we shall see the NHS forced into making proper provision of limbs generally. It is very far from doing so now.

LET US FOR A moment consider the matter of phantom limbs. Those who have never lost a limb, or part of a limb, have difficulty in understanding just what a phantom limb is. The body is an organic whole, which is conscious of itself as a whole: if part of it is removed, depending how long that whole has been in existence the body will have a degree of permanent recollection of that missing part. Thus, a baby

whose limb is removed soon after birth will never be aware of his missing limb: nor will a young child. But thereafter, awareness of the limb increases, so that an adult is usually aware of the missing limb. For instance, the author lost the top two phalanges of a finger in an accident with a carving knife not many years ago: he is very much aware of the absence of these phalanges. But here is a curious thing: he is not aware of the absence when he wears his artificial finger—or, it would be better to say, not in the same way.

Awareness of this absence is, in most cases, just awareness involving no pain or disagreeable sensations at all. But in some cases, it is combined with very severe pain—in cases where the neural processes in the removed limb have themselves been damaged.

In this country, until comparatively recently—a matter of ten or twelve years or so—the phantom limb experience has been treated cavalierly. This attitude arose during the Great War, when the vast majority of amputees were soldiers from the ranks. One medical attitude towards those who suffered unpleasant phantom limb experiences was that they were poor material anyway in terms of morale, and the only thing for them to do was to grin and bear it. This was of course arrant nonsense, although there may have been some truth in the possibility that the general neural condition of the sufferer had deteriorated in the conditions of trench warfare and somewhat primitive medical conditions at the time. But "grin and bear it" was real nonsense. Yet this kind of attitude persists among those who provide limbs at Roehampton, though not over the matter of the phantom limb.

The attitude towards the phantom limb has undergone a definite change, due largely to American research. They found that a hand or arm amputee can mentally, as it were, close or open his missing hand, or bend his missing forearm; and that the remaining muscles are actually obeying these mental commands. So they designed arms which, by means of pressure-sensitive pads, respond to these muscular movements, and operated the arm or hand, to make use of the phantom



sensation. In some cases, where a degree of pain existed, it was mitigated by the use made of this muscular movement.

There was a further development. In the case of lower limb amputations, the newly developed practice of immediate post-operative fitting of limbs, markedly reduced any unpleasant phantom sensations. (This fitting is what it says: the fitting by means of plaster-of-paris casts and suitable attachments, of the new artificial limb—on a temporary basis till the stump is ready for the permanent limb—while the patient is still on the operating table and under the anaesthetic. Thus when the patient comes to, he is in some cases unaware of any absence of limb at all. This is especially so with children, and cases are known of children not realizing they had artificial limbs until the time came to remove the cast, when they would object strongly to *their* limb being removed.) Such immediate fittings have vastly reduced the length of time needed for adjusting to limbs: from a matter of many weeks, and in some cases in this country months, to an average of 3-4 weeks. A case is known of a patient walking within three hours of the operation; discharge from hospital with the new permanent limb has taken place in 21 days. The great point about this immediate fitting is that the phantom limb, as it were, “inserts” itself into the artificial limb, and the only time one is aware of the absence of one’s own natural limb is when one takes the artificial limb off at night. Curiously, this also occurs with congenital or childhood amputees who so regard the limbs as “theirs” (we are not here thinking of immediate post-operative fittings) that they too are conscious of being without the natural limb only when they remove the artificial limb.

**W**E SHOULD TURN for a moment to upper limbs. Not many years after use was first effectively made of residual muscular movements, it was discovered that the electric impulses in the nerves could be picked up and amplified to operate artificial hands through electric motors. This was a step forward from the use of muscles, since in some cases the muscles had suffered damage and, in many, their power was too small to operate the prosthesis. But the

nerves almost always remain, and this is the road along which developments are proceeding and must indeed proceed. Some publicity has been given to such limbs in this country, but they are not in general issue, and much needs to be done before they are entirely suitable. Meanwhile, Roehampton seems to think that the way to provide properly for an arm amputee is to equip him with a number of interchangeable gadgets, designed to be suitable for various trades and jobs, and to be inserted as needed into the socket of an artificial arm. When not “working,” the gadget is replaced by a so-called “dress” hand. Many must have seen these leather-clad hands, which tell the world that the wearer has an artificial hand. Yet for some years now there have been in production (in this country as well as abroad) artificial hand coverings which are moulded in plastic, from a natural hand, and resemble a natural hand to all but the closest scrutiny. But few indeed of these are to be seen.

What one does see in this country is a far from negligible number of people, of all ages who are not only one-handed or one-armed, but wear no limb. This is because of the cumbersomeness of what the National Health Service issues, and because of the gadgetry. Notice indeed how the basic idea is wrong: they fit a man for his trade, not to be a man again. The Americans work the other way: they accept that good artificial arms can be made, but that their strength is not great and that they require some adeptness to manage satisfactorily. They demonstrate that, with suitably designed “split-hooks” (which of course do not begin to look like a natural hand) it is possible to do virtually anything. An outstanding example is a young man in Baltimore who lost both hands when a child, but who plays baseball with his artificial hooks—and does everything else into the bargain, including riding a Honda. The American style of split-hook is attractive in appearance and makes the British pattern look medieval. The result is that many children never wish to change to artificial hands, in their present state of development; and even many adults in the end, once they have overcome initial self-consciousness, prefer the split-hook. But what

one rarely sees in America is a person with one arm—i.e., without any prothesis.

Time to consider the lower limb. Here, in the normal cases, there have been two great developments of which we see little or nothing in this country. The first concerns the above-knee limb: the usual fitting nowadays in America is what is known as the total contact sealed socket. This is a socket made from a cast of the stump, designed to be in contact with the stump at all points, with a valve to enable any trapped air within the socket to escape. It is not a vacuum socket, which has been experimented with here, and which is not desirable for various reasons. It is a total contact socket, with no vacuum. The limb thus fits perfectly, and is fully held in place without the need for any shoulder or waist suspension at all. Contrast the normal practice in this country of a socket which is anything but total contact, with a metal band to fit the pelvis, to which is attached a jointed bar fixed to the socket. Although the patient has a perfectly good hip joint this is unnecessarily duplicated and causes, into the bargain, much wear and tear on clothing.

The other development is for the lower limb, with what is called the patella-tendon-bearing socket (or ptb socket.) Here again, a cast is taken of the stump, up to and around the patella, and a limb made so that the stump fits snugly into it and so the patient’s weight is taken on the patella itself—a very good weight bearing object, as those who pray in church will know. A light leather cuff is strapped just above the knee, and that is all. There is no cumbersome thigh socket lacing up, no unnecessary and handicapping metal knee-joint, no side irons, no wear and tear on trousers, a much lighter limb, much freer movement, and much greater comfort. How many people in this country have them?

**L**ET US LOOK a little into the future. If a patient is to lose a limb, the ideal would be to provide a permanent replacement. By permanent, we mean fixed and immovable, part of the patient. Within our own time, this may become possible. It is already possible, and not only possible but performed, for titanium pegs to be inserted into the jaw-



bones, which, protruding through the gums, without any rejection by the gums, become a firmer surface for the fitting of dentures than has hitherto been devised (and, moreover, this has been done in this country.) It seems reasonable to suppose that if the gums can be tolerant of titanium, then so can, for instance, the flesh of arms and legs. If so, the next step would be to fit a titanium tube to the remainder of the patient's bone, which would protrude through the skin to make a far firmer foundation for an artificial limb permanently in this way. Indeed, the development after that

would of course be to fix the artificial limb permanently in this way.

We can see further than that: if it is possible to pick up, and amplify the electric impulses in the nerves, it should be possible to sheathe the nerves in some suitable conducting substance, itself well protected and insulated, and lead the connection within the stump to the titanium tubing, through it, and down inside it, to connect up with motors within the prosthesis. In this way, something near perfect control of a limb could be achieved, and it would want little for an artificial limb to be in all respects as good as a nat-

ural one, certainly so far as lower limbs are concerned. It would then want little for them to be made better, too—and even without that step, the replacement of a limb would often become a matter for choice instead of being regarded as a calamity. It is not often realized that the medical profession, for some quaint reason, advise polio patients against amputation of lower limbs, when such amputation, even with Roehampton's substitutes, would make the patient far more mobile. Could such advice be reasonably maintained when these developments have taken place?

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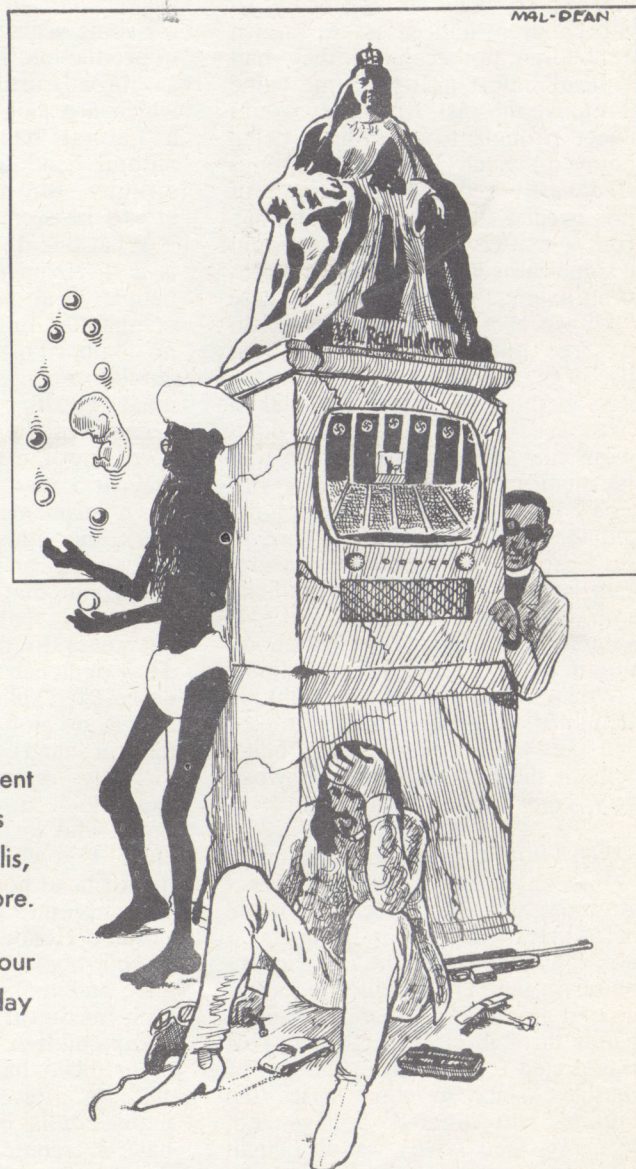
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