

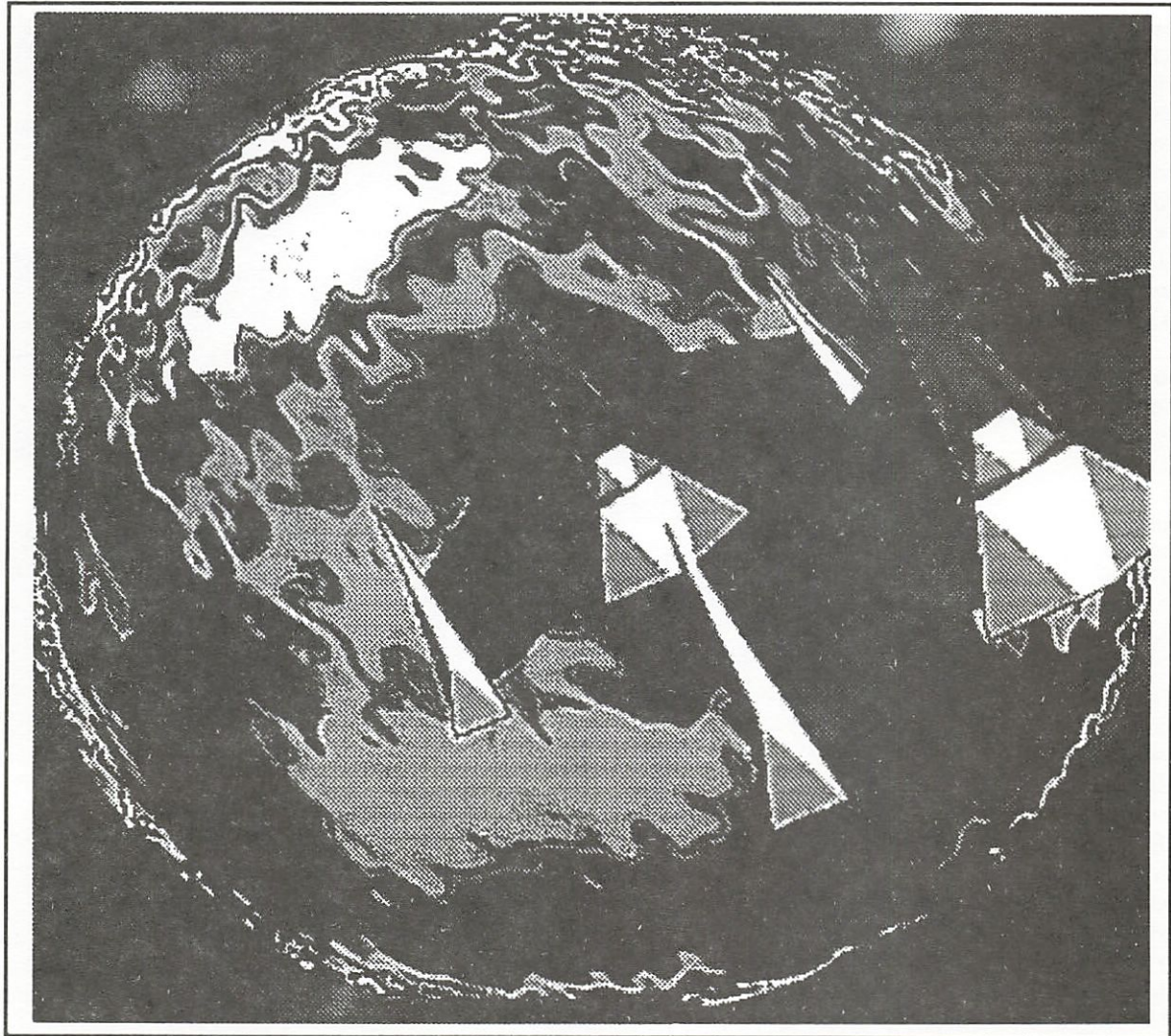
DENALI



LANE WINTER
COMMUNITY 1995
COLLEGE

JK

DENALI



LUNAR BY FRANKIE PALMER

Cover art by Justin Tindel

Lane Community College
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Winter 1995. Volume XVIII Number 2

FROM THE EDITOR

Here is the Winter '95 issue, and the theme is science fiction. On the following pages you will find fiction, poetry, photography and graphics which all embody some form of science fiction, fantasy, or horror. Also, there is an interview with professional science fiction author Jerry Olton, plus an original story.

The response to the Fall '94 issue was very good. The winners of the reader's choice awards are:

- Best story — Gary Noland for "The Emancipate Metronoid"
- Best poem — U.B. 28 for "Dr. Doctor, A Jar"
- Best photo — Kenneth Brady (me) for "Birdwatching"
- Best graphic — Kyra Kelly for "Go Ask Alice"

These awards were determined by less than 100 votes from readers during Fall Term. This term, you may vote by tearing out the last page in the issue, filling it out, and dropping it off at the SRC, on the 2nd floor of the Center building or in the *Denali* office. Please vote, so that the results will reflect a greater portion of *Denali*'s readers.

The Spring '95 issue of *Denali* will challenge your creative talents! All fiction and poetry submitted should begin with the line, *The sign on the door read, "Free Beer."* Where you go from there is purely up to your imagination! Photography and graphics should reflect something from that sentence in their subject matter. Have fun!

To submit, pick up a submission form at the SRC, in the *Denali* office, or at any of the boxes where *Denali* is available. Or call 747-4501 ext. 2830 for more info.

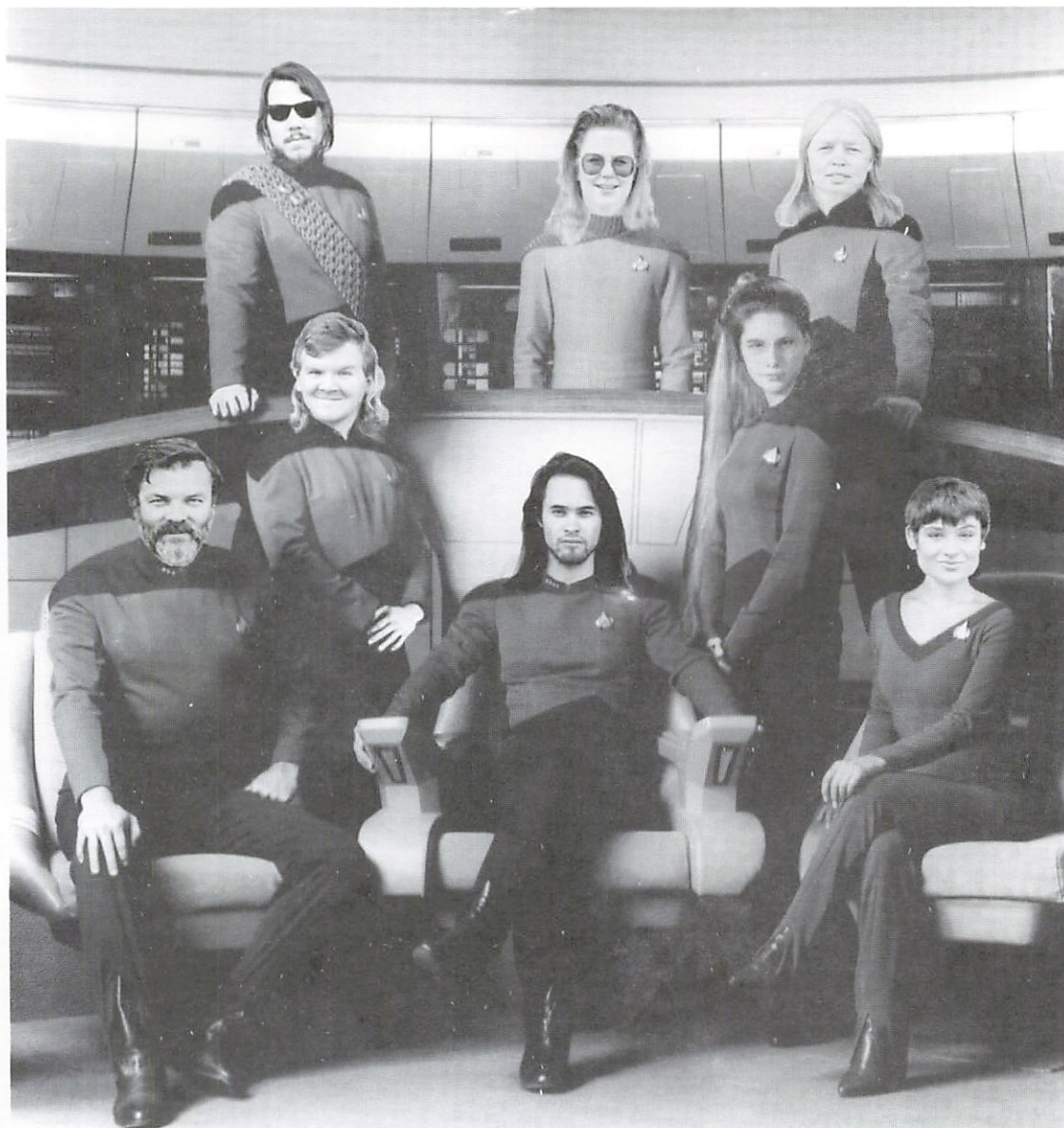


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TIME'S CHILD

A DOCUMENT FOUND DURING A SEARCH ON INTERNET 1/1/95

PETER JENSEN

There was a child, who got lost in time long before our Age of Light. This child wandered across the fields of time before our present abilities. They say this child appeared before our time, long before anyone else broke the time barrier. They say this child showed up once in our time, was frightened, and then disappeared, simply went back home.

Of course, we searched all the records for this child. We traveled back and tried to find its time. We failed to find the child's time quickly. We failed to locate this child in time to save it from its fate.

This child appeared before the Age of Einstein. It discovered the real nature of time before it should have. It discovered relativity too soon, and now it's gone. But there is in oral circulation an old legend about a child who was told about the night sky by its mother and father. This child was told all the usual fairy tales, but instead of reaching the conventional conclusions, this child drew the right conclusions and realized what it was looking at as it lay on its back on a hill watching the stars.

The legend continues that at first, the child drew the wrong conclusion that time is the same everywhere. "I am seeing the stars all at once. The present is singular in me. All those lights unite in me!" Of course, simultaneity is impossible in a relative universe. But wrong conclusions are valuable; they show us clear errors we can rule out since they do not lead our minds out of the mental maze to an edge of discovery. Wrong conclusions lead us further into the maze, where the bull-headed, half-beast-half-man of ignorance waits to feed on the annual sacrifice of children.

But this child took a long, hard look at the beast of ignorance and escaped! This child realized as it lay in the grass that every light that swims in the night sky is a different past. This child realized what kind of universe we live in. We were able to find a document, which this child wrote and left behind in a time not its own. This was found in Brooklyn, New York, and it was dated August 19, 1942, just after the beginning of the Golden Age of Oil:

When I look up at the sky on a clear night, I could ask for no more powerful proof of relativity. Every light source I see, whether it's a planet or a star, a solar system or a cluster of stars, a pulsar or a nebula or a galaxy — every light is a different age, and I am looking (it just seems like all at once) at a multitude of past times.

This nightly evidence is the original, simple proof of

what time really is. I can look up and say, "That light is fifty years old. That light is a thousand years old. That light may be a million years old. And maybe some of that light is over a billion years old. And they are all just arriving at my eyes on curved paths now at the same time! Think of the diverse times I am seeing right now!"

How curious I am to explore all those times! In a sense, I am already traveling in time whether I look at all those times in the stars or at my belly button. I wonder if I could actually cut loose from this time. How could I do that with my mind?

Taped to this page was the tail feather of a Passenger Pigeon, a bird common in the 1800s — and common now that we have brought them back — but extinct in 1942. This feather is a somewhat sad but oddly amusing clue that this child came from or had surfaced in the 1800s to pick up such a pretty feather and place it in 1942. This child also left an item from 1942 in the home of Thomas Jefferson: a photograph of Albert Einstein was tucked into the Lewis and Clark collection in 1809. Much later, someone at the Smithsonian was chastised for leaving that photo "out of place." But in fact, the more we checked, the more out of time items we found all over the world that we could trace to this one brilliant but childish joker. This child seemed to be playing hide and seek in time. We now know why.

This game was a deliberate attempt to search for a more friendly era than its own. And this child was aware of the dangers; the clues it left were designed to appeal to beings fond of doing thought experiments but who were also moved by a warm sense of humor. We finally found this child's time by solving a series of story problems it left behind in Washington, D.C. in 1945; Bern, Switzerland in 1905; Monticello in 1809; and Eugene, Oregon in 1995. From then and there, we could dive right back to its time, but we arrived too late for an immediate rescue. Let us explain.

At this child's time, there were no known ways of exploring time except reading, and they say, at first, this child pined away for lack of any tools for discovery. This is a grave danger for us all. If we lack proper tools, if our generation cannot help us come up with a means of discovering more, we all run the risk of watching our curiosity die long before we do.

This child could imagine something like a telescope for

investigating time. This child could imagine something like a spaceship for sailing out into time. This child could imagine its mind leaving its body and traveling in dream time. But no one then saw the need to explore time since everyone but this child thought of time as if it were an earthly, one-way river flowing like a wind.

And the beast of ignorance never liked people thinking about the nature of time. It built walls to keep time out. It raised up warlords to fight one another over whose wizards had the better, outdated ideas about time. It rewarded thinkers who invented systems of belief designed like viruses to search human minds for new ideas and destroy them. They gave this viral search and destroy system many fancy and misleading names. They called it "religion." They called it "education." They called it "science." They called it "progress." They even called it "freedom!"

Many were fooled. Many were trapped. Many were caught and punished. A few were rewarded and cared for by warlords greedy for new weapons. A few just slipped their minds loose in time and escaped.

Of course, this child was almost too young to be suspected, but they found this child before we did. They sent this child to a special school to unlearn its ideas. And by the time we arrived, they had succeeded. The last clue we found of this child's extraordinary mind is the report of a teacher who wrote:

This child never paid attention in class. When I called on this child, it turned, and I saw its dull facial expression that had been just staring out the window instead of doing class work. This child was an impossible student! A real day-dreamer!


By the time we arrived, this child had been turned into an ordinary young person of its time. It was still affectionate in that melancholy way that children get when they are trapped in a war zone. We tried to question it, but it looked at us with fear. We identified ourselves as beings from another time, but it could no longer recognize beings from its own dreams or its own travels in time. We quickly broke off contact and returned.

There was a child who got lost in time long before our present Age of Light. This was a child we lost in time. We recommend a special rescue. We recommend a mission in time back to when this child was just discovering the nature of time at the age of seven. We recommend bringing this child back to now. Of course, its parents and its cat will be brought forward, too.

This is an important request! You must remember how often we had to go back and help Einstein escape. We await your approval. This is urgent!

Some one else is tracking this child in time. We are crossing time paths with some one or some thing sinister from another time. We have found traces of foul-smelling bubbles of gas across the time barrier. We know the child knew of this entity and was able to avoid it. We know this entity has also been avoiding us. But we have also made some mistakes that might be useful to this entity.

We think that even this document may have been broadcast by our overpowered system, and several electronic copies of it have been lost in time. That is why we never identified here the actual time this child was born. We hope no one but us knows when to find this child.

There are many dark ages that would like to destroy or exploit this child. There are many ages that do not know the value of children who see this universe with new eyes. 

SHEEP

The sheep walked in circles
For hours and hours
Reverent, yet pitiless
In Gregorian cadence they
chanted
As only these sheep can do
Connotative, yet scrupulous
They dreamed of the Moon
Had visions of stars
Sublime, yet merciless

Sheep in solemn meter marching
Watching rockets soaring to space
Contemplative, yet mocking
Dogs have been in space, and monkeys
Goldfish even, but never, never sheep
Deplorable, yet splendid
Fantasy mirages of moondust
Infinite vistas; sheep in circles stroll
Decadent, yet aspiring.

- ROLAND MARTY



TITHE BY JASON RACKLEY

THE FOG

Stealthily in the darkness,
On slippered, silent feet,
A fog stole in from seaward
And spread her mystic sheet.

She made each gleaming ball of light
A phosphorescent gem,
That might festoon the crescent moon
In a glowing diadem.

She wrapped the leaves of sleeping trees
In wedding veils of white —
Then wafting high into the sky,
Crept onward through the night.

But morning guessed that she had passed,
For glistening far and near,
The fog had left on each fair thing
The traces of a tear.

- DEE BUGARIN

THE WEB

Once while your eyes were melting
I slipped inside your mind.
And I sat amongst the puddles
of bitter teardrops left uncried.
From this well within
I viewed the fiery source.
Out of which you flew all molten eyes
upon an iron horse.
All through your flight of fancy
behind a shadow I was hidden.
Entwined in icy cobwebs
trapped in your world forbidden.

- VENICE MASON

SHIFTER

KYLE P. WHELLISTON

Last summer, my college roommate Chad went off to the Orient to study various Eastern religions. After a great deal of practice and vigilance, he mastered the ancient secrets of shape-shifting. He was actually very good at it — he could turn himself into just about anything.

He could do basic objects, like a rubber band, a rock or a ball. Sometimes he'd try more complex shapes — a lamp, a potted plant, a videocassette. When he tried really hard, Chad could make himself into very complicated machinery — a refrigerator, for example, or a television set. One time, he even turned himself into a luxury automobile. It was all really quite remarkable.

Sometimes his ability came in handy; whenever we locked ourselves out of the house, Chad would turn into a key. One October weekend, the two of us went camping in the mountains; a surprise rainstorm soaked all our gear, including our matches. Chad changed into a portable wood stove, and we were able to eat dinner and keep warm.

He was a big hit at parties. Everyone would sit in a circle, with Chad in the middle, and my friends and I would all try to "stump" him, to challenge his ability. We tried a compact disc player, Venetian blinds, a four-slice toaster, the flag of Iceland. We occasionally would see him freeze up and strain a bit, but he'd come through every single time. Once, he was dared to turn into a \$100 bill, and I had to physically restrain one of the guests from going out and spending Chad on beer.

Some people became quite jealous of Chad and hated him passionately. But most everyone was very fascinated and entertained by his unique ability; he had no trouble finding dates. Some people even tried to take up shape-shifting, but always to no avail.

During winter term, Chad developed the strange habit of "disappearing" every once in a while. I'd have to search the apartment for items that had not previously been there — new clothes, furniture, unexplained knickknacks. I'd always have to count the silverware and dishes. I wouldn't dare vacuum the floors or even take out the garbage, for fear of throwing Chad away.

But eventually, he would show up again. He would tell me what he had been, and it was usually something obscure or bizarre: a false electrical outlet, pimple cream, a Hummel figurine, a glue stick. Each time, he seemed more and more disturbed — he said he wasn't able to choose what he was turning into anymore. It was almost as if he were slowly losing control over his body.

In March, things really took a turn for the worse. During finals week, Chad was gone for four days. We had made plans all term to spend Spring break in Palm Springs — sit in the sun, drink Corona and meet girls. But as the departure date approached, I realized that I'd have to go on vacation without my good buddy Chad.


On my first night in Palm Springs, I ate at a little Chinese restaurant across from my hotel. I felt a little bit bad about the circumstances, so I got a table for two and kept a chair empty in

Chad's honor. It was one of those places where the cook prepares the meal right next to the table, with a lot of fast knife work and bursts of flame. I had egg foo young.

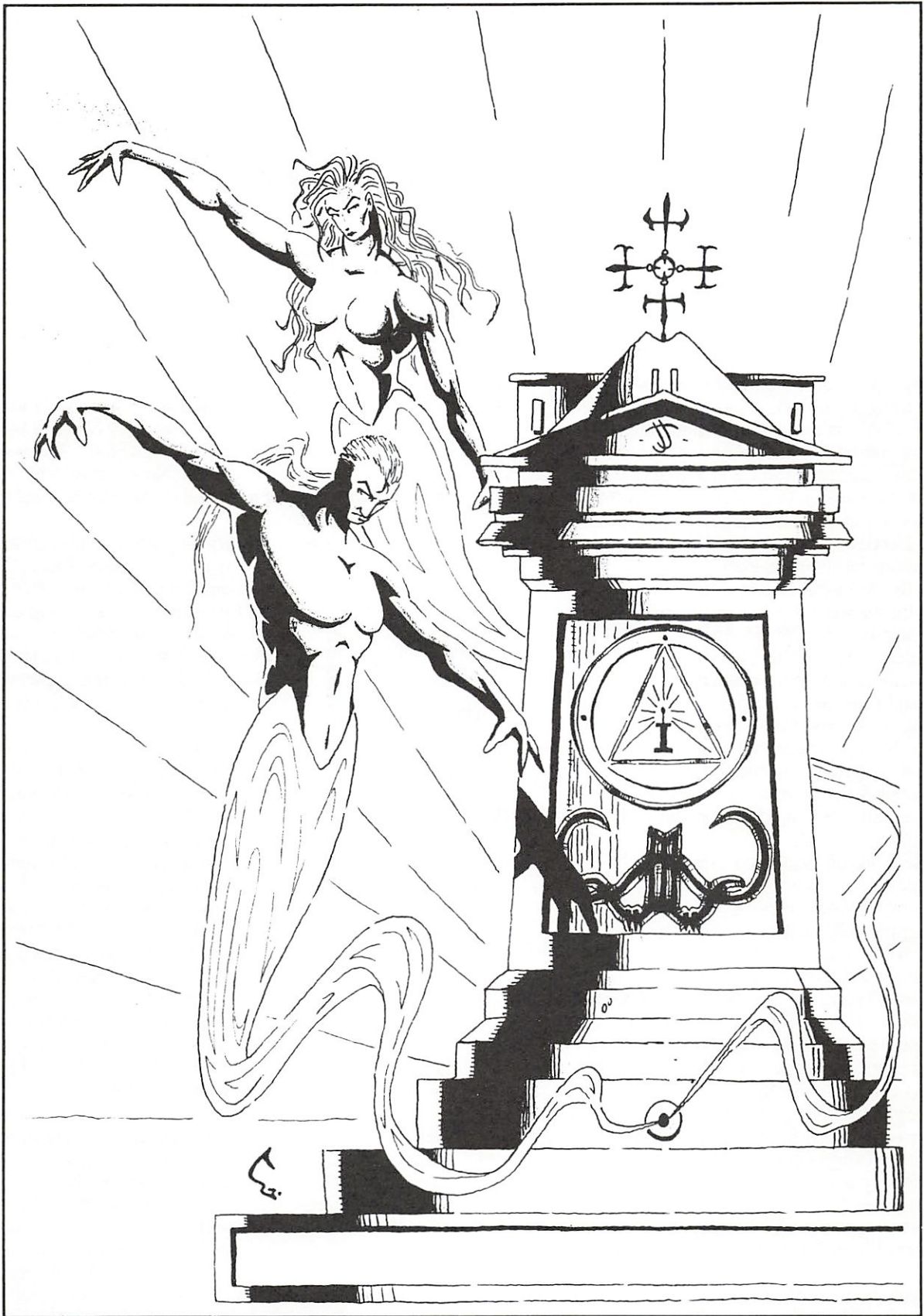
When the waiter brought me the bill, there was a fortune cookie on the tray. When I cracked the cookie in two and read the small slip of paper inside, it read: "I'm stuck."

I couldn't believe it — I had murdered my best friend. I know it wasn't really my fault, but I still can't help feeling responsible. I'm not kidding when I say this: it's impossible to live with yourself when you've done something like that.

Ever since I killed Chad, I hear the police sirens in the night and think they're coming for me. I've become incredibly paranoid, and I can't stop shaking and sweating. I've also developed an intense fear of inanimate objects.

I keep thinking about something Chad told me on that camping trip. "I learned that the most important part of shape-shifting is believing that all things, human beings included, are infinitesimally worthless in the 'grand scheme.' Now, I look in the mirror and think that I have as much lasting importance as, say, a candy bar. Then I start thinking of myself as a piece of chocolate. I get this incredible feeling, like I'm not tied down to my body anymore. That, my friend, is freedom." 

Once, he was dared to turn into a \$100 bill, and I had to physically restrain one of the guests from going out and spending Chad on beer.



SOUL MATES BY JEREMY GAWRYLON

TRUCK STOP RELIEF

TWAIN WOODRUFF

Driving my aqua-green, toothpaste tube shaped Volkswagen bus machine along a numberless Interstate highway, one of the good ole U. S. of A.'s miracle veins of connection, I decided that egress was imperative. My white-lined, criss-crossing eyes registered painful decibels, and I was seeing chartreuse elephants carrying Elvis manikins on their backs — complete with M. Gandhi bodies. My quick mind wondered out-loud: "Why this fusion of the ascetic and the hedonist? Can a vegetarian and a hound-dog eating carnivore co-exist?"

Tuning to the AM band on this note, I was relieved that the answer blared its way to my warbling consciousness: "Only in Amerika!" My angst-ridden "phew" splattered the inside of the windshield with yesterday's pasta sauce, and I saw in the nearing distance a huge EXIT, also numberless, which seemed like an excellent alternative to driving further with my mind and my car radio in such closeknit syncopation. So I told myself to ignore all previous education and J.P. Sartre and to exit. I did.

My rumbling bus quickstopped through three faded red stop signs before I noticed a massive parking lot with a very, very tiny building geographically centered beneath a massive sign with the name: "Truck Stop." I stopped my bus and let the heavy breathing of my incarcerated spirit subside, before I shifted the bus into first gear (lowest of numbers) and drove me, my bus, and all my worldly possessions to the center of this parking lot, which unbeknownst to me was coincidentally the center of the universe, as news commentators later discovered. I stopped the bus, leaving it wedged between two eighteen-wheelers: truck A and truck B. Believe me, this is how they were designated with classical Japanese calligraphy, which I had earlier in life bothered to study during my micro-Zen period. You do not have to be a rocket scientist to navigate a Volkswagen bus across the Amerikan dreamscape (let's for honesty sake say landfill), but it certainly does not hurt. To be smart, that is, which I am, of course.

Did I tell you, by the way, that my days here are numbered and thus my overzealous obsession with numbers and numberless numbers? Well, this is true; both the first statement and the second. I now continue since this story is by far the more interesting of the two; for the story of my soon to be stone-cold dead body is not worthy of an obituary columnist's time. Now I

continue.

I step down from my bus and adopt a trucker's walk and mind-set while I double-clutch my weary bones to the door of the aforementioned (story one) "Truck Stop." This is a ball-busting exercise at the very least. Now I know why truckers carry so many cases of motor oil in the third seat behind them. In case of emergency.

The sky above my immediate position is blacker in multiple degree than the sky in every other direction. This is the blackness of a Colombian coffee bean colored telephone in my former hairdresser's shop and the blackness of my Colombian hairdresser's long waffled hair. The fact that I no longer have any hair, "nada," is part and parcel of the "other" story; which I hope to not refer to again.

The "Truck Stop" sign, golden yellow neon light, shot straight into this blackest overhead creating a white hole in space pouring straight from the center of our universe, which of course is exactly to the most exact millimeter of inexactitude where it and I were now standing. I was agape at the clash of white and black, probably due no doubt to my earlier micro-Zen training, which had often hinted at this kind of blatant duality which macro-Zen can reveal and which most likely occurs only

at the end/beginning of the known/unknown universe. Clarity was and is, still, not my strong-point; but this sight offered me the clarity of a paradox suddenly, violently opening its enigmas for the entire human race to see and to absorb. But I digress in the midst of my egress, so let me progress.

I opened the simple screen door with a none-too-steady hand and entered quickly, losing my gaping mask and donning the mask of a weary, bleary, dreary trucker happy to be in the company of other weary, dreary, bleary truckers. The journey taken is not merely destination bound, for the getting there is often the meat of the sandwich. And this is what I wanted now, a sandwich stuffed with meat. These days meat is not always in high supply owing to our ballooning population, yet often along the road less traveled, which is where I found myself, a demand for meat can be satisfied. I planned to demand, and it was up to this eatery to satisfy. Now that I had a plan in mind, it was quite a bit easier to hike my trousers truckingly and head for the empty booth in the tiny diner's corner. Funny, but the walk seemed long, longer, longest. I am not sure whether it was the

"To go for the jugular on the first thrust is poor technique and generally disastrous, so I say, 'I'll have a cup of coffee, pretty woman.'"

eyes of the truckers, like high beams on a foggy mountain road, zeroing (the root of all numbers) in on my masquerade, or whether it was that the interior expanded implausively in a reverse ratio to the exterior, i.e. the room was growing as I moved within, ever deeper within. I was there. At the booth. Empty booth.

I set myself down with an obvious "phew" and waited, while recatching some needed oxygen, for the waitress with the smile. Yes, there were three waitresses, akimbo behind the palmetto counter. One with a smile. One without a smile. And one with a cartoon squiggle, neither up nor down. The waitress with the smile approached my booth from the center field counter with her centerfold body drawing the selfsame eyes which had just wounded me so bloodily. Yet her demeanor paid them no-never-mind, and she kept her smile face forward and arrived with a "What'll it be?"

To go for the jugular on the first thrust is poor technique and generally disastrous, so I say, "I'll have a cup of yer coffee, pretty woman."

She, obviously used to this repartee, asked did I want it neutralized, "Cream or sugar?"

Decision time. I must attempt to close it now or never, especially as my days were numbered. "I don't want to cause you no trouble, make it black, and, oh, how're the chances of me getting a meat sandwich? Any spare meat'll do."

Her half-moon smile didn't wane an iota, and quick as a firefly smashing dead-dead against a windshield she sparked, "Your order has already been passed to the kitchen, and your otter sandwich is frying greasefully as we speak."

Hiding my amazement behind a trucker's listless smirk, I coughed, "Thanks ma'am."

She left me to return to a rusty coffee vat with a Mobile Oil Pegasus winged and snorting fire oil on its cylindrical metal, poured my coffee, black, and returned to clunk it on the table. She slipped a spoon from behind her ear and dropped it gently into my open stirring hand. I was astir but maintained my quiescence. The Zen masters would have approved, albeit hypocrisy is not a skill they teach.

The waitress disappeared as quickly as she had satisfied my demand, and I began to drink the strongest brew that a Turk would tolerate willingly. I heard a story that the Nazis used coffee as the ultimate torture tool. "Sleepless Days and Sleepless Nights" began to resound from the jellybean shaped jukebox next to the counter. More syncopation between me and my ear and reality, which was starting to make me nervous.

Before the tune had left the room, I was handed my sandwich and left to my own devices. Truckers were everywhere — in fact, my booth had been the only empty booth, seemingly waiting for

me to occupy it. The coffee wasn't helping my nerves, but this otter meat was a great equalizer. I have always believed that vegetarians have allowed their consciences to subvert their natural needs and are thus mostly responsible for the corruption that we all now face every day. They lack the blood taste, the blood spirit, which is our link with yesterday's news, yesterday's views. They are aflutter with their "don't touch this" and their "don't touch that," and their sterility has conversely led to a world corrupted by its own shadow, its own vanity. Even the Bible's "thou shalt not" recognized that "thou shall" and that "thou did," and that that's how it all works. The leaf eaters have let their principles overwhelm their instincts, and the result is a plastic robotic behavior which borders on an embodied machine with no soul.


"More coffee!" I suddenly screamed with a passion volcanic for such a meek soul. I needed grease to oil the inner gears and sprockets, lubricant to keep me sliding even further down the path away from this society, this world of dry rot and decay. Even my impending and already soon to be death was no cause to detour from this highway, which was my escape.

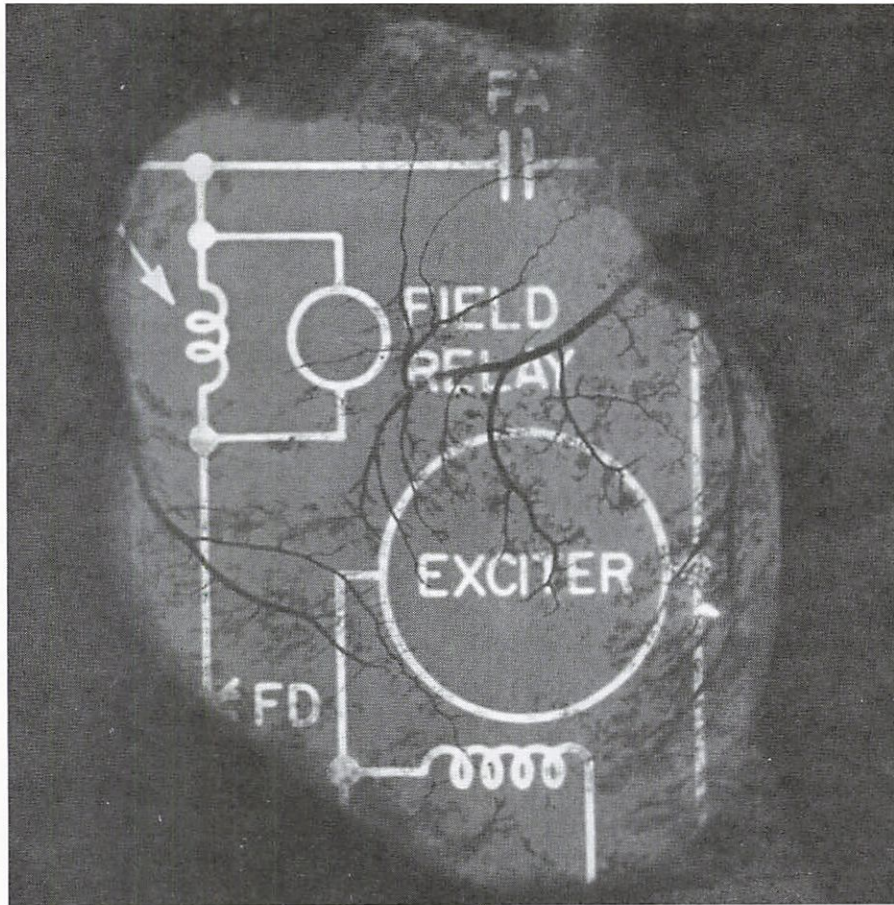
Before the waitress with the smile could get to me, I noticed that an unusual hum of activity had been afoot the entire time of my meal. Truckers had been silently chowing down, getting up, and walking to the palmetto counter. There they would one by one climb on top of the counter, smile at one waitress, frown at one waitress, and cartoon squiggle at one waitress. Then a perfectly circled circle would disappear from the ceiling above them, and a hemp ladder would fall from the blackest sky above and up they would climb, one at a time, into the "white hole of space" above and beyond. As each departed, another pushed through the screen door and took a seat in the too-full diner. Imagine where my frazzled nerves and make-believe persona went when I saw what was happening.

With my second cup of coffee the waitress with the smile said, "This is all you'll get from me, but it's not really why you're here anyway, is it?"

I had no reply since my being here was the answer.

Like all of these other make-believe truckers, I was one of the chosen few who had chosen myself to exit stage center. My dreams of escape were realized in this structure by the numberless interstate, this way station to eternity. I and the exact center of the universe had met. Thus I had discovered the true and highest level of karma possible: become a nameless trucker. I was engineering the broadest and longest highway there can ever be. I was about to climb into the blissful dawn of infinity. And its truth was that it was of my own making.

I sighed a final "phew" and was gone. 



BLOOD ENGINE BY KYLE P. WHELLISTON

ESCAPE

I gaze across
the barren landscape,
watching the red dust
rise and swirl
in the unrelenting winds.

I look longingly
at the moons as they rise,
and my heart aches for
the future and remembers
days from long ago.

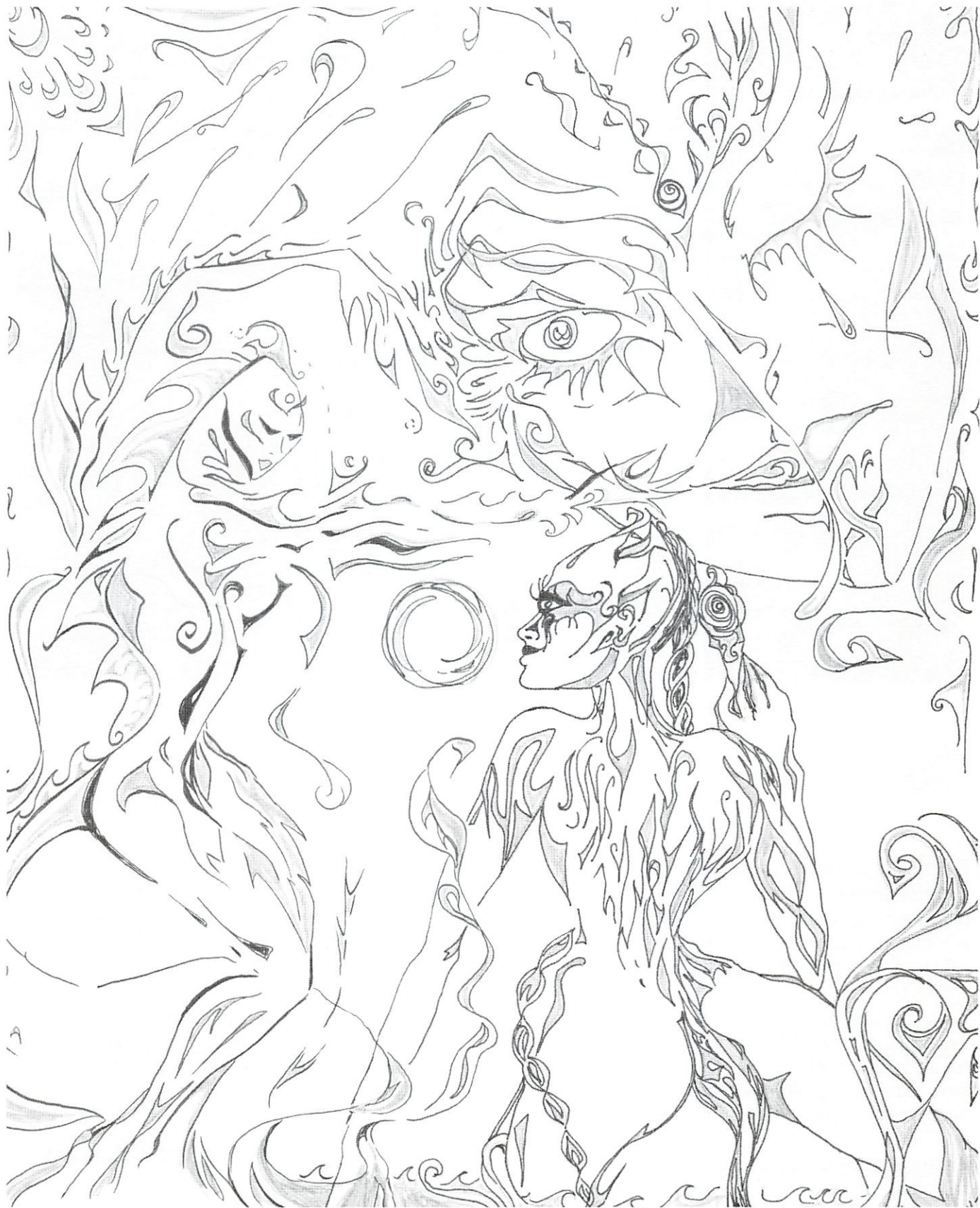
I recall the past in
painful clarity,
the days when resources
and life were plentiful
instead of destruction and death.

I close my eyes against
the sight of my planet.
I can no longer bear
the rape of my beloved home,
so I am leaving.

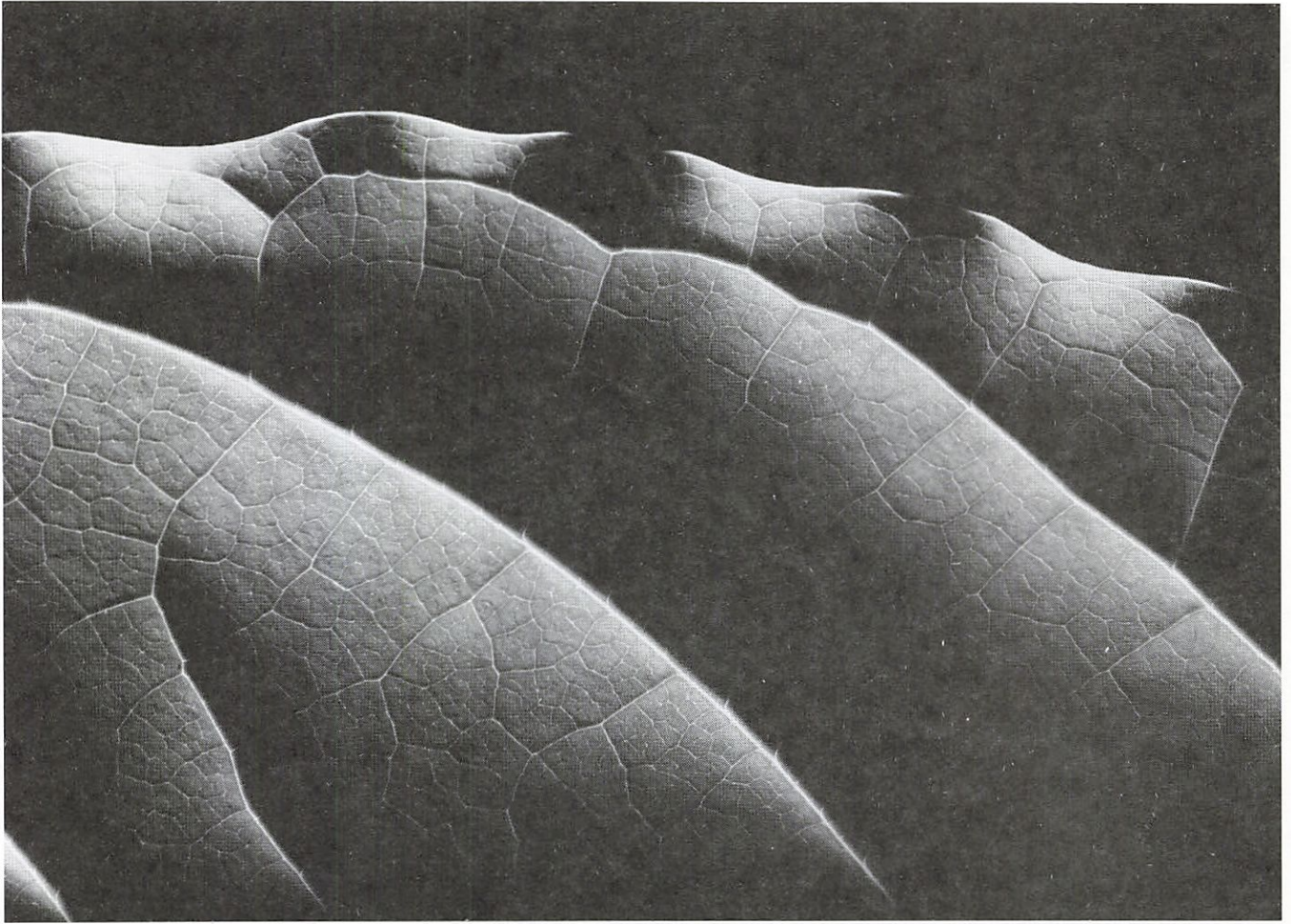
I let my eyes take
one last drink of home,
close the hatch,
prepare to take off,
and abandon all I love.

I watch the rosiness
of my planet become
a speck across the void
and cry myself to sleep as I
glide endlessly toward the great unknown.

- SARAH MCCOY



UNDINES BY KYRA KELLY



AVOCADO LEAF BY CEDAR GRANEY

QUIDDITY*

Floating in the dream-sea I hear your voice
and rise above the waves to call you near
the flickering warmth of incandescent
jellyfish play games of tag with our senses
calling each to the other within our minds

Your hand brushes mine and I stir the waters
dreaming your face within my own
for an instant you breathe the water through
your skin and speak in whispering waves
beauty is far beyond the realm of imagination

Currents carry us along, bodies entwined to
the center of the dreaming world in silence
we stretch our arms to the shore and call
for a brief instant to know to feel to believe
this is the love was meant to be

We have been here once before at birth
when the visions of our untainted minds were
clear with perfection and now are here to show
our spirits our one true love and will return
again at death to hear the final message

Visions come to us and we see the perfection
afforded one in many millions and smile in
our joy our passion our realization of dreams
and thank Quiddity for its primal powers

- KENNETH BRADY

* borrowed from Clive Barker

INTERVIEW WITH A MAD SCIENTIST

KENNETH BRADY

JERRY OLTION is the author of *Frame of Reference*, two books in Isaac Asimov's *Robots and Aliens* series, and a collection of short fiction, *Love Songs of a Mad Scientist*. His short fiction has appeared in *Analog*, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, *Pulphouse*, and a variety of anthologies.

DENALI: When did you begin writing and why?

JERRY: Sometime in grade school, in an English class. The teacher told us to write stories one day, and I thought it was pretty cool. So, on later days when we weren't supposed to write stories, I still would write stories instead of doing my English papers. And she didn't mind! It was that early tolerance of my disobeying the rigorous structure of education — just striking out on my own and writing and being praised for it, instead of being told, "No, you can't do that," which encouraged me. Also, my mother had written magazine articles, so I knew it

could be done. Normal people could do it.

DENALI: Did you begin by writing science fiction?

JERRY: Right from the start. I've been doing it since the moment I could spell, or slightly before that. In fact, I still have my very first science fiction story, which was published in my collection, *Love Songs of a Mad Scientist*. Mom saved it, and years later, after I'd been published, she sent it to me.

DENALI: What were you reading at that time? Which writers got you interested in science fiction?

JERRY: Tom Corbett: *Space Cadet*! All the Miss Pickrel books. *Miss Pickrel Goes to Mars*, stuff like that. I got into Heinlein, like all other science fiction writers do, but I think I was reading Larry Niven about the same time I discovered Heinlein. I guess Niven was my mentor, the person I tried to emulate.

DENALI: And who do you read now?



"I spent a lot of time in the physics and astronomy labs, because I knew I wanted to be a science fiction writer."



"I've seen four or five people completely kill their careers because they got a little bit of fame and people were paying attention to them, and they suddenly thought they could preach to the world."



"I came out here and I was one of fifteen science fiction writers. You can't swing a cat without hitting a writer in this town."

JERRY: Tim Powers, definitely. David James Duncan. Mainstream — I don't read as much science fiction as other stuff. I read non-fiction a lot now. I do a lot of research. I am rereading *The Lord of the Rings* right now.

DENALI: Do you reread a lot of books?

JERRY: A good book should be reread. That's every writer's goal — to write a book that someone would want to reread. I think it's getting rarer and rarer these days that people *do* reread things. But that's still my goal. I want to write something so good that someone wants to reread it.

DENALI: Do you find anyone saying that to you now? That they reread your stuff?

JERRY: Mom. [laughs] She's always saying, "Oh, I was just reading one of your stories before you called!"

DENALI: You've been nominated for a Nebula Award, right?

JERRY: Once I was on the final ballot, and I've been on the preliminary ballot two or three times. The only award I've ever won is the reader's choice award from *Analog* for my story "The Love Song of Laura Morrison."

DENALI: Where did you go to college? What did you study?

JERRY: The University of Wyoming. I majored in English because by then I knew I definitely wanted to be a writer. But I spent a lot of time in the physics and astronomy labs because I knew I wanted to be a science fiction writer. I enjoyed science classes much more than English.

DENALI: But you got a degree in English.

JERRY: Yeah, I got the degree. If there's anything more useless than an English degree, I don't know what it is. Well, half an English degree, I suppose. So that's why I stuck it out.

DENALI: And what were you reading then?

JERRY: Mostly science fiction. I discovered Mark Twain in college, more or less by accident. I'd read *Huck Finn*, *Tom Sawyer*. But I took a class in American Literature, and we got some of the more obscure Twain, like *Letters from the Earth*, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, things like that. And I suddenly realized — wait a minute! — this guy's writing science fiction. *Pudd'nhead Wilson* hung on the idea of fingerprints, and at the time fingerprints were brand new — I realized it was a science fiction story. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* is science fantasy. So I read all I could. When I start to get too serious, I think — wait a minute! Twain wouldn't have done it this way. Monty Python! That was another early influence.

DENALI: A big influence?

JERRY: Yes. A big influence. We used to rent *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* and watch it until we could quote the entire thing. I guess that's a college experience that everyone has.

DENALI: In your own fiction there is always an element of humor. You mentioned you start to get too serious sometimes. Do you find yourself backing off and adding humor?

JERRY: Sometimes I'll be twenty pages into something and realize it's just getting really tedious. So I will then intentionally either toss something in at that point, or go back earlier and lighten it up. Yeah, it's a consciously thought out thing — trying not to take myself too seriously. I've seen that happen to other science fiction writers, those who shall remain nameless, and it's just death. But I've seen four or five people completely kill their careers because they got a little bit of fame, and people were paying attention to them, and they suddenly thought they could preach to the world.

DENALI: They want to be prophets?

JERRY: Yeah. Robert Heinlein said, "If you want to send a message, use Western Union." Of course, he was one of the most preachy writers around. [laughs] But I think he's right. If you're trying to preach, start a religion.

DENALI: That's been done, as well.

JERRY: Yes, and pretty profitably, I might add.

DENALI: You write a lot of fiction about religion, don't you?

JERRY: Oh yes. I love religion! From the viewpoint of an agnostic, religion is one of those big questions. It's an open-ended thing, a belief system that is pretty much self-consistent. Like the scientific method is a pretty self-consistent way of looking at the world, so is religion. Extrapolating from there, you can come up with some pretty wild conclusions. You say science fiction is a process of saying, "Well if this goes on, what happens?" So if you take that attitude and look at religion, using the same question, you come up with stories about what happens when someone is twenty light years away, and the Day of Judgment comes, and they get home, and God missed them. They were twenty light years away, and He wasn't looking for them out there! [laughs] I have a story about that. I have a story about a burning bush on top of Mt. Pisgah, which incites all sorts of religious frenzy. Then I introduce a scientist character into the story who looks at it from a scientific point of view to see, "Well, what could be making that bush burn without being consumed?" So I answer it both ways in that story.

DENALI: You enjoy poking fun at religion?

JERRY: Not so much poking fun at religion, or blaspheming — although I have done that on occasion — I just like looking at it logically. Such as, okay, you guys say you believe this. Well, what are the logical consequences of this belief? Let's just run it out a few millennia and see what's going to happen. Look at the logical inconsistency in a certain spot and try to see what happens when you patch that over.

DENALI: Does this cause problems when you try to get some of your fiction published?

JERRY: Yes. Some editors will respond to a story saying, "I loved the story but it would cost us too many subscriptions." I wanted to do an anthology of religious stories called *Jesus Died for My Sins and All I Got Was This Lousy Book*. But it wouldn't go over too well.

DENALI: There seems to be a general fear of publishing controversial material today. Do you find this to be the case in science fiction?

JERRY: In ways it's worse in science fiction. The politically correct movement has worked its way in. It's worse in fantasy. You have to have barbarian swordswomen as well as men. You have to make sure there are *exactly* fifty percent women in every scene. In science fiction, your spaceship captain had better be female unless you have a *damn* good reason for him to be male. This is the conventional wisdom. I try very hard to break the mold as often as I can, but I'm aware of it. Before I was never even aware of whether a character was male or female — it didn't matter. Now if you write a story that's got all white Nordic males in space people say, "that's 50s science fiction. We don't want that."

DENALI: What do you think is the value of college writing classes?

JERRY: When I first went to college I thought I would be able to find a class that would teach me how to write, and how to be a published writer. What you do is learn how to craft these

wonderfully burnished and honed pieces of prose, and you may have written five of them in the course of college — or maybe ten if you have a progressive teacher. They don't give you any indication of how to publish or of what to expect in the publishing world. And there's no training on how to make a living at writing. Writing classes are good for what they are — to teach you some of the basic skills of writing — but they do no good in showing you how to get published.

DENALI: So what is the value of college?

JERRY: Well, it teaches you to think. And, it makes a social animal out of you. You're forced to hang out with other people and listen to their opinions on things. Every now and then you become aware that other people have valid thoughts. If that happens only three or four times during your entire time in college, it's probably worth going.

DENALI: Thinking, that's dangerous. You might get your mind changed.

JERRY: Yes. That's the religious mindset. That's the problem. That's what I fight when I'm fighting religion. This idea that you can't change your beliefs because they're your beliefs, by God.

DENALI: You write primarily short fiction, right?

JERRY: Yeah. I have fifty-five short stories published professionally, four novels. I've written a few more novels and proposals. I'm beginning to realize you can't make a living at short fiction. Unless you're Harlan Ellison. [laughs]

DENALI: You moved here from Wyoming, correct?

JERRY: Yeah, in 1989. In Wyoming, I was the only science fiction writer in the state. There were poets and literary writers there who wouldn't talk to a lowly genre writer like myself. Then I came out here, and I was one of fifteen science fiction writers. You can't swing a cat without hitting a writer in this town. It's very pleasant to have other writers in town who face the same problems I do, who can help me out.

DENALI: What is your writing process?

JERRY: I get up about ten or so. After lunch I turn on the computer, pick up something I've been working on. I try to stop in the middle of something when I quit writing. That way it's easier to pick up on. I'm a reactive person rather than proactive. So, I always end up taking care of other things that need doing, and the writing ends up on the back burner. If I have something I'm working on, I have more motivation to go back to work. I try to put in four to six hours at the keyboard each day. Or at least doing some aspect of the writing process: research, mailing, etc. I come up with elaborate ways of getting to the keyboard, and then it takes me three or four months to figure out a way to subvert that system. Then I have to come up with a new one.

DENALI: What motivates you in your writing?

JERRY: Working at McDonald's. [laughs] If I don't write, that's about all I'll be able to do. You take a nap too many days in a row, you're going to be slinging hamburgers.

DENALI: What advice would you give to new, or growing, authors? Especially in the field of science fiction.

JERRY: Stick to it. That's the basic thing. No matter what else people tell you, you have to have something written. You're not a writer, and you're not going to sell something unless you've got a finished product. Write, and set up a system, so that you'll be writing even when you're not excited about doing it that day. Learn your craft: read a lot. Learn what's going on now, what's been done, what hasn't. There are a lot of subjects waiting to be written about. Keep an eye on the real world. That's what you're

really writing about in science fiction. You're writing in metaphor. You're talking about the future, if this goes on, what will happen? But you're really writing about today.

DENALI: A lot of people seem to be confused as to what science fiction really is.

JERRY: Yeah. Many people tell me, "I never liked science fiction until I read your stuff." I wonder whether any of them ever read science fiction. They were reading stuff like *Conan the Barbarian*, or watched *2001: A Space Odyssey* and didn't understand it. The idea that you have to write about the future, or technology or aliens — that's bogus. I bet two thirds of my science fiction is set in the present day with one little twist on the reality of today.

DENALI: You read a lot out of the science fiction field. Do you write out of it as well?

JERRY: Yes. I like to experiment. You get bored doing the same thing over and over again. I live in fear of the day a publisher asks me to do a trilogy and offers me enough money where I'd actually consider doing it. I'd have to write three books in a row about the same damn thing, and I'd hate that. There are certain genres I just don't like much. I don't like horror, so I don't read or write it. The same with generic style fantasy. But I did do a sword and sorcery novel.

DENALI: How about romance?

JERRY: Yeah. I'd like to do that. The lines are blurring between genres now, and soon there won't be as much of a distinction.

DENALI: That's good.

JERRY: Definitely. My ideal book would not say science fiction on the spine, or fantasy. It would just say book. Or fiction.

DENALI: Good fiction.

JERRY: Yeah! Or really good fiction!

DENALI: Start your own kind of fiction.

JERRY: Yeah! But, I don't really see myself as that innovative a writer. I wouldn't be starting a brand new genre, unless I did it by accident.

DENALI: What would you like to do the most? What would be your goals?

JERRY: Just a lot of good stuff. Look at Mark Twain. When you've read all of Twain's stuff you feel like you've got a handle on not only the author's life, but the time in which he lived. I'd like to build up a body of work that means something. By the time I'm in my eighties, I'd like to have said what I want to say and have it all still in print. That's what every writer wishes for. That all their books will remain in print, and people will continue to read them.


DENALI: Is that important to you? To be listened to?

JERRY: Yeah. Some people write and never really want to be published. But I want more readers all the time. It makes me feel really good when someone I don't know comes up to me and tells me they really enjoyed my story. Although, if the world collapsed, and we were all to go back to living in caves, I'd probably still collect backs of envelopes and write stories on them. I can't stop writing. The reason for me is to show others, "Look what I did today."

DENALI: Look at me!

JERRY: Yeah! Look at me! Look what I did! I did a funny!

DENALI: Writing, then, is all you really want to do?

JERRY: Yes. But I've always said that if I don't succeed as a writer, I'll go into something easy, like nuclear physics. 

BATTLE LINES

JERRY OLTION

"If you love me, you'll do it." Zofia's soft sultry voice filled the patrol plane's cockpit, warming Gordon like sunlight pouring through a gap in the clouds. He looked over at her in the seat beside him and she smiled, her lips open slightly, a hint of teeth behind them. Her iridescent silver wings, held tight to her body, rustled softly as she tilted her head sideways and turned to look at him out of just her left eye. A wisp of dark hair fell forward to partially hide her face.

God, how he loved that coy look. She knew just which buttons to push. Still, what she was asking him to do . . .

"Love don't have nothin' to do with it, darlin'," he said, falling into the pilot's cant that he knew turned her on. "We're talkin' survival here. I don't have those pretty wings of yours."

"But I do," she said, extending them as far as she could in the narrow confines of the cockpit. They touched either side of the double-wide cabin, and wrapped around to nearly block his view ahead. "I will catch you. And then —" her voice grew softer, "— then we'll make glorious love in mid-air."

"Fallin' like bricks the whole time." He banked the plane around in a slow circle, looking for more of Relig's warriors, but the battle was over. It had been a rout; even bio-enhanced warclones were no match for a squadron of battle planes. Zofia's people were free — and now she wanted to celebrate.

So did Gordon, but on the ground.

"I won't let you fall," she insisted. "I love you."

"I don't doubt that," he said, doubting it immensely. The two of them had spent twelve hours a day for four days on patrol in a crowded airplane without killing one another, but that didn't mean it was love. He didn't say that though. What did it matter if she loved him? That wasn't the issue. He said, "What I doubt is whether you can keep an extra ninety kilos in the air. Like as not



ILLUSTRATION BY JUSTIN TINDEL

we'd both go splat if you tried it."

"Thanks for the compliment," she said sarcastically, and he realized he'd just belittled her secondary sex characteristics. Accipitan women might not have breasts, but their chest size was still a matter of importance to their lovers. Vital importance, if Zofia's description of their mating habits were true, for those shapely mounds that mimicked a normal woman's breasts were the powerful muscles that drove their wings.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean it that way. You have wonderfully big, rippling — one could even say heaving — pectorals. But I won't be any help at all in keeping us aloft. Not like a Accipitan man."

She laughed. "Hah. Our men are no help either. How could they be? They're upside down!"

Gordon supposed she had a point. He'd never seen an Accip

fly inverted. The way their wings attached, he doubted if they could. Did the women actually carry their mates during sex? He supposed it was possible.

"All the same," he said, "I'm heavier than they are."

"Maybe, but not by that much. You certainly don't weigh ninety kilos." Her voice held a note of reproach.

"I do with my flight gear on."

"Silly, you won't be wearing flight gear."

He laughed at the image. "You want me to bail out of my plane with nothin' on, hopin' that you'll snatch me up before I get to fallin' too fast for you to keep up, and then you expect me to — to perform — while I'm hangin' on for dear life. I hate to disappoint you, but human physiology doesn't work like that."

"How do you know? Have you ever tried it?"

He looked out at the ground two kilometers below. The cavern leading to Relig's underground warren was smaller than the thumbnail of his outstretched hand.

The city on the arch spanning the cavern was smaller still. And tiny specks of flyers above it were just visible if he squinted. It was a long way down. In his warship Gordon felt invincible, and the thrill of victory for a just cause was a powerful aphrodisiac, but the thought of stepping out of his metal cocoon into all that empty air cooled his fire. The plane could fly fine without him, but without it he was a ballistic projectile. "I don't have to try it," he said. "I can imagine it just fine."

"I won't be wearing anything either." She rubbed her hands over his shoulders and chest, leaned close and nuzzled his ear.

Her voice and her caress brought the response she wanted, but Gordon took her hands in his before they could stray far enough to find that out.

"You want to make love in flight?" he asked. "Okay, let's do it. Right here, in the plane. If we unbuckle and twist around a little, we —"

"That's too restrictive," she said petulantly. "I want to feel free!"

"Okay, then, let's land and do it on the ground."

"It doesn't feel natural on the ground."

That line seemed so familiar Gordon had to laugh.

"What?"

How could he tell her that he recognized her come-on? It suddenly struck him how strange it was for him to be fighting her advances. Him, Gordon DeLinn, the interstellar rake of a fighter pilot. Usually he was the one who tried to talk hesitant women into having sex with him, not the other way around.

"You're being a tease!" she pouted, leaning away from him and looking out the side window.

"I'm not," he said. "I'm just not ready to risk my life for sex."

"You're not risking your life! I said I'd catch you."

He shrugged. "You'll try. But accidents happen. Turbulence,

or a bug in your eye, or you might sprain your wrist bailing out."

"You think I'm ugly, don't you? I'm too alien. You think it'd be bestiality."

"What?" That had come out of nowhere. "Where did you get that crazy idea?"

She turned her head again to face him, her lips full and red in a pout. "The missionaries have been preaching that it's a sin. That we Accipitans have been genetically altered until we're no longer human."

"Missionaries," Gordon snorted. Half the battles he had fought were against the missionaries and their repressive agendas. He leaned toward her and kissed those soft, inviting lips. "Don't listen to those idiots," he told her. "You're plenty human for me." He didn't tell her that it was her differences that turned him on, that he liked his women exotic.

She kissed him hungrily, and her hands returned to his

shoulders and back. He reached out and ran his fingers around her powerful muscles, along the soft rippling skin at the edges of her wings, down the long ridges of her sides where they attached. She reached under his flight suit, tugging open the zips and running her hands over his chest, his sides, down into his pants. She began peeling his suit off of him, and he didn't stop her. He couldn't. He didn't have enough hands to do that and continue touching her, and now her wings themselves were caressing him, their silky softness enfolding him.

"Oh yes," she murmured. "Oh yes, let's do it."

"We are doing it," he said, unfastening the complicated straps that held her brief clothing in place.


"I want more." She kissed his right nipple, her tongue circling around and around until it was hard as a berry. "You drive me crazy," she whispered. "I want you."

He recognized those lines, too. Whispered in the heat of passion, they always worked. And now that he was on the receiving end, he knew why. It doesn't matter how many times a person hears them, or even uses them himself; they're incredibly flattering, and if someone wants to believe them, they will.

He was running out of protests. The plane was flying itself, would even return to the hangar if he told it to. And Zofia was playing his body like a bard plays a harp.

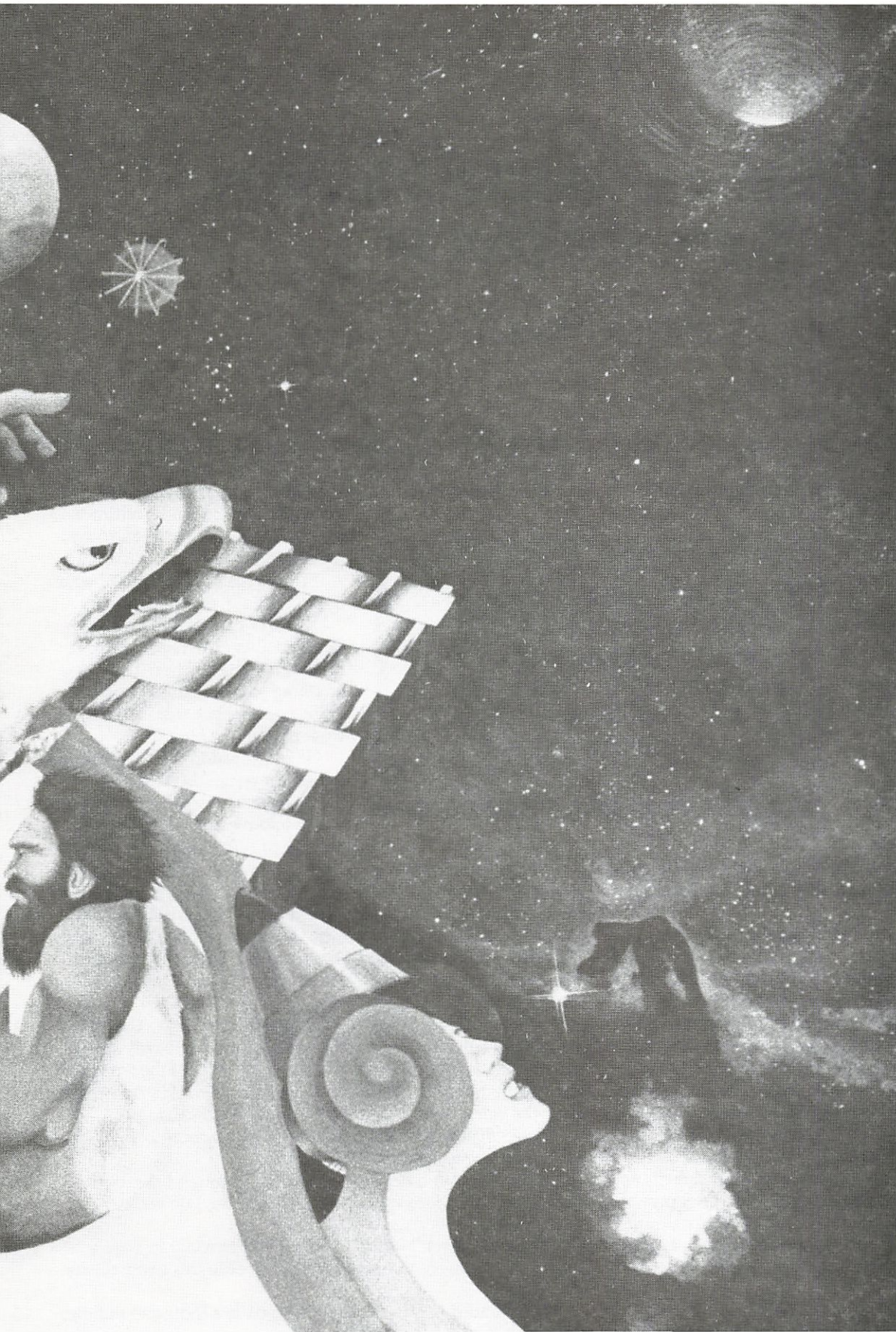
She pulled off his jacket, and the liner beneath it. Every inch of skin she exposed received a kiss. Gordon protested feebly, but he knew if she stopped he would finish undressing himself. He had to have her. His sense of self-preservation had given way to more primal urges; he wanted to make love with this woman right now, no matter what. Even if he had to do it her way.

"Do you promise to catch me?" he asked.

She smiled, knowing she had won. "Trust me," she said, as she reached for the lever that would blow the canopy and pitch them out into the air. "Trust me." 

**"Usually he was the one
who tried to
talk women
into having sex with
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not the other way
around."**





WORLD'S RHETORICAL EVOLUTION BY MOISES BECERRA

AND ROCK THE GROUND WHEREON THESE SLEEPERS BE

KENNETH BRADY

I took the wrong exit off the information superhighway and got lost.

Standing beside a forty foot picture of a smiling woman advertising bran flakes, I looked at my watch. Four twenty-one. Great. I sighed, hefted my briefcase, and walked slowly through the heart of the city, that area of the net designated for those less fortunate. They were the poor souls who slaved away at the keyboard, unable to buy the newest equipment, unwilling to go work a third job to pay their phone bills.

The computationally challenged.

What the hell was I doing here?

It was drab, lifeless, grey as a February morning in Seattle. The rain drizzled statically, each drop hitting the steel sidewalk with a faint crackle. I turned my face to the sky, letting the drops hit my skin. They were cold.

"If I had designed this universe, there would not be cold rain," I said to the city.

"My lord," said a voice off to my left, "I would I might entreat your honor to scan this thing no farther. Leave it to time."

I turned slowly, pulling off my glasses and wiping the wire-rimmed lenses with my shirt. Putting them on again I caught the faint flicker of a shape from a dark doorway ahead and to the left. A small sign above the door had the word 'Heaven' printed on it in faded, dot-matrix lettering. I smiled pointedly.

"Ah, Will," I said. "Would you kindly show yourself? I thought this was probably your doing."

The shape moved from the doorway, just an extension of the darkness, then coalesced into human form. Most of one, anyway. Will's head and torso floated above the steel sidewalk, pale and meticulously represented. His goatee seemed to offer an apology for his receding hairline. A dimwitted grin hung loosely on his face.

"I am glad to see your Highness," said Will, his grin not slipping in the slightest.

"I really have no time for this," I said, checking my watch again. "Why do you insist on this 'Lord' and 'Highness' show

anyway? Have I done something to receive this special attention? And, more importantly, is there any way to undo it?"

Will hovered in the air, expression blank, pondering the question. Then his smile returned, and he floated down the alleyway, bidding me follow.

"This is the very coinage of your brain," he said, floating away.

"What?" I asked, not moving.

"Do you always have to talk in these ridiculous riddles? Look, anything you have to say to me is pointless. Nothing will keep me from pulling the plug."

He continued to drift away down the alleyway, so I hastened to follow, against my better judgment which told me this was to be yet another of Will's annoying games.

He was by far the most annoying of system operators, his games a constant show that those of us with power on the outside were no more than toys when we entered his universe. Will was the one the warning signs pointed to, the demon mothers told their children would snatch their files and insert worm-like viruses into their computer systems should they stray too far from the well lighted paths of the internet.

I was eagerly awaiting the meeting this afternoon. The time was finally here for us to decide which programs to cut, which programmers were no longer needed. To get rid of the worst of the system operators, especially the old ones. The 90s throwbacks were the worst. And Will was first on my list of cuts.

To my misfortune, Will somehow knew my position.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"Over hill, over dale, thorough bush, thorough brier, over park, over pale, thorough flood, thorough fire, I do wander everywhere —"

"Yeah, whatever," I said. "Look, Will, I'm really in quite a hurry. So . . . uh, could we get on with it? Skip this damn dreary city, okay?"

He continued floating along. I stepped in a thousand puddles with each step.

The path we took went through the grey streets, through steel parking lots of grey cars, rusting, through forests of grey trees. I

**"There's nothing worse
than a bored program-
mer. Excepting, perhaps,
a bored programmer who
thinks
he is Shakespeare."**

longed to be back in the technicolor part of the net, that designed for the wealthy, where I held a place of some status. My version of the real world, I suppose. There, I could be powerful. There I could be who I wanted.

There I could make my five o'clock meeting.

But as long as Will decided to play these games, I was stuck here. He was surely responsible for urging me to take the wrong exit. Perhaps he altered a road sign, maybe diverted a lane or two. There's nothing worse than a bored programmer. Excepting, perhaps, a bored programmer who thinks he is Shakespeare.

His body disappeared through a doorway in a tenement building, and I followed. The interior was a sharp contrast to the city outside. The room within was lit by oil lamp, shadows flickering on the walls, a maple desk against the far wall. And sitting, moving a quill pen swiftly across a tan parchment, was Will. His entire body now occupied the chair.

"I see you're whole again," I said, seeing him turn to greet me. "Too much work for you to res your entire body out in the dreary cityscape, is it?"

Will's high, ruffled collar pushed at his chin as he stood. I watched with amusement as he pulled it down in his mock-refinement.

"Nay, indeed if you had your eyes you might fail of the knowing me," he said.

"Great, more riddles," I said. Dealing with the old man was, for me, much like reading Shakespeare was in school. I understood the words plainly enough, but the subtext was always a mystery. I suppose that's why Will chose to think of himself as the Bard. Artist? Yes. Genius? Certainly. Clear communicator? Not a chance.

"This is the Twenty First Century, Will," I said. "You're old, out of date. You need to cut your words down to a minimum, use each wisely, not overelaborate. Got it?"

"He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy, and sundry blessings hang about his throne that speak him full of grace."

"What I have," I said, "is a severe case of tardiness. I need to meet with the board of directors in" — I looked at my watch — "in twenty minutes. You can't stop progress."

Will sniffed humorously and handed me the parchment. It was written finely, but I could see the laser printed dot patterns when I looked closely. I read it aloud.

"What studied torments, tyrant, hast for me? What wheels, racks, fires? What flaying, boiling in leads or oils? What old or newer torture must I receive, whose every word deserves to taste of thy most worst. Thy tyranny, together working with thy jealousies, fancies too weak for boys, too green and idle for girls of nine — O, think what they have done, and then run mad indeed, stark mad; for all thy bygone fooleries were but spices of

it."

"Everything is a game to you, isn't it?" I asked. "This is some mad power trip for you, being in control. The net isn't a game, nor a play to be directed. At least not by you. I will not be detained any longer. See ya."

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players; they have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts, his acts being seven ages."

"I'm more than just a player," I said.

I made my exit then, stepping from the doorway into the busy street, cars racing along in neon colors, each an attempt to be more bizarre than the rest. This was indeed the superhighway. How I got back so easily, I'll never know. Most likely, it was yet another of Will's games. Sooner or later it would catch up with me. I checked my watch. I still had ten minutes. I could make it.

A purple Jaguar sat idling at the roadside, so I crawled inside and roared off into the net, arriving at my terminal shortly after. As I unhooked from the headset and my office faded into view around me I sighed, seeing that the clock said three p.m. I was not late after all, but quite early. My watch in the electronic world was wrong, likely Will's doing.


I relaxed, mixing a gin and tonic in the kitchen and sitting quietly on the sofa. I pulled a pad of paper from my briefcase and marked Will's name in large, annoyed letters, then circled it. Yes, he was to be the first budget casualty.

When I had finished my drink, I gathered my briefcase and car keys and stood to face the grey rain of the real world outside. A flashing light on my answering machine caught my attention, though, and I paused to play it back.

"If we offend, it is with our good will. That you should think, we come not to offend, but with good will. To show our simple skill, that is the true beginning of our end. Consider, then, we come but in despite. We do not come, as minding to content you, our true intent is. All for your delight, we are not here. That you should here repent you, the actors are at hand; and by their show, you shall know all, that you are like to know."

Will's laugh trailed off in the end of the message, and I paused to smile and gloat a bit. Too bad he would not be on the net much longer. After the meeting, he would be shut down quite permanently.

"Sent Saturday, six fifty-nine p.m.," said the voice stamp on the message. I looked up sharply at the clock on the wall and dropped my briefcase with a quiet thump. It still read three p.m., where it had stopped three hours ago or more. Once again, Will had done all he could to act his illusions upon me and succeeded. I was fairly beaten.

Old folks, you know, have discretion, as they say, and know the world. 

WHAT DO YOU SAY AFTER YOU'VE SAID, "WAY COOL"?

(EVERY TERRAN'S GUIDE TO THE SF MOVIE DATE)

SANDRA M. JENSEN

In the old days I could go see *Alien* with a group of buddies and afterwards confine my conversation to, "Like, wasn't it totally gross when the alien hatched out of the guy's chest? Gore city." My first reaction to *Star Wars* was even more primitive, gunning my dad's old eight-banger Ford Torino up and down I-5 pretending I was in hyperspace.

Then what? College. Education. You're not in Kansas anymore, Dorothy. Dating educated people – what a concept. At first I let my sci-fi hip date do all the talking after a Friday evening out at the latest *Terminator* flick; I'd just nod my head and try to arrange my face into one I thought would be worn by an intelligent graduate of the UCLA Film School. After a while I did pick up some very cool stuff about how to think and talk about SF. (You have to say "ess-eff"; trust me on this one.) Early on I got the basics: after a movie it's always socially acceptable to comment on the plot, the characters, the theme, costumes, sets, special effects and cinematography. But what makes SF different is *subjunctivity*. Samuel Delaney is an SF writer who pointed out that the presence of science may define science fiction, but it's not always scientific truth as we know it.

"Beam me up, Scotty."

You call that *science*? Sure. It's hypothetical science – it *could* exist if certain changes occur in society and in science as we know it.

The thing to ask yourself about an SF story is whether or not it violates your understanding of scientifically defined reality – even if that reality is artificial *Star Trek* reality. You may not know much about genetic engineering, computer-based virtual reality, time-space distortions with near-light speeds and black holes, but you can tell when some plot turn isn't adequately backed by the science of the created world. "Hmmm," you whisper to the empathic Betazoid beside you in the theatre, "Serious *subjunctivity* problem . . ."

Don't get it? Well, forget that one. There's other chips you can dunk in the dip while waiting for pizza and beer. You can talk about novums, that is, "new things." Think of an old *Twilight Zone* rerun: it's an ordinary night in Eugene, Oregon, as the titles are scrolling by. A student steps out of an LCC lecture hall and slips on a cyberbananapeel. Notice that strange banana right off: that's a novum. "I loved the introduction of the *cyber novum* under the opening credits," is a good thing to say.

An excellent SF pro adds novums one at a time until everything that was once normal is now strange. In this movie you thought LCC was, like, reality, but now you know it was a virtual hologram created by mind parasites from the Jupiter moon, Io, in order to stimulate growth hormones in robotic student brains marinating in a rare formula of taco sauce being studied for sentient behavior. You come out of the movie feeling that the normal is strange, that the parking lot looks full of alien incubation pods. That feeling is called *estrangement*. A high level of estrangement is considered to be totally cool, so you can tell your date how strange you feel and be confident the comeback will be, "I can relate," and not a handful of Advil.

If all is still going well, you can then proceed to discuss *extrapolation*. No, this is not your geometry class where you had to use a set of points to draw a curve that extended past the last known location, but you've got the idea. The best way to discuss extrapolation is backward from the future world to the year and context the film was made in. Remember *Tron*? Trace back that story about a guy being chased around the inside of a futuristic computer, and you see that the writer extrapolated from the computer technology of the Seventies. He must've gotten up close and personal with a microchip and said, "What if?" He *extrapolated*. It's up to you to have the guts to say he was commenting on our society's immorality in unleashing a technology we didn't know if we could control downstream in time.

What's extrapolation good for? It's a mind game, a way to think about if-ness, which is to say, subjunctivity. You can think about the writer's science facts, or try to figure out his or her cultural, scientific or political point. Did anyone see *THX 1138*? Los Angeles becomes a high-tech underground city because the Earth's surface was so polluted. The hero and heroine are chased around and finally get free of the underground police. They escape to the surface – for what? To die of pollution. The author extrapolated *forward* from 1960s levels of pollution and police repression in L.A. and said, "What if it goes on like this?" You extrapolate *backwards* and say, "He must've written this in the Sixties because . . ." Fill in the blank with what you know about L.A. that makes it obvious the film wasn't made in the Eighties. This is one way experts figure out if an old movie is significant or not, by the way it documents its own time through the dark glass of extrapolation.

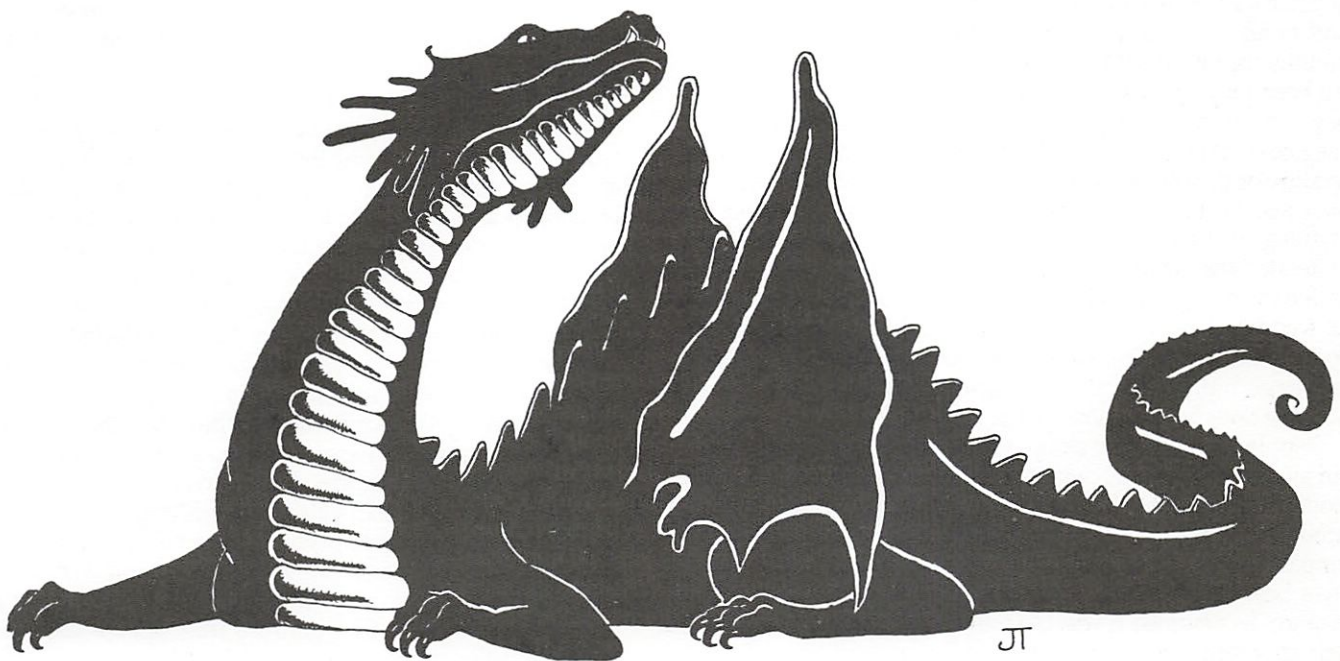
Listen, I'm not charging you for all this great information. I'm really an alien, turning you into one of *them*, one of those refugees from a Woody Allen movie who're always looking for a date who can have an intellectual discussion about a film without being embarrassed about having brains. Go ahead, it's now time to mention the dominant *metaphor*. Does the story feature winged aliens, like Vonda McIntyre's in her short story "The Mountains of Sunset, the Mountains of Dawn?" Speculate – how are those creatures like human beings? What is Luke Skywalker's light saber a metaphor of? "Of course," you say, "we all know that the Starship Enterprise is a metaphor for Spaceship Earth. Then who does Deanna Troy represent?" Always ask your date questions; it gives you time to think.

So think about where in this movie tried and true, oldy but moldy *icons* are used, like rockets, time travel, or first contact with aliens. These are generic conventions, and we love it when a storyteller takes one of these *icons* and adds a dozen novums. What novums will the filmmaker introduce to the icon of the space battle? "Space battle," you think, "Been there, done that. This better be good." You're thinking about the *icons* of SF and making judgments; why not say so?

If it's a film in a popular and beloved series like the *Star Trek* movies, all of us trekkies bring an encyclopedia of *Star Trek* knowledge and expectations with us. An encyclopedia in your head like that (on any topic) is called a *megatext*. For instance, when *Star Trek: Generations* came out, it added new information to our collective megatext. Now we all know how Captain Kirk of the original Enterprise dies; we speculate on ways to bring him back from the other side through time travel or genetic engineering. We extrapolate from our own megatext to add novums to the *Star Trek* icons.

Don't forget sex; the conversation was going to get around to that anyway. SF people are always exploring gender: androgyny, sex changes, multiple genders and other unconventional sexualities. Does the film perpetuate sex-role stereotypes, or is there some new thinking going on? Here's your chance to turn the moment your way. Take off your horn-rimmed glasses, turn on a smoky look, and say, "I believe Sigourney Weaver in the *Alien* series portrayed a female warrior of combined intellect and sensuality."

"Extrapolate," your Wookiee will whisper. 



ARTWORK BY JENNIFER TIMMONS
INSPIRED BY JOSEPH ZUCKER

THE WELL-TEMPERED BONE BOX

GARY NOLAND

In the frantic haste of the final hours, Irving tossed the remainder of his possessions — files, correspondence and knickknacks — into plastic incinerator sacks. He loaded them into the van parked outside the garage.

The piano movers were due any moment. While awaiting their arrival, Irving puffed a fag and made a parting survey of the premises, wiping an occasional spot of grease off the countertop, a dustball off the mantelsheff, or a cobweb off the antlers of the elkhead hanging over the fireplace. All in all, it looked quite convincing. The authorities wouldn't suspect a thing and the new tenants would never know the difference.

Having applied his craftsmanly expertise, Irving had recast the Steinway from a six-footer to a six-and-a-half-footer. Since most of his compeers and subordinates were oblivious to such minutia, they'd probably assume — at worst — that their eyes had been playing tricks on them. In the improbable event that they were to catch the grotesque distortions in the Steinway's clang color, they'd attribute it, no doubt, to mutations in temperature or dampness. Most movers he had dealt with were big, burly and oxlike, so he wasn't concerned that they'd detect anything irregular. The strong scent of recent varnish all but obliterated the vinegary stench of formaldehyde. Besides, all the sections were tightly sealed in Ziplocs and encased deep inside the woodwork beneath the frame and keybed. Irving had had to elongate the instrument some to accommodate for the extra poundage, but, luckily, the garbage disposer had taken care of most the doughy, glutinous parts.

Stepping out onto the stoop, Irving relumed his coffin nail and sucked in the sour, carcinogenic smother. He felt confident about his decision to skip north, away from the hectic, inner-city turbulence. The passing traffic, he observed, was like a stationary lump of knotted scrap iron being propelled on a sluglike conveyor belt. Every time he spotted an eighteen-wheeler in the distance, he assumed it was the movers. Stoically, he watched for their approach. Ten, fifteen, *twenty* minutes went by, and still there was no sign of them. With mounting uneasiness, he paced the pavement to and fro, his attic enveloped in a cloud of smudge.

At forty past the hour, a toy truck — one of those remote-control affairs — pulled up on the sidewalk in front of the apartment complex. It was about sixteen inches long and five inches tall. Irving expected to see some youngsters governing the device, but not a soul was in sight up or down the block. He couldn't help marvelling at the high-tech wizardry of the whirligig before him as it performed wheelies and other acrobatics. He wondered if there were pranksters watching him or —

worse — laughing at him from an unseen vantage point. Unsympathetic towards being made into an object of ridicule (especially by hempy little brats), he snatched hold of a convenient golf club and was about to clobber the vehicle when, unexpectedly, four little men, no taller than half-pints, emerged from it and approached him easygoingly.

"Hi," said one, extending an elfin hand, "I'm Eeny, this is Meeny, that's Miny, and that's Mo. We're from Kleinway Movers. You called?"

Looking down upon the four movers, Irving was taken aback by the scrimpiness of their bulk for the task at hand. Over the phone they had quoted sixty dollars an hour for their services, a fee which had not seemed at all unreasonable. However, judging from their bodily dimensions and the size of their dolly, it appeared the task would take them many weeks, if not months, to complete, by which time the disinfectant and preservative effects of the Formalin (and other aqueous chemical agents) would long since have lost their potency, producing an unsavory emanation and drawing hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of bluebottles and their legless grubs. Such a sight and smell would arouse suspicion in even the most beef-witted of muscle-lovers. Furthermore, the cost of such a move, at the quoted price, would be astronomic, all but eliminating whatever benefits were to be derived from the insurance money he had collected. Not to mention that the new tenants would, in all probability, wear thin on patience and, after a time, elect to sue him for the impediments caused by the persistent breaches upon their privacy that would result from the various delays, obstructions, and technical problems occasioned by such a maneuver.

As these troubled thoughts rushed through Irving's mind, the four little men had already (not without considerable exertion) clambered the staircase, using a footladder, and were just entering the antechamber of his apartment. Unperturbed by the toilsome task at hand, they unrolled their sleeves and attempted to topple the grand piano over onto its side, but, to no avail — *it wouldn't budge!*

Irving, being pressed for time, offered to assist them. However, in abidance with the loftiest ethical codes of their profession, they refused his help. An hour, two hours, *six* hours went by, and still the piano wouldn't budge.

By dinnertime the new tenants arrived. Upon finding Irving and the movers present, they politely inquired as to how long it would take for the premises to be vacated. Before Irving could respond, however, the movers rushed forward and genially extended their apologies, promising it wouldn't be more than fifteen or twenty minutes. Reassured, the new tenants began

unloading huge, bulky appliances from their van and wheelbarrowing them into the apartment. After twenty minutes had passed, the piano stood in the same spot, without any signs of progress having been made. The tenants courteously offered a helping hand but, again, the four little movers were adamant in refusing assistance of any kind, promising it wouldn't take but another five or ten minutes. Thereupon, Eeny and Meeny descended the staircase to their toy truck and removed two miniature chainsaws and blowtorches.

Upon returning, the two homunculi began sawing away at the front legs while the other two escalated the hind leg to fine-tooth-comb the innards of the instrument, hoping to locate the source of the overweightage. Naturally, their meticulous attention to detail threw Irving into a panic, for he feared they might uncover the relics.

Meanwhile, the new tenants had moved so much bric-a-brac and appurtenances into the chambers, there was virtually no space left for navigating the instrument through the narrow span of the vestibule. The last item to be brought in was a cage holding a large, vicious-looking canine that intermittently sniffed and growled.

Although Irving was losing patience with the ineptness of the movers, he decided to control his temper, lest he invoke their suspicions. The faint scent of sweet molasses began to seep through the strings of the piano. Two of the dwarflings had donned gas masks to avoid inhaling the fumes of sawdust that emerged to form a thick fog beneath the belly of the instrument. The other two were behind the keyboard, dismantling the striking mechanisms and damper lifters while blowtorching the escapements and action levers. They seemed to be going about their business adroitly, so Irving was hesitant to dismiss them just yet. The dog began to whimper and lick its chops as it piningly ogled the instrument.

The new tenants, though not uncivil, were cracking their joints, gazing at their watches, and pacing counter-clockwise in small circles. As midnight approached, they inquired once again, more brusquely, whether the movers were making any progress. Eeny explained that the instrument weighed more than they had anticipated, but that they were getting closer to pinning down the coordinates of the logjam. Once they could locate and excise the "excess baggage," as he called it, they'd have the piano out in "half a jiffy." Upon hearing this, Irving's stomach churned and he began to suffer a serious case of the whimwhams. The tenants yawned theatrically to indicate it was already far beyond their bedtime, but consented — albeit grudgingly — to allow Irving and the micromorphs to stay overnight to continue their work.

In reciprocation for this "favor," they asked Irving to take their dog, Dildo, out for a short walk if he started yelping. Before Irving could think of a tenable excuse to naysay their request, the lodgers disappeared into the boudoir, bolting the doors and occluding the passageways behind them.

While the munchkins busily mutilated his Steinway, a subtle scheme presented itself to Irving — a way in which he might "kill two birds with one stone." The hound, foaming at the mouth and wading in a pond of its own drool, was sharpset and

fuming from being caged in and neglected by its owners. Irving considered that it might be strategically advantageous for him to establish a friendly rapport with the peeved pet. He opened the freezer and found a chunk of hamburger meat inside it.

Promptly, he defrosted the meat in the microwave. Once it was soft and succulent, he marinated it in various sauces and relishes, approached the cage, and dangled the morsel in front of the famished wolfhound's muzzle. The beast whimpered, snarled, and slobbered. To appease it, Irving tossed it a chunk of the ground flesh, which it instantly gobbled up, licking clean the ridges of its snout while snapping its jaws. Irving divided the rest of the hamburger meat into tiny lumps. He then marinated the dinner clothes of the movers while their attentions were momentarily averted. After preparing a thimble-sized garden

salad and *petite pommes frites*, he fried the hamburger lumps in leaf lard.

Once the meat was sufficiently browned, he invited the four little busybodies to take a break and join him for supper (an offer they graciously accepted). He placed their tableware beside the kennel. After changing into their dinner jackets, the movers partook heartily of the toothsome comestibles. This enraged Dildo, who began barking furiously.

When Irving judged that the appropriate moment had arrived, he unlatched the cage door under the pretense of obliging the tenants' request to walk their dog, but, to his chagrin, the ravening carnivore paid no heed to the marinated munchkins, nor what they were feeding upon, but

instead bounded spastically towards the piano with an unmistakable singleness of intent. Pouncing upon the instrument, it scratched and dug vigorously beneath the frame, making a terrible rumpus as it did so. The movers set aside their meals and approached the piano cautiously to ascertain what the animal was all hopped up about, at which point the tenants burst into the room, atremble from top to toe, wiping sleep from the heavy bags under their eyes while making no effort to hide their annoyance at being so rudely awakened in the middle of the night.

Wagging his tail triumphantly, Dildo leapt from the piano with a drumstick between his jaws. A wooden panel opened beneath the soundboard of the instrument and a bloated caricature of Irving's Uncle Seymour plopped to the floor, bearing likeness to an oversized Easter egg.

The tenants and dandiprats froze like statues. Their jowls dropped and their tongues hung low as they stared at the severed conk piece rolling about on the hardwood. Vertebrae, tendons and wind pipes extruded at its point of detachment, like the nutty portion of a candy bar after the first bite's been bitten off. As they directed their stern gazes upon Irving, the air became so gummy, one could chew it.

Mortified, Irving drew a stub from his pocket, lit it, then backed towards the antechamber, deliberating how he was going to talk his way out of the cul-de-sac in which he now found himself.

"You knew all along!" the first tenant exclaimed in a tone rife with accusation.

Vertebrae, tendons and
wind pipes extrude
at its point of detachment,
like the nutty portion
of a candy bar
after the first bite's
been eaten off.

"Why didn't you tell us?" the second tenant asked in a sibilant so incisive, it could peel an apple.

"This is an outrage!" the third tenant roared Olympianly, followed by a nod of consensus and whispers of "egregious!", "disgraceful!", and "scandalous!" from the four little pigwidgeons.

"We are *not* amused!" they proclaimed ironically in unison as they glowered menacingly at Irving.


The room began to fill with a distinct canine odor. The tenants' ears were larger and flappier than Irving had originally realized, and their teeth sharper — almost like fangs. Also, the movers were taller and brawnier in frame than Irving had noticed when first meeting them. In fact, their physiques were not unlike those of heavyweight boxers. Upon closer inspection, Dildo, it seemed, was only an innoxious little Chihuahua (an error of judgement Irving could only attribute to the flat's oblique lighting).

As these revelations swirled through Irving's consciousness, he lost balance and collapsed upon the sofa in a feverish delirium. When he came to, the movers were looming loftily above him, applying cold compresses to his knob and smelling salts to his snoot. Evidently, he had fainted.

"You'll be alright," Eeny said. "Those fellows are pretty upset, though. They've been talking to their lawyers for the last three hours. It seems they're not taking this affair too lightly. As for us, no skin off *our* noses — we're *delighted* to be of service."

Eeny handed Irving a bill. Apparently relieved that what they had feared to be their own incompetence had turned out to be someone else's mistake, and would not, therefore, reflect unfavorably on *their* reputations, the four movers lifted the piano onto the dolly and rolled it nimbly down the stairwell, out the front entranceway and into the van. Dildo enjoyed a hearty feast for the remainder of the night. Irving, exhausted from a hard day, curled into a fetal position and slept inside the kennel.

Next morning, after breakfasting with the tenants, Irving persuaded them to settle the matter out of court by offering to remunerate them liberally for the inconvenience caused by his negligence (and gross stupidity, he wanted to add). This cost him more than half the insurance money he had collected. Still, it left him with enough assets to comfortably subsist on after his retirement. The tenants, with their long whiskery snouts and waggy tails, agreed to sublease the dog cage to Irving at a nominal monthly fee (plus all the biscuits they could eat). He accepted their offer and moved into the cage after cleaning out the scum left by its previous occupant.

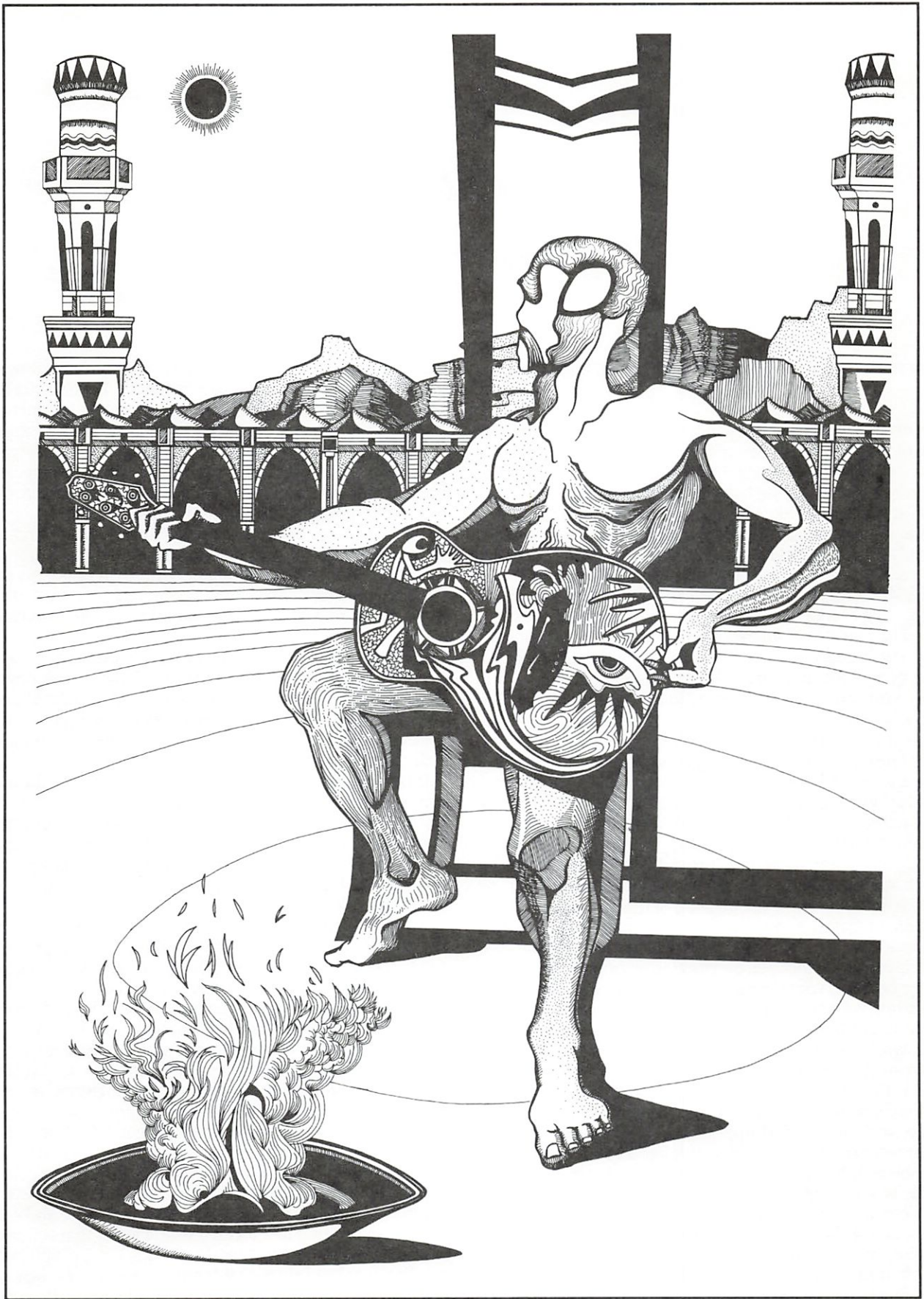
After a time the tenants redecorated the apartment, replacing the elkhead over the fireplace with a stuffed and pickled trophy of Irving's uncle. The milky goo that had dribbled from Uncle Seymour's eye sockets was replaced with lacquered banjo marbles. The shocked grimace he had worn (when he saw the meat cleaver coming down) was taxidermically altered, for Irving's benefit, into a wide and mirthful grin. 

CAPE ARAGO

It seems too long ago
almost to remember
The peaceful haven
Quiet like I'd never known
I have my regrets my ocean
of remembrance
Arago existence take me
along with you
Such a memory shame
it's been faded
Because of a time gone

past
Like the stars too
dim to see
So he lied about it?
Even I had a part to play
Even I tried to keep it
true
But I didn't need it
I had the ocean all along
and at night
when the lighthouse
teased the water
Beams dividing
bending, reflecting
We are all a little like that.

- RENA MCCLEAREY



SUFFER INDEFINITELY BY NATHAN HEARN

HEAT

RYAN FOOTE

All the world cannot be wrong/It must be me, I don't belong.
—Zounds

Cigarette smoke signal, the swirling wisps lost in the air; symbolic of isolation, this surrounding cloud of desolation. From an abandoned high-rise, the view from the balcony must be bleak. There is nothing to see but waste; the monuments of an industrial age crumbled like the near forgotten Parthenon of a distant era. What must the sight of a gutted factory, rusted metal frame bending, bending ever downward in decay, induce inside one who can portend the same fate for himself? How long ere the body deteriorates in much the same manner, the skin splotched red with gaping holes like the metal covering of a discarded machine? The pinnacle of human creation laid waste, detritus now grey, the irrevocable grey. The vast grey circumference encircling everything in a fog or cloud of noxious smoke, obscuring color and destroying definition. A two-dimensional drawing of hopelessness, badly rendered. Reality metamorphosed grey, reclaimed by mutated nature.

On the twenty-third story balcony of an abandoned high-rise, affording a panoramic view of misery, destruction wrought by greedy ineptitude, he sits caged by the rusted railing. The smoke of his cigarette mixes with frozen breath above his head, spiraling upward but never dissipating, merely indiscernible from the polluted cloud already there, ever present. He rarely stirs, never tapping an ash away, simply letting it fall, adding more grey. A body which does not move can usually, in this place, be considered remains, certainly as worthless as what surrounds. Yet, the smoke should prove his existence, though he acts like stone. Trying to imagine another person blinking is difficult, for your own image becomes superimposed on, then replaces, the other. The cigarette must burn to filter soon, then he will move.

It's cold in this land. The end product of the attempted salvation which had been envisioned by great minds. Always trying to correct a problem instead of not creating one in the first place. Once, the opposite was true (as it most often is, for the negative holds more value than its counterpart) and it was hot, the air; the world was at first tropical, then unbearable. All zones of thought were encompassed from all directions and plied to the whole problem at hand. Reversing a detrimental process will often cause worse harm than the simple absence of a solution. That is, to counter the unnatural heat which threatened cremation, they did just that, countered it. The antithesis of man-made heat: extreme manufactured cold. Their synthesis: an icy death sentence. A deadly dialectic spiraling downward into nothing.

Chaos, disorder. They had attempted to mold order from disjointedness, never recognizing their first false assumption: that there need be order. Their failing produced fire, now ice.

When it was hot, I would sit beneath a sprinkler, letting cool grass and water soothe my parched body. Water is the life's blood of Eris, but humans have always sought to contain it. Water forced into a hose and only allowed release from a chosen point: the sprinkler. The holes through which this water must pass are orderly, designed to spread the water evenly. From this order, chaos. The water leaps into the atmosphere, droplets momentarily suspended until they randomly fall to the grass. Randomness is the chaos of flight. Where would I land, flying from this balcony? No ground is visible, and the structures rotting beneath offer no welcome, their own muteness caused by their order being unraveled by nature and time; partners in destruction, yet wedded in creation. The chaotic nature of all things.

Their machines were far more sophisticated than a sprinkler, however. Their previous subjugation of nature was designed to create order but only succeeded in causing unnatural disorder: heat. Still they failed to notice from where their new calculations sprang. Their reasonings were order, but the composition of order is chaos. The equation followed: nature, the exploitation of that nature, the problematic heat of that synthesis, the attempt to correct that synthesis, and, finally, disorder once more. A disorder of unraveling, not creation. Inevitable, if unacceptable. The error of great minds and their technological implements is more cataclysmic than the mistake of lessers. A misguided strike of a hoe will but turn up a bit of earth, but the technology of greed has killed it.

Pardon the disjointedness of this manuscript. The combination of numb fingers and rapidly chilling thought process is not conducive to narration. It's cold; an icy grey cloud that pervades every aspect of experience. I read a story once, an old, rare ice story. The cold kind they keep on computer because the cold books are too fragile. Grey in it, the story, not the computer, although the story was in the computer cold but entered, I mean. This story, I mean in this story, the world was dead cold dying. Not like now, different, like before their machines had it grey, but I seem to misplace who "they" are. The earth was disjointed-joining, no, traveling toward the sun heat. I don't remember what it looks like either. I hope it isn't grey. And everything was dying, withering up and then it had. There was one cold person left — heat looking for water which had all dried up but cold. There is no such thing as water now, it is only ice and cold. He died when he fell into a fucking well. I guess that is irony but school was so long ago and cold. School, time, people, ice. Excuse my grammar but I think that there is someone else here with me, not right here, though there's that too, but across the cold carcass, crevice. On the balcony of the building next here. It's cold and —

I'm confused. I just read what's written here, but I don't think I wrote it all. I think that my mind has been frozen grey, all matter of things are grey, which still doesn't explain the person lying beneath my feet. She's grey but won't talk to me. She's colder than me. I just saw him move, that guy across the carcass. I see what he's doing and — she moves when I step on her! I don't know I just crawled up fucking basement last day looking for but I can't come cold here.

Lucidity comes realization. This coldness is affecting more than my motor skills, which makes it difficult to write; it is altering my mental faculties. I've read over what is put down here and can attest to the fact that the woman lying at my feet is dead. I did not know her but found her lying frozen as I scavenged throughout the building, searching. I wonder who he is across the abyss.

I've managed to uncover a small, battered heater; the miniscule warmth provided is comforting nonetheless. I've also turned up a half-burned cigarette, which I lit on the heater. I watch my own swirls of smoke dance above and intermingle with the obscuring shroud of noxious chemicals and wonder if he can see me as I see him. I wish I could contact him. Conversing with another was abhorrent to me when there were others to be misanthropic toward. Now I would greet that contact with more than open arms. More: I crave it. The irony is not lost.

There is no crossing that crevice which divides us, from which

only the skeletons of factories and the hulks of warmth Revertors protrude. Everything else is grey and unseeable. Damn! That fate should have been tossed about so carelessly by such clumsy hands. Damn, I've —

Slipped, fallen really. I'm cold and can't feel a thing. I noticed my consciousness waning, madness ebbing. I extinguished the cigarette just below my left eye. No stab of pain awakened my failing senses of cold, cold. I should put out my eyes. Helpless, but better to be blinded. The realization that I won't see my end anyway stops me.

The view from the twenty-third story of an abandoned high-rise is the same as mine. I see what he sees, grey. His heater, like mine, is by his side. He's cold like me.

He finally turned toward me and waved. He knew that I was here all along. I saw his face, and he wasn't me.

I think, by the grim, determined visage he presents that he believes that his heater is going to heat up the world.

The world is going to eat up his heater.

Yet. It is too late to melt the ice from their hearts, but maybe our heaters can warm back up this world.

Maybe she's better off cold.

Batteries don't last forever.

Solidarity, friend.

Heat.

IN MEMORIAM

ah... now I understand... this is why absolutes must remain elusive, inconceivable...
infinity black holes God and death would crush us to infinite density
if we get too close
i know, because as i stood in the kitchen chopping vegetables for the soup
thinking of you
a black hole snuck up on me
trapping me in its horizon and as i teetered queasily on it's brink
looking doooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooowwwwwwwwwwwwnnnnnnnnnnn
into infinity
i almost saw you there but that measly 10% brain of mine pulled away
reeling and crying
no, the unbearable weight of your death must be explored as a black hole would be
with utmost caution,

dancing left of center

right of center,
perceiving the absolute by

the events surrounding it yet
towing the eggshell boundaries of a truth whose weight
i cannot bear
death is a singularity

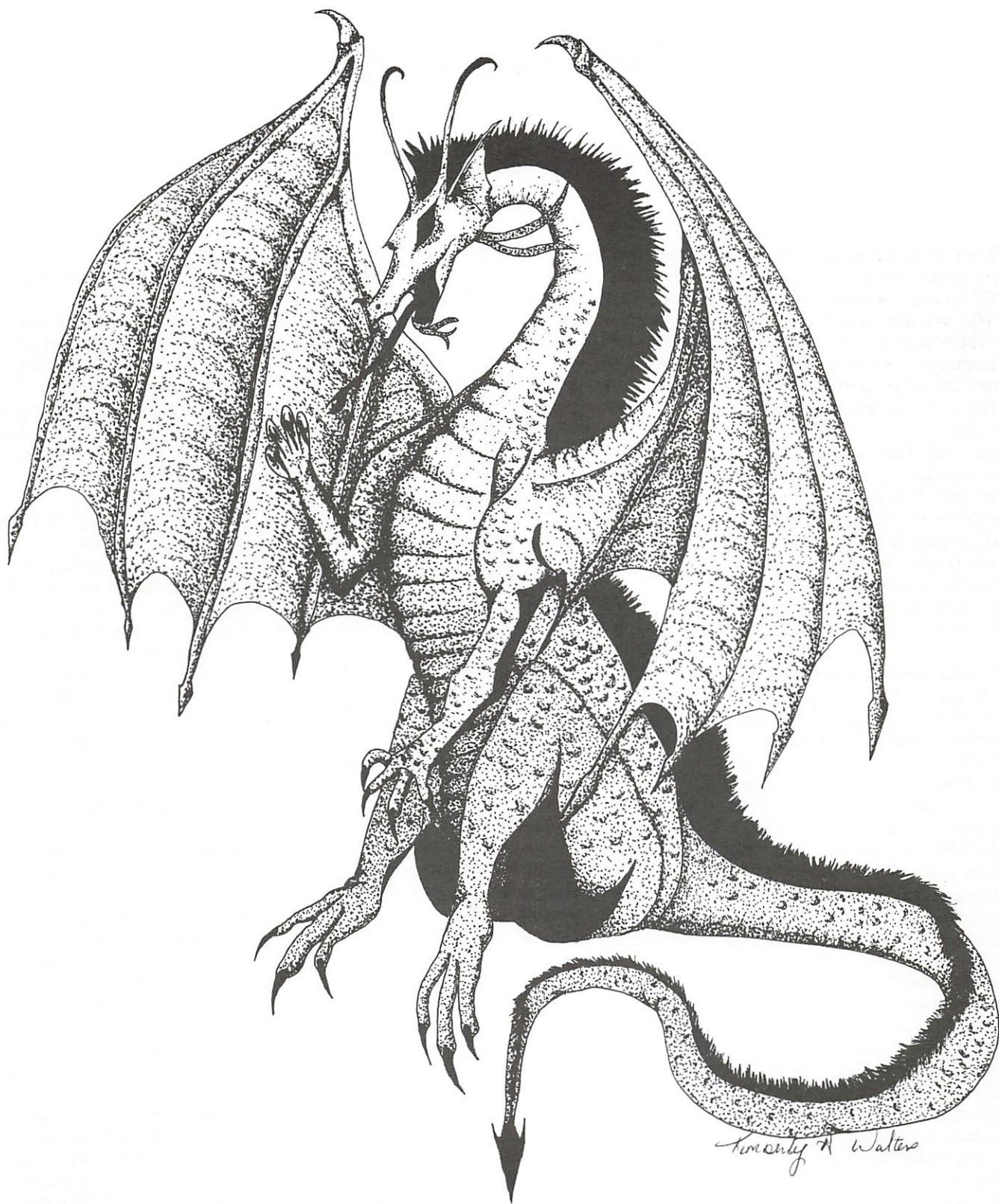
- BRONWYN BAZ

*in physics, a singularity is a phenomena that cannot be explained

ALIEN CREATIONS

we still follow starry exhausts
alien sunwarmed trails
the smoke of our own disgust
treeless paths across midnight deserts
we keep illusion
in our cross hair sights
a mirror of creativities
a room of desires
haunted mirages
dripping from the walls
surround an open window
we must look
stare without
to feel within
an unformed word
crawling
across a stuttering tongue
like a maggot
crawling
across a dying rat
in the alley
surrounding this house of illusion
sucking the poisons
into its starving belly
to survive, to create
its own alien form.

- TWAIN WOODRUFF



DRAGON BY KIMBERLY A WALTERS

HOLLOW BONES

CHRIS A. BOLTON

"They'll come for us, won't they?" she asked, eyes nervously dancing across a readout on the monitor.

"Of course," he answered without much conviction.

"Why wouldn't they?" she continued, more to herself than him. "The beacon still works, we're sending out in fifty thousand languages. There's no reason *someone* shouldn't pick us up." She switched off her portable console, then pounded it with her fist. "Damn it! they should have been here weeks ago!"

"Please relax. They will come."

Rebecca looked up at Jax, squinting into the sunlight. "You think so? They better. We're almost out of everything." She craned her neck to see around the rock wall. She spotted the wreck of *The Argos* on the ground seventy feet below. Nothing had changed. It hadn't for over a month. "We won't last more than ten days."

Jax favored her with a smile. "Sure we will," he said. Then he stepped off the cliff. His feet met naked air. He stretched his arms wide and arched his back sharply so his body assumed the proportions of a perfect crucifix. His tangle of shoulder-length black hair fluttered back as the wind blew hotly at his face. Jax closed his eyes, leaned his head back slightly, and remained motionless.

Rebecca watched him hang, unwilling to admit aloud that she was impressed. She'd seen him do this a dozen times or more, but her senses had never dulled from the sheer amazement of it. Still, she didn't want to inflate Jax's ego by sharing her appreciation with him.

"How do I look?" he asked.

"Like a crazy man levitating."

He smiled thinly. Without twitching a muscle, he pushed his shoulder blades outward. Two large, feathery white wings unfolded from his back and spread to their full, glorious span behind him. Nearly six feet tall and twenty feet across, Jax's wings blocked one of the twin suns from Rebecca's view.

"You make a great sun visor," she joked.

Jax hung majestically before her, the shielded sun wreathing him in a yellow, almost celestial glow. He wore only a pair of brown slacks, allowing Rebecca an admiring view of his fine, strong form, the body hard and sun-drenched. She shook her head as she got to her feet, wiping dust from her hands onto the

legs of her green fatigues.

"It's getting hot," she said, drawing sweat from her brow.

"Give me a lift back?"

Jax swept her into his arms with surprising strength and swiftness. Wings flapping only occasionally, each time with a rumble that reverberated powerfully in the air, he carried her aloft and kissed her dry lips. Rebecca's hands slid around his neck, fingers kneading his shoulders as their tongues met. She felt the sharply jutting shoulder-bone beneath the taught skin: it was hard and firm. Tough to believe it was hollow inside.

"Ever made love in mid-air?" he asked, pulling gently at her tank top.

When they returned to the ship, Jax didn't bother to dress. The ship's coolant fended off the scorching heat of early afternoon, but it was still warm enough to keep Rebecca's perspiration flowing even in a relaxed, seated position. Nonetheless, she refused to go around in the nude like Jax. She had nothing to hide from him; it just didn't seem civilized. They were the only two life forms on the entire planet, but to Rebecca, that only heightened the need to maintain the standards of the civilized

world, lest they descend into abject savagery.

She set the portable console on her desk and scanned the monitor as the ship's log scrolled by. She glanced at each date with a flash of recognition: March 18, *The Argos* set out on its routine survey mission to the Miramar System. . . March 24, the crew of five received a distress signal from a planet believed uninhabited. . . March 31, *The Argos* set down on the red world they would call Hades. . . April 2, the discovery of an Icaran named Jax and his ruined one-man craft. . . April 5, *The Argos* was damaged in a meteor shower as it attempted to leave Hades. Unable to regain control of the hydraulics, they crash-landed on the surface of Hades. Only Jax and Rebecca survived.

Sighing, Rebecca dated her new entry May 10.

Still there is no response to our distress signal. Food and water supplies are dangerously low. With our present rationing, there is only enough to last 10 days, maybe less. Am losing hope. Maybe it's this damn war that's keeping someone from saving us. Maybe Central Intelligence fears this is a Cyber ambush. Why not? The Cybers look, sound, and feel human — or like any other race they choose, for that matter. They could kill us and manufacture replicas in no time, if that

"Life is subjective,"
Jax told me
this morning. "You
have to make it
into whatever
you want it to be."

is their true nature. I wonder. Does the fact that they are androids underneath create the need to kill them — or is it simply that they're sapient androids and therefore pose a threat to other "intelligent" life forms? Either way, I wish someone would win this conflict. . . anyone . . . just so we can get rescued.

The ship is holding together surprisingly well. By my estimates, there is just enough coolant to last another week. Then, if we don't starve or dehydrate first, the twin suns of Hades will fry us. Which is the worse way to go? At least we're not alone. Every morning Jax and I climb the Tower. I sit on top to get a better signal. Every morning I am disappointed that no one responds. I have almost grown used to it. Now I just climb up there to watch the suns rise with Jax. I've never known anyone like him. It is a sad irony that I have never been so happy in my life. If we could only be rescued, so that we might share a life together.

"Life is subjective," Jax told me this morning. "You have to make it into whatever you want it to be."

Jax appeared behind her, and she stopped writing. "The temperature dropped below one hundred."

"Already?" She glanced at her chronometer. "It's not even six."

"Must be winter starting," he suggested. "As close as Hades gets to a winter. I say we should watch the suns set from the Tower."

Rebecca agreed. It was still too hot to climb the massive rock they had named the Devil's Tower, so Jax flew Rebecca to the cliff near the top, their familiar look-out. They sat together on the hard, red ground. Jax's wings beat in a slow, gentle rhythm that kept a breeze blowing over them.

The suns overlapped in the sky, then melted together into a pool of red and purple on the horizon. Except for the Tower, the land was completely flat as far as the eye could perceive. With nothing to obstruct her view, Rebecca was grateful for the first time that Hades' surface was smooth as stone. The two held each

other long after the sunlight had receded into a sky brilliantly lit by stars — billions more than could be viewed in Earth's sky, due to their close proximity.

Rebecca felt Jax's rough hand in hers. "You never sweat," she marvelled. "I'm a walking sweat shower, but you're always dry."

"It is the bones," replied Jax. "Hollow and light."

She laughed. "That doesn't make sense! I went to university with an Icaran like you, and she sweated more than I did."

Jax smiled. "Maybe she is a genetic fluke."

A rock roughly the size of a bowling ball fell loose from the peak of the Tower, dislodged by the beating of Jax's wings. It dropped hard, slamming into Jax's right shoulder and tumbling past Rebecca's head. The rock nicked her temple, knocking her down. She sat up slowly, a little dizzy, and wiped at the thin trickle of blood.


"Are you all right?" he asked.

She nodded. "Fine. But it'll be just our luck for this Tower to fall apart now." She looked at his shoulder and gasped. "Jesus, you're cut! Let's bandage that before it gets —"

The word was "infected," but Rebecca never formed it completely. Her mouth suddenly fell open. The rest of her body went numb, and her mind drew a white blank. Jax frowned at her. He followed her gaze to his shoulder. Beneath the torn skin and the oozing blood and bubbling pus, was a glimmer of stainless steel. Jax looked into Rebecca's eyes, and she stared incredulously into his.

"I wanted to tell you," he muttered. "I didn't know how. Don't be angry."

She turned from him, fighting tears. "They aren't coming for us, are they?"

"No," he replied in a hollow voice. 

A KNIFE BLADE WITH NO HANDLE (A MESSAGE FROM THE DARK STAR SYSTEM)

They took over our home planet
and argued with everything we held dear
and won all the arguments
and raised a lot of money we didn't have
and took over political power
and turned it into military power
and ruined our space program
and declared us strangers
and redefined or made fun of all our best ideas
and killed scientists, teachers, and doctors
and forced us to convert
and cut taxes to defund our public schools
and privatized our jails, libraries, and parks
and substituted profit for freedom of speech
and took all our jobs and farms
and destroyed all the public land
and sent us to prison or away into exile,
and then they looked around for more of us,
but we were almost all gone,
and they still had their problems,
so they blamed those closest to them
and began
one
by
one
to devour
their own children.

- PETER JENSEN

CONTRIBUTORS

Bronwyn Baz is a classical music major in vocal performance at the University of Oregon School of Music. She feels that opera, dogs, poetry, physics and body-building make life worth living.

Moises Becerra — Born in Mexico City 26 years ago. Student of Hospitality Management at LCC. "Being contracted to paint an indoor mural is one of my biggest dreams . . . the other? To get paid for it."

Chris A. Bolton has been wandering around LCC for almost two years, waiting for something to fall in his lap. He aspires to be a writer and filmmaker, and has no idea why he likes to use his middle initial when he writes.

Kenneth Brady practices random acts of senseless fiction.

Dee Bugarin — I may be blonde but, I have my limits.

Ryan Foote — "Waiter, another Bock!" Dedicated to T.A.S.

Jeremy Gawrylow — I spend my free time creating and thinking. Then I draw my ideas onto paper.

Cedar Graney — Photography is cool!

Nathan Hearn — I don't have anything to say.

Peter Jensen — I speculate at LCC and LBCC. Science fiction is how those of us without math speculate, isn't it?

Sandra M. Jensen studied speculative fiction with Ray Bradbury, Harlan Ellison, and Theodore Sturgeon in the 70s. She teaches SF at Linfield and LBCC. Her humor piece interprets Brian Attebery's critical vocabulary for SF movie buffs.

Kyra Kelly hopes to someday make a musical instrument out of her toenails.

Roland Marty — All information regarding Roland Marty is classified.

Venice Mason — One more freak of nature out-the-closet.

CONTRIBUTORS CONTINUED

Rena McClearey — I'm ready to pack my sheep and move in with the Little Prince, personally.

Sarah McCoy — I can be summed up in three quotes: "You will do foolish things, but do them with enthusiasm" — Colette; "To fear love is to fear life, and those who fear life are already three parts dead." — Bestrand Russel; "Sacred cows make great hamburgers." — Robert Reisner

Gary Noland, born in Seattle in 1957, is a composer of growing reputation. His works have been performed throughout New England, on the West Coast, in Japan, and broadcast over cable television and radio stations across the United States. Gary is Founder and Director of the "Seventh Species" new music concert series, which began in San Francisco and now continues in Eugene.

Jerry Oltion is still waiting for his people to come and take him home.

Jason Rackley — God is a convenient crutch for those who fear death, and for those who cannot regulate themselves.

Jennifer Timmons — "The people who live there now like to think of themselves as evil, but they're really no worse than anyone else." — E. Kushner

Justin Tindel — I'm too tired to think of anything good to say, so you'll have to wait until next issue.

Kimberly Walters — I have been drawing since I was very young. I really enjoy drawing, and I hope one day to have a career as a Marine Biological Illustrator. I have entered other pieces of my work into the Lane County Fair and received good reviews.

% finger **Kyle P. Whelliston**
Login name: KPN In real life: ???
Connection closed by foreign host.
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Twain Woodruff — I am currently in a "street poet" mode, writing, self-publishing, and hocking a 12-poem book of poems each month for one year (to be odysseied at the end of August 1995). I moved to Eugene in January of 1995 after 40+ years in Midwestern Minnesota Minneapolis' monotony, and I am happy to have made the leap.

VOTE!

Winners
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next issue.

*Choose your favorites from the
Winter '95 Denali
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Please select only one from each category.

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Whereon These
Sleepers Be | <input type="checkbox"/> What Do You Say After
You've Said, "Way Cool"? |

POETRY

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Lunar | <input type="checkbox"/> Untitled dragon (p. 25) |
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