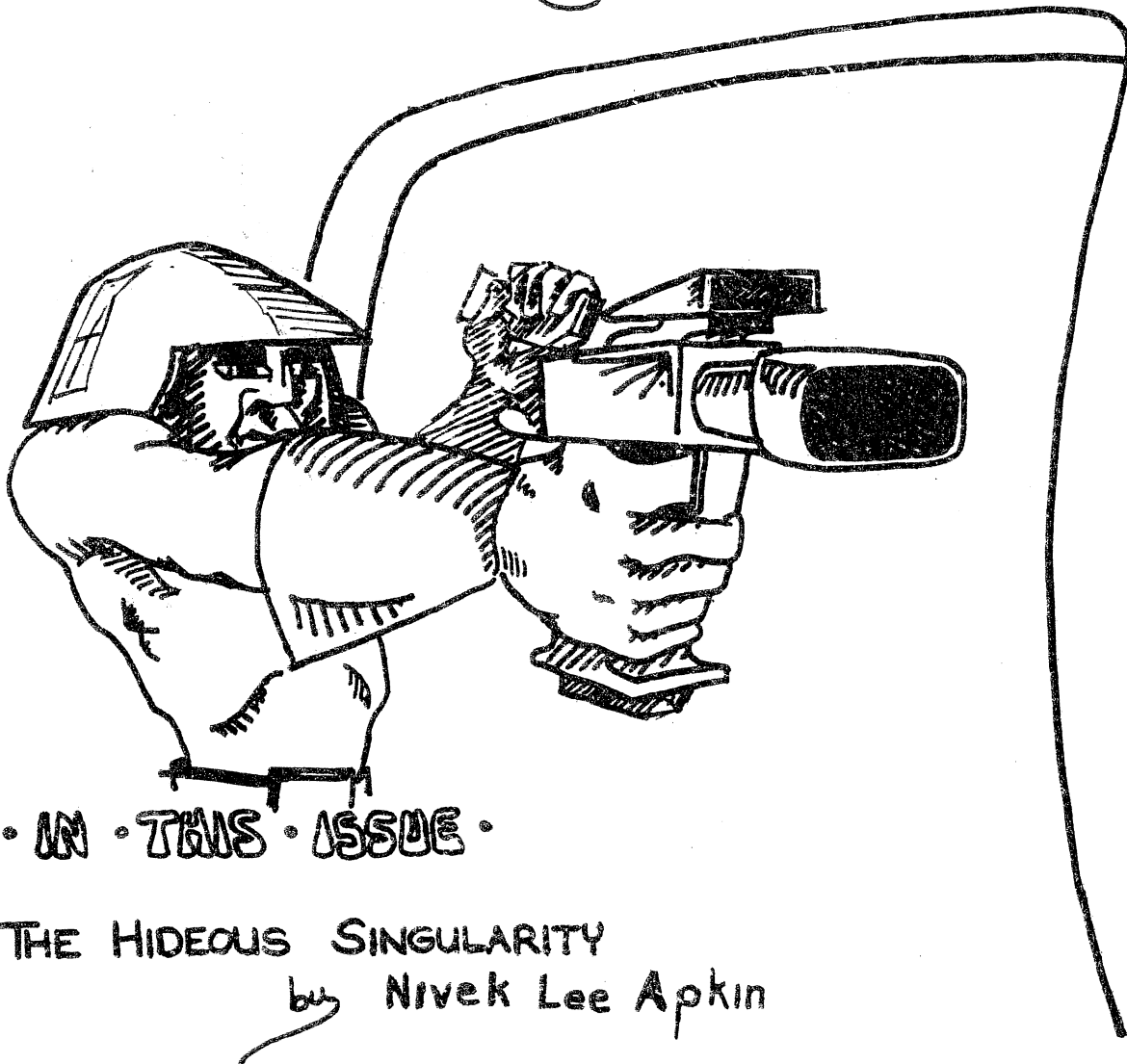


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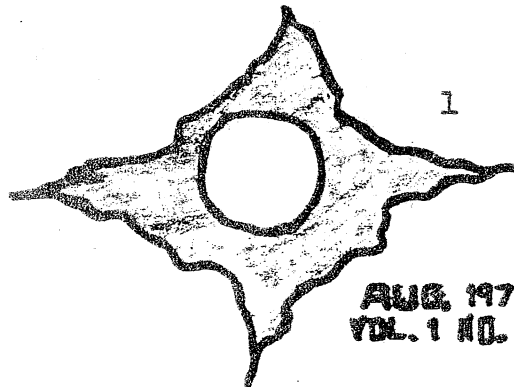


• IN • THIS • ISSUE •

THE HIDEOUS SINGULARITY
by Nivek Lee Apkin

STARUS

SCIENCE FICTION



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EDITORIAL



Slosh. Slosh. Slosh. Slosh. SLOSH. It comes. Creeping slowly. Through the mud and mire it goes. Unknowing. Seeking. Down the sewers it goes. A manhole cover lifts. It looks around. Leaps out. Right in the lap of a newsstand owner. He jumps ten feet in fright. Recovers. Picks it up, giving it an ominous look and places it on the shelf. A new fanzine has hit the streets.

That's what I think of when I hear the word fanzine. It makes me think of something so low to be called a magazine containing fiction to low to be science fiction. The only example I have is so called Weird Fiction. This is where the writer (the word writer in Question) takes an old hokey plot mixes in Science Fiction Horror, and some Fantasy in varying portions, lets it stew then gives the editor the results. The results are usually pure and complete trash if not worse. The editor is usually too stupid to know this or is inexperienced or has bathed in this BS all his life as a comic book editor. I seem to have got a little off topic so I guess I'll get back on.

Fanzine. I loathe the word. I find it degrading to have to say that this magazine, Sirius, is a fanzine, so I don't. Sirius is a magazine, an amateur magazine and at the moment no more and no less. Now some of you reading have suddenly lit up saying he's screwed his argument, I haven't. It seems when amateur publications came out amongst the pulps they were coined FANZINE because they were printed by fans, the name stuck, unfortunately. Fanzines in my mind are little cliques or cults which are centered for a certain group, like a school mag. or small town newspaper. Amateur magazines like Sirius are centered also for a certain group, the science fiction reader not Trekkies and Doc Savage freaks. Although they may read them if they wish; usually they don't. An amateur magazine is one that starts from scratch and has a goal of reaching the height of a professional magazine. There is one problem. When does a fanzine stop being a fanzine and become professional? No-one can tell me. It seems once it gets the name it sticks and all it can do is become a big fanzine. I hope to stay clear of the rut by calling Sirius a magazine and hammer it into everyone's head, maybe force will work. I hope so. This now brings us to ...

What is the best and worst fan magazine. Well for the best it's hard to say but of the three fanzines I've read I say Dick Geis' Alien Critic for the way he so nicely carves up his opponents. He'll probably take a butcher knife to this. The worst fanzines by far are Trekkie fanzines. I myself have been lucky enough to never see one but was unlucky enough to buy STAR TREK LIVES by Bantam Books. It contained excerpts from stories in Trekkie fanzines. Gad! You'd swear the writers never saw a STAR TREK episode in their life. They don't have a clue about the characters personalities at all. And the stories are stupid with no plot or an old moldy one. In other words, HOCWASH!!! And the real clincher is that they say that STAR TREK is the science fiction of the future. BULL. STAR TREK is a breeder. IT INTERESTS THE YOUNG AND THOSE INEXPERIENCED WITH SCIENCE FICTION BUT IS NOT REPEAT NOT SCIENCE FICTION !!! It is at best a Science-Fantasy or more true to the point SPACE OPERA. It will not take over science fiction with clods and weird fanatics writing most of it. (Thank God) Gene Roddenberry and professional writers wrote it, and wrote it damned good. (Especially Ellison and Roddenberry) The Trekkies and their fanzines are killing it and degrading fanzines at the same time. No wonder we get it so hard.

Hold it. I'm getting carried away. One cannot blame this all on the poor lovers of William Shatner, unfortunately. The Trekkies are only one breed and a weird one at that. But where does the problem lie? It seems to be back in the old first

THE

HIBERUS SINGULARITY

3



All they that take
The sword
Shall perish with
The sword.

Matt. 26. 52.

I

A giant torch accelerated through the eternal darkness of interstellar space. Its massive paraboloidal reflector, hundreds of meters in diameter, expelled a concentrated beam of light for propulsion. This vehicle (that we shall now refer to as a star torch) was rapidly moving at near light speed in the direction of its own photon beam. Obviously then, it was traveling with negative acceleration, thus in the final stage of its journey.

Almost filling the coal black sky behind the star torch were several stars shining more brilliantly than any other star in the endless night. This conspicuous grouping of stars was the open cluster from which this star torch had come.

At the other end of the star torch there were two spheres, one larger than the other. Placed in line with one another and attached by a cylindrical corridor, they housed the crew of this vessel. The markings on the outside surface of the smaller sphere were truly symbolic of the creatures who built the star torch. With cork screw like eyes jutting up from a rounded muzzle its nostrils were flaring with a violent anger also expressed in the eyes. Its jaws, opened wide, revealed a pair of curved fangs dripping with a deadly venom. However, it was only a harmless diagram. This star torch, flag ship to the imperial fleet of the Allmighty Anean Empire, had been appropriately christened the "Serpent". Its destination, a relatively small lone star, was still some light years away. But yet, the journey continued, the star became closer and so did the strange destiny awaiting this star torch.

II

"I wonder what Quintros' next move will be?" "Grekos thought to himself while waddling towards his personal service console.

Depressing a small switch with an out stretched finger a certain glass cylinder began to fill with a green, translucent liquid.

Quintros' main objective was to kill him; that was obvious. Yet it was also obvious that he should have killed Quintros ages ago. Then this problem would never have occurred. "Well you know the old saying", Grekos thought aloud "Never put off for tomorrow what you can do today." Besides, procrastination was one of his lesser virtues (if you want to call it that).

Grekos grasped the glass cylinder in his bony hand while with a finger from his second one he depressed a switch on another section of the service console. This action caused his command throne, located in a convenient proximity from his service console, to recline fully into a horizontal position. From here, Grekos took up a comfortable situation on the throne turned couch. That is, he lay on his side and rested his head on the palm of his hand.

Grekos took the glass cylinder in his free hand and raised it into the air in a mocking toast to an unsuccessful future for Quintros. He brought it down and sipped its intoxicating contents through the slender tube that was his tongue.

In a desperate attempt to gain more knowledge about the plans of Quintros, Grekos had only a few hours ago sent his personal serf Aktros to do some eavesdropping. It was hoped that Aktros would return with some useful information in order to make it easier for Grekos to find and annihilate Quintros. Yet Grekos' mind, instead of sceaeming for more ways to out wit his opponent, was constantly pondering the significance of the mission that they were assigned. He couldn't seem to ignore the importance of this assignment. The fact that he was chosen to lead an army to the outskirts of the Empire (the Emperor himself had personally informed Grekos of this assignment) was truly a great honour indeed. He was ordered to lead his army to a solar system on the edge of the star cluster that was their Empire. It was in this solar system that they would encounter colonies set up by intelligent beings from elsewhere in the galaxy. The duty of his army was to slaughter these colonists, these intruders. A simple enough task but yet the concept of alein intelligence brought a rare emotion to both of Grekos' hearts - fear.

Grekos began to laugh. He laughed for he feared and he felt foolish because of his fears. So he laughed a cackling, screeching, spine tingling laugh. And while he laughed a buzzer on his service console began to laugh with him.

Grekos lurched forward out of his comfortable position and his insane cackling was halted. A thin skeleton-like arm reached over to the console and with the thrust of a finger (that at first glance appeared to resemble a twig) the humming buzzer ceased to resound throughout the throne room. At this moment a small viewing screen also located on the service console flickered to life. The image portrayed on the screen was that of his personal serf, Aktros, who was frantically banging his knobby fist on a switch in the outside corridor. Grekos gently touched yet another switch. Thus signaling the entrance door of his throne room to silently slide open and allowing Aktros to come stumbling in.

"Oh mighty war-lord, my glorious master," Aktros managed to mutter between great sobs of grief. "You are in grave danger. Quintros is plotting to assassinate you!"

Grekos only leaned back into the comfort of his throne and smiled at the blubbering heap before him.

"Do you think that I fear Quintros? Why, I have been fully aware of his intentions since he became heir to my position", Grekos calmly replied between sips of his refreshing drink.

"But master, he has followers!"

"Now we are getting places", Grekos muttered to himself while lowering the now empty glass cylinder to the red carpeted floor beside him. "Come now, slave, who are these followers? I want names!"

Aktros remained kneeling before Grekos. While violently struggling for breaths of air, he attempted to speak twice. But only a blue-tinged blood trickled from the corners of his mouth and down his crooked, outward thrusting chin.

"Come you blubbering ninny! Speak up for time grows short!" Grekos' harsh words seemed to crush Aktros before him.

"They are...are", Aktros finally managed to force the words out but only by causing great physical agony to himself, "Drakos for one, Margain, Dorada Tibia and a... a few minor warriors, master".

Grekos' saucer-like eyes expanded in astonishment at the mention of the latter name. Dorada Tibia was a good friend of his (if such relationships existed in this society) and they deeply respected one another, or so he thought.

Grekos leaned forward from the throne. He gently massaged the rounded end of his protruding chin with the fingers of his hand. The nature of his attitude began to change to the more inquisitive aspects.

"Are you sure that Dorado is involved in this?"

"Oh, quite sure, master. I myself did see and hear him plotting with Quintros." As he uttered these words the leathery lips of Aktros quivered and exploded in a sputtering flood of blue. He was no longer strong enough to support his own weight and he collapsed forward face first into the blood that had spilled from his mouth.

"Oh dear me!" Grekos mumbled to himself as he stared down at the now twitching corpse.

The great feeling of remorse was more or less for himself instead of anyone else. For it had now become quite obvious to Grekos that Quintros was also fully aware of the entire situation. Originally Aktros' back had been turned away from Grekos. But now he lay on his ventral side in a pool of blood on the elegantly carpeted floor. In this newly acquired position the dagger protruding from between his wings was in plain view.

While looking down at what was left of Aktros, Grekos did feel slightly deprived. For Aktros was an excellent slave, one who remained loyal to his master to the very bitter end. This type of slave was very hard to come by and Grekos would probably have to remain without one for the entirety of the mission. However, such are life's little difficulties that one just has to bear with.

More importantly, it was now essential for Grekos to liquidate Quintros before the latter could do any more harm. Grekos had been secretly prepared for this event for quite some time and it was now only a matter of carrying the process out.

He reached over to the service console and with the twigs that were his fingers he uncovered and depressed a certain switch that had been secretly kept in his console. The sole purpose of this carefully hidden switch was to (when activated) signal Lykurgos (an effective and faithful warrior) to gather and prepare his hench-men to do whatever services for Grekos they could.

Upon the completion of this simple task Grekos with both hands on the rim of his service console rather lazily pulled himself from up out of his throne. Once again thoughts of Dorado Tibia came to his mind as he stepped over the bloodied heap of Aktros. Exactly why Dorado Tibia had sided with Quintros wasn't quite apparent to Grekos. Although he began to formulate his own ideas concerning the situation he could not entirely accept their implications just yet.

He stopped in the center of his throne room. Here he reached his meager but yet powerful arms upwards as if in a futile attempt to touch the ceiling. Reaching even higher he balanced himself on his relatively large toes, two to each foot. By stretching his muscles in such a manner his body was sure to recover from the inactivity of lying on a fully reclined throne. He even gave his wings a bit of exercise. This he did by beating the featherless, leathery membranes (molded in a somewhat similar form to that of a bird's) in such rapidity that it almost lifted him off the carpet.

With this bit of physical activity out of the way he proceeded to waddle over to a section of wall that appeared to have a large vertical rectangle etched on its surface. By pressing on this surface with the palm of his hand it slid open in a much similar manner as the door to the entrance of his throne room. The relatively large storage closet, that was revealed with the opening of its door, displayed several multi-coloured uniforms that bore a slight resemblance to the coveralls worn by the farmers of his home world. These had no immediate value to Grekos so he pushed them along the rung on which they had been placed. Reaching into a secluded corner of this miniature room, he removed a scabbarded scimitar from its storage rack. As the door to his closet automatically slid shut behind Grekos the sound of steel being drawn against steel echoed in the ears. This occurred when he removed the scimitar from its scabbard. While holding the coarse, dull grey hilt firmly in his left hand, he blissfully stared down at the flashes of the superbly polished blade (which Grekos unconsciously and slightly rocked back and forth in the palm of his other hand) reflecting the light in his throne room. Unlike most Warlords of his stature, Grekos' scimitar was quite unadorned, thus lacking the grandeur of attractive decoration. Grekos didn't even keep it on display in his throne room either. This attitude was quite unusual for a Warlord who regarded his scimitar with great personal value. Any other Warlord who thought of his weapon in a similar manner would surely give it the best possible outward appearance. But not Grekos, for he had no intention of displaying the source of his pride to anyone.

The sparkling scimitar blade almost had a hypnotic affect upon Grekos. His mind became trapped in a torrent of memories and it was carried away to a long ago time on the world of his birth--Ankias. Grekos could still remember the warm summer evening when a pair of the Emperor's messengers had arrived at his father's resort high in the

Ealdianenique Mountains (a mountain range on Ankias which is famous for providing hunters with such big game as the Giant rock dragon). However, Grekos was just a young adolescent when the messengers informed his father that Grekos was one of the few to be chosen for service in the Emperor's own army of warrior guards, and why not? for Grekos had done exceedingly well in the military academy and he was an excellent ~~warrior~~. Truly the type of young warrior that an Emperor would have enter his private army.

Since Grekos had been given a month's notice before he would have to leave his father for a new loyalty to the Emperor, then his father, out of pride for his son, decided to devote that time for the celebration of Grekos' appointment. During one of those many parties that were thrown in the honour of Grekos his father presented him with a scimitar as an award for his accomplishment. Seeking a more peaceful place to discuss the significance of this gift they both left the vicinity of brawling warriors and drunken prostitutes.

He could remember his father telling him then that it was the scimitar which was the symbol of citizenship in the Allmighty Anean Empire. This weapon was the key to success and power. For if an Anean trust no one and uses his scimitar skilfully, he would surely gain much respect and dignity. But if he did not, death would be the only result. All those who were warriors were citizens and all slaves, women and intellectuals were not. Grekos' father warned him that although the intellectuals played an important but usually ~~harmless~~ role in society they could be very dangerous when in want of power and they rarely used a scimitar. He did repeat himself again to Grekos for success and positions of power would come only through the skilled use of his scimitar and respect from others would soon follow if he could not be defeated. But if he showed weakness in any form death would quickly befall him in the form of an opponents' scimitar.

Grekos had deeply respected his father for he had taught him a great deal. Even though Grekos had heard his father mention those facts about Anean society before this was the first time he heard them through the ears of a warrior.

His father was quite right about the importance of the scimitar for Grekos' older brother had become very jealous of Grekos because of his new military position. He attempted to murder Grekos for it but Grekos, being very learned in the art of dueling, had decapitated his older brother before the duel had progressed more than three minutes. With the skilful use of the brutal scimitar, Grekos had always been successful in subduing his opponents. Thus he had gained great prestige as one of the most respected Aneans in the Empire. Like all those before Grekos it was with the fatal blows of his scimitar that he gained the position of War-lord, the commander of a star torch. And now, Quintros was challenging Grekos for that very valuable position. However, Grekos had no intention of giving his warlordship up without a fight. So he decided not to waste any more time ~~remembering~~. He returned the scimitar to its scabbard and strapped the pair to his right

As he waddled towards the exit of his throne room the pair of large nostrils located under his crooked, outward thrusting nose jarred his memory. "Oh yes," he muttered to himself. "I mustn't forget." He had turned around by now and was waddling back towards his personal service console. Grekos had almost forgotten to have the remaind of Aktros removed. For if this task wasn't carried out soon enough the corpse would probably foul the air and ruin the carpet. This was reason enough for Grekos to call for a pair of maintenance serfs through the intercom on his service console. Again waddling over towards the exit he then caused the door to open by applying pressure to its surface with the palm of an outstretched hand. An order from the War-lord is always quickly replied to. So two serfs dressed in the white uniforms of maintenance workers fluttered in from the corridor, almost colliding with Grekos, who was on his way out. "You idiots!" Grekos snarled while grasping the hilt in his bony hand. "I could have your heads for this!"

The two maintenance serfs only slinked into the corner of the room in dire fear for their lives. "All right, you fools, take that corpse to the galley and remove those blood stains from the carpet or you'll be no better off then he is!" meaning Aktros, of course.

The serfs only replied with several violent yet positive bobblings of their skull-like heads. "Come on you lazy parasites - move!" Grekos; harsh words finally got some action from the measly pair as they quickly waddled over to the decaying heap on the carpet.

With this simple task underway, Grekos was soon out of his throne room and in flight down a rather large corridor. Again thoughts of the empirical assignment entered his mind. The fear that Grekos previously developed concerning the alien intelligence he no longer experienced, for it was only a foolish emotion and no true citizen of the Anean Empire knows fear. But yet, the more Grekos wondered about the aliens, the more he became aware of the existence of something far more disturbing then the concept of alien intruders. Grekos' curiosity flared to life. If it wasn't the aliens, then who or what was it that had caused chills to run down the spine of the most respected War-lord in the Anean Empire? Grekos was at a loss for an answer and he probably wouldn't have been able to comprehend it if he knew. But then, he didn't even understand what was causing him to wonder about wether or not there was something or someone else out there other then the aliens? This question he also couldn't answer but for some inexplicable reason he knew that something drastic was going to occur.

His thoughts were interrupted by someone's hand rapidly descending onto Grekos' shoulder and gripping it firmly while in mid-flight. Instinctively, Grekos quickly reached for his scimitar but ceased his reaction upon the realization of the hand's owner. "Lykurgos, are you trying to get yourself killed!?" "No, my War-lord. But if I had been someone else you could..."

"I know, I know, I could be dead right now. And you shouldn't be going around grabbing Aneans on the shoulder like that. It could prove to be unhealthy for someone."

Lykurgos only capitulated due to the superiority of Grekos and said no more. By now, a small party of warriors that made up the group of Lydurgos' henchmen had joined them. Together they flew in a close knit flock down the main corridor. They then turned down a second large passageway that broke off from the main one.

This seemingly coincidental meeting with Lykurgos and his henchmen was certainly not so, for Grekos had planned to meet in this section of the star torch and at this moment quite some time ago.

With the rapid downward beating of wings Grekos gently settled onto the carpeted corridor floor. The rest of his group automatically followed suit behind him. Grekos slowly reached down and squeezed the hilt of his scimitar. Lykurgos and his henchmen were quick to follow suit again as the corridor walls echoed the sound of scimitars abruptly removed from their scabbards. Quintros, who was standing almost three quarters of the way down the corridor, had also readied his scimitar for its bloody deed.

With large round eyes (set deeply under heavy brow ridges) Grekos slowly scanned the group that had sided with Quintros. Margain, standing to the left of his leader, held his scimitar firmly in his left hand. He looked as if he was prepared to cut through a thick under brush in some tropical rain forest. Drakos, standing to the right of Quintros, wasn't nearly as tense as Margain. Holding his scimitar horizontally and loosely in both hands he twirled it around in a somewhat uncircular pattern (its polished blade reflected the light of the corridor in such a manner as to resemble a signal light beacon). A few low ranking warriors had now assembled behind Quintros. With the way their scimitars were drawn they appeared to be ready to fight an ignorant serf instead of one of the most effective war-lords in the Empire. But what really had caught Grekos' attention was the obvious fact that Dorado Tibia wasn't there. Grekos was somewhat puzzled, for his serf had died believing that Dorado sided with Quintros. Yet, Quintros had showed no signs indicating that any member of his group was missing.

More warriors began to gather at the end of the corridor but their only involvement in this ordeal would be as spectators. Grekos could hear their uncouth mumbling behind him. They were obviously betting with one another on the outcome of this confrontation, for they had always done so during similar occurrences in the past. Their impatience began to grow as the number of shouts from the crowd urging a start to the battle increase in numbers.

"Come on, Grekos, the crowd grows weary. You are boring them!"

Quintros' tormenting words brought a quick reaction from Grekos. He charged forward and both sides collided in air amid slashing scimitars, and the noise of wildly cheering spectators.

Lykurgos, with both hands firmly wrapped around the hilt of his scimitar, brought it down with tremendous force onto the head of Margain. It sliced deeply into his skull almost reaching the neck. A blueish tinged blood sprayed from out of the almost lateral cut, like a liquid from an exploding balloon. This was accompanied by a slow creeping of the blueish brain, which hung out of the gruesome opening in his head. Drakos, after downing his opponent, dove in the direction of Lykurgos. Lykurgos' scimitar still lodged deeply inside of Margain's skull, was of no use as Drakos (with his own weapon) almost completely severed Lykurgos' right arm. Still with the use of his left upper limb he managed to withdraw his scimitar from its victim and in retaliation he sliced off one of the large pointed ears from off of the side of Drakos' head. The mob of spectators laughed hysterically at the sight of such sport. The remaining warriors violently fought their adversaries in the brutal attempt to mutilate one another.

Grekos was obviously on the defensive in his own little struggle as Quintros was slowly forcing him against a wall. The crowd wildly cheered for their favorites as they sensed a coming end to the conflict between Quintros and Grekos. The rapid barrage of blows delivered by Quintros' scimitar were so far successfully blocked by Grekos' own weapon. However, Quintros' blows were so quick that Grekos couldn't force them back soon enough to commence his own offensive. But yet it has often been said that "the best defence is a good offense." Upon the consideration of these words Grekos planned to take full advantage of their meaning. That is, when the chance did arise he, instead of blocking Quintros' scimitar with his own, ducked his semi-circular swing. Then, with a quick strike of his own scimitar, he sliced Quintros' hand (the one holding the scimitar) off at the wrist. Grekos now had complete control of the situation. He brought his arm with a firm grip on the scimitar back to its furthest extent behind his head. With one powerful swing, the blade of Grekos' scimitar passed through Quintros' neck like a kitchen knife through butter. Quintros' saucer like eyes erupted in shock upon the realization of his defeat. To Grekos the sight before him was rather comical. For in the few seconds that Quintros remained in the air his head had balanced perfectly on the end of the neck from which it was cut. The expression that remained on Quintros' face (one of such surprise that it made it impossible to describe) caused Grekos to bellow out in sadistic laughter. Dropping to the floor, his head finally rolled off and the blood sprayed from his jugular like water from a faucet.

Grekos landed beside his downed opponent and picked Quintros' scimitar up off the floor. He stared down at the artistic imprints of the twin-tailed scorpion on the shining blade and at the gem-studded hilt. To Grekos, Quintros' richly decorated scimitar was worthless. He flung it into the madly cheering crowd without a second glance. The entire crowd of warriors all rushed towards the area of where the scimitar had landed and they began to fight for its possession.

"You handle the blade fairly well," Dorado Tibia, who had just entered the immediate area, complimented Grekos. "You should have been a doctor-like me."

Grekos turned to face the Serpent's Barber Surgeon while wiping the blood, pieces of flesh and brain from his face.

"What are you doing here?" Grekos muttered inbetween licking the blood from his hand.

"I've come to patch up the injured," Tibia replied while inspecting the wounded arm of Lykurgos like a butcher might inspect a doubtful piece of meat.

"It'll have to be amputated."

The area was beginning to clear of its spectators and a small troop of maintenance slaves arrived to clean up the mess of Anean carcasses.

"All amputations are performed in the ward. Come along now before he bleeds to death."

Lykurgos received some assistance from the Barber Surgeon and War-lord as they flew in the direction of the surgical ward. As far as the others who had partaken in the duel no medical aid would be necessary for they were beyond that. The serfs only gathered up their mutilated remains and carried them off towards the galley.

The entrance to the surgical ward automatically slid open upon the arrival of the trio. After setting their wounded compatriot on a ward bed of minimum comfort, Tibia quickly called for an assistant to bring the tools that were essential for a proper amputation. The reply was almost immediate as Tibia grasped Lykurgos' arm firmly in his own. Taking a stainless steel saw-tooth blade up in his left hand Tibia began to cut through the shattered and hollow bone. No anaesthetic was used of course (because it was saved for even more severe cases) but Lykurgos didn't mind; he could bear the pain. Grekos stood patiently in the corner of the room and he did not utter a sound. Tibia, with a few more hacks of the blade, separated the arm from the rest of Lykurgos' body. He let it drop along with a steady stream of blood into a large porcelain bowl lying beneath them. With the application of a sample of a small quantity of disinfectant, and a tourniquet the amputation was quickly completed. "You can go now. And be careful with that wound for a few days." Tibia told Lykurgos while signaling for an assistant to remove the bowl and its contents from the room.

The door slid shut behind the exiting Lykurgos. As for Grekos he continued to remain silent. Dorado Tibia directed a few confused glances towards the quiet one while cleansing the instruments of his profession in a poorly kept sink.

"What's a matter, did Quintros get your tongue?" Grekos only answered with a slight, negative nod of his head.

"Noisy, aren't you. Well, if your a little more talkitive to-night maybe we can discuss the days duel over some chow. Agreed?"

Grekos' nod was affirmitive this time and followed immediatly by his quick departure from the surgical ward.

Tibia watched the door slide shut behind the exiting Warlord while drying his hands with what had been a white towel. After throwing the blueish stained rag into a large, deep basin he too departed for the greater comfort of his quarters.

Grekos burst into his own quarters and practically threw himself onto the command throne. He then sat up and rested his lengthy chin on the palm of his hand. Grekos' deep set eyes were flaring with confused and tormenting thoughts. Grekos' couldn't seem to understand how Dorado Tibia was involved in Quintros' plots. Tibia certainly did not attend the duel, probably because of the fact that he wasn't very skilled in the art of dueling. Instead Tibia was an intellectual; he was probably the most intelligent Anean on the Serpent

Grekos thought some more. Since this was the case Tibia could very well be privately scheming for ways to satisfy his own desire for power. To Tibia it was only logical that he should side with Quintros in an attempt to gain his trust. After all, Quintros had been favoured to win the duel and Tibia was obviously aware of that. Nevertheless, it really did not matter who won the duel, for Tibia would become first heir to the Warlordship in either situation. But then again the odds had been in Quintros' favour. All that Tibia wanted was to be respected by whoever won the duel. Therefore he could prepare to carry out his plots without having anyone becoming suspicious of his activities.

Grekos couldn't fully understand just how far Tibia had become involved in Quintros' plot. Yet, it was the plain fact, that the respected Barber Surgeon was involved which aggravated him. However, Grekos was not going to take any more chances. He had accepted the offer to sup with Tibia that night and this could be the perfect opportunity that he must not fail to take advantage of. Of course Grekos would wait until the meal had been properly devoured and then he would slit Tibia's throat. After all it was the only polite way to rid yourself of a possible threat to your position. In the meantime Grekos would ready a dinner uniform and cleanse his scimitar of its stains.

Addoor slid open and Grekos waddled into the chamber that it revealed.

"Don't you beleive in knocking?" Tibia spoke in a normal tone of voice as if Grekos was standing beside him instead of across the room.

"Why should I? It's my Star Torch."

Tibia only smiled at the reply as he filled two slender cylinders with a warm orange coloured wine. Grekos waddled over to a large rectangular table. Here he picked up a chromium covering off a platter that contained the main course of the feast. He stared down at the roasted leg that had once belonged to Quentros. To him it looked rather tasty. Cannabilism was not an unusual practice on Star Torches; after all, it saved vital space that might have needlessly

been wasted on other foods. Grekos replaced the chromium cover in its position on the table. From here he sat himself down onto a well padded couch where he would feast in the finest comfort. Tibia set both cylinders onto the table while taking extreme caution that Grekos would receive the one meant for him. Tibia suggested a toast as they both gathered up their warm cylinders.

"To the Warlord of the Serpent. May he gain great success."

"Yes to Grekos of Ankias." Grekos specified.

With a big smirk across his face Grekos immediately downed his drink with out any hesitation. The smirk left for more agonizing expressions. Grekos recoiled in pain and let out a hoarse cry. His own blue blood trickled from the corners of his mouth and dripped from the nostrils of his nose. He looked up at Tibia who was sitting across from him on the other side of the table. With drink in hand and a smirk on his own face he appeared to be enjoying himself.

"Poisoned?"

"Of course Grekos, hydrocyanic acid is quite affective. If the acid doesn't kill you the cyanide surey will." Tibia calmly and almost happily replied to the tortured Warlord.

Grekos was mortified. He attempted to reach for his scrimitar but he was too weak and the pain was excruciating.

"But why?" a foolish question and Grekos realized it.

"Obviously I'll become the Warlord. Then I can successfully carry out the rest of my plans. Care to know what they are Grekos?"

Grekos only lurched forward with his arms folded against his abdomen. The acid was beginning to dissolve sections of his intestinal tract.

"Actually Grekos, my plans are rather ambitious. You see," Tibia set his cylinder onto the table. He then leaned back into the softly padded couch and folded his fingers together.

"Once we reach the alien colony, shall we say that my forces will easily subdue them, of course. And then, with the use of these aliens for slave labor and maybe some aspects of their technology I might just be able to build up a force strong enough to overthrow the Emperor. Actually Grekos, I am very sure of myself. I will take control of the Empire!"

Grekos could no longer reply for the acid had affectively destroyed his vocal chords. He lay in his own blood on the couch and stared up at the ceiling above. His death was not far off and so he waited in torturing agony for it to arrive.

"I hear you have fourteen women in your harem Grekos. You know, that's the problem with these star torches, no women on board. However, where was I, oh yes, and you've no children yet. But then, if memory serves me correctly, your third wife has laid some eggs, although they haven't hatched yet. Its a pity you'll never see that, isn't it Grekos? I did arrange to have your body bronzed and sent back to your home planet however, I know you'll appreciate that." Tibia continued to speak without any feeling of remorse for Grekos who lay, suffering terribly, before him.

The initial shock that the pain brought about was easily overcome by Grekos. He also managed to ignore the continuing agony.

However, Grekos' mind was now oblivious to all that, went on around him. For this was no longer of any importance.

Grekos had been the victor of thirty six duels as Warlord including his defeat of Quintros. All these duels were fought and won in a dignified manner--with Scimitars. He failed to heed his fathers warning about the dangers of intellectuals. Poisoning was a method of assassination that Grekos never expected. A move that Tibia wisely played. Although this method of assassination is immoral and an act of cowardice it is certainly not illegal and it was very effective.

Thoughts of the alien colony and his mission returned to him. And again these thoughts were accompanied by a strange feeling of fear that Grekos couldn't explain. But yet was it the colony that he feared? Grekos remembered, it was something else, unknown and quite terrifying. He could see a star in his mind. It was a strange thought that seemed to occur spontaneously. But it was a star that he could sense, a very unusual star for it was without colour and it did not shine. Yet it was of the deepest black that he could ever imagine. Even darker than the blackest night he had ever experienced. And it was the first thing that Grekos had ever feared in his entire life. He could almost feel it pulling on him as if it was some hideous creature trying to drag him away into a deep darkness. Grekos was almost becoming hysterical with fear. For he felt that the Serpent was in some kind of terrible danger. He attempted to get up and warn all those on the Star Torch but he was unsuccessful, too weak, he could barely move. But then a great feeling of relaxation crept into his body and drove out his anxieties and the pain that he suffered from. To Grekos, death came as a relief.

Tibia tumbled from off of his couch and onto the carpeted floor as the Serpent made a sudden and violent lurch forward. Clumsily he managed to fight the powerful, invisible force that was pulling him towards the stern of the Serpent. He staggered out of his quarters and into the large corridor. Collapsing to the floor he could feel a bone in one of his wings snap as he crashed in an awkward position. Yet his screaming scream of agony was not because of this but instead it expressed the pain he experienced as his legs stretched forward from out of his body like two pieces of pulled toffee. He could hear the agonized calls of the other warriors as their bodies were ripped apart by the tremendous force.

The Serpent and all that was in it were breaking up due to the powerful strain resulting from an intense gravitational field. Pieces of star torch and Anean bodies began to spiral in towards on erie black star from which no light shone. As this matter rapidly accelerated towards the gravitational vortex it began to super heat and release a series of intense x-rays that may one day act as a signal to some distant world of what had just occurred. But once the remains of the Serpent plunged past the event horizon nothing could ever escape, not even photons. The dead star torch was now in a universe of all its own. If anything had survived (which is quite doubtful) it would never be able to muster up enough energy to escape or even contact the outside universe. Now the entire atomic structure of what had been the Serpent and all that it had contained disintegrated into oblivion. It had reached singularity.

III

A young woman brushed a loose strand of blonde hair back behind her shoulder. She was carefully studying a length of computer print-out lying on a table before her, the hair had just gotten in the way.

"Yes dad, its obvious. It has to be a black hole."

An older gentleman standing beside her nodded his head affirmatively while puffing on a pipe of tobacco. His hair was graying at the side burns and a wrinkled brow was symbolic of the many hours he spent in an observatory. He blew a cloud of white smoke from his mouth and pointed an outstretched finger at a certain section of the out-put. Most of the markings on the computer paper were just straight lines with, in some sections, very slight fluctuations. But what had caught the attention of the young woman and her father was a sudden jerky up and down shape of the line on the middle of the paper. This is what he was pointing at.

"Yes, Rebecca, as you can see, this massive fluctuation does not occur regularly so it can't be a neutron star. It has to be a black hole."

The orbiting stellar observatory that they had put in orbit around their world had finally made an important discovery. It had detected the x-radiation from some distant object and sent it down via radio wave to the computer complex in the observatory below. The father and daughter team of astronomers were quite pleased with the discovery, for not many black holes were known to exist. But yet this discovery had come at a price. For according to a blue shift in spectral observations of a star torch. The two astronomers were sure that it was coming towards their colony. After all not a great deal was known about alien intelligence and much could have been learned through an encounter with them. Yet for some reason the star torch had navigated right into the black hole as if it wasn't there. The x-rays that they received from the occurrence varified not only the esistance of another black hole but also the doom of that alien star torch.

"It really is a terrible way for any type of intelligence to meet death. I don't think they deserved it!" Rebecca spoke of the star torch.

"Now Rebecca. If anyone is stupid enough to wander into a black hole, they surely deserve the fate that they got. After all they should have been able to detect the bending of light due to the massive gravitational field."

"Oh dad, how can you be so cold about it?"

"Easy; we don't know anything about those creatures. How can you be so certain that they weren't coming to destroy our little colony?" her father asked but only in a jest.

"Daddy! Why would any alien want to do a thing like that to some other beings that they don't even understand?"

"Come on now, lets clean up or we'll be late for tonight's concert." He ignored her question while folding up the computer print-out.

Rebecca's father always looked forward to a relaxing evening of music and especially this one tonight, for the musicians would be performing his favourite symphony. The C minor, by Beethoven.

Nivek Lee Apkin

Science Fact:

Nivak Lee Apkin

Black Holes--A Dead Star's Ghost

For those of you who have already read the 'Hideous Singglarity' and have little or no knowledge concerning black holes, I do believe that you may be somewhat confounded by their use in the story. So, the purpose of this science fact article is to explain to you, the reader, exactly what a black hole is. Then, with a better understanding of them, you might (I hope) hold a better appreciation for the 'Hideous Singularity'.

In order to gain a proper understanding for black holes I believe that it is essential for us to first consider where they came from. Now, imagine your average ~~every~~ day massive, radiant star which is busy converting the simple element hydrogen to helium by a process known as fusion. This process will go on normally for a few million years until its supply of hydrogen has been completely depleted. Then it will use the helium, that it had produced before hand, in this process of fusion. But, this requires much higher temperatures, so low and behold the star's temperature rises to hundreds of millions of degrees and its diameter begins to expand. Growing larger and redder, it becomes a red giant reaching an almost 500 million mile diameter. Of course, the super giant has also engulfed all of its nearby planets. By now the helium fusion has ceased and many of the heavier elements up to, but excluding cobalt, have been created. But the fusion reactions all stop here with the element iron. There are no remaining forces left which are capable of supporting this huge, red giant. This star's core rapidly begins to collapse, temperatures begin to rise to the billions of degrees and the material make-up of the star is thrown deep into space. Conditions now prevail for the creation of elements which are heavier than iron. These elements are the raw materials needed for the creation of new stars. The enegy of this explosion of stellar matter forms an expanding burst of light which may signal some distant worlds' of the super nova that had just taken place.

After this tremendous explosion of matter and energy has ceased, the remains of the star begins to collapse towards its center of gravity. As its diameter ~~decreases~~ the atoms that make up its matter are pushed closer and closer together. The electron shells are shattered and the growing force of gravity caused the electrons to smash together with the protons in the nuclei and thus forming neutrons. Upon reaching a diameter of twenty miles, each square centimeter of the shrunken star weighs several million tons. In some cases nuclear forces within the star are strong enough to stop this collapse at the neutron star stage. However, the star that we are considering has a strong gravitational field due to its unusually large mass and it continues its collapse.

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This contracting star has now vanished completely from the three-dimensional universe. At the neutron star stage, this star had ceased to emit light so it is now nothing but a pure black and massive gravitational field where the escape velocity has exceeded the speed of light. This is what we call the black hole.

Using Albert Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, two physicists, Robert Oppenheimer and Hartland Snyder, first postulated the existence of black holes in 1939. Until recently the existence of black holes was greatly doubted. However, with modern techniques the search for black holes has been carried out with growing success. But then, one might ask; how can a black hole be detected if it emits no form of energy what so ever? The answer to this question depends on the matter that the black hole takes in. As you probably have already realized from reading the 'Hideous Singularity' that the powerful gravitational field generated by a black hole has a habit of pulling in to it anything which comes within reach. As this matter plummets into the black hole, it should begin to collide and compress (that is, its atomic structure). Thus, it would super heat to hundreds of millions of degrees and emit an intense stream of x-rays. These x-rays, when they reach the Earth, are usually absorbed by the upper atmosphere and they rarely reach the ground. So, astronomers have, in order to detect these x-rays, placed satellites in orbit around the Earth. It was in 1971 when the first powerful x-ray source was detected. Located in the constellation Cygnus there is a blue giant star with an unseen companion in orbit about it. This invisible companion appears to be the source of these powerful x-rays that our astronomers have detected. This unusual binary star has been labelled Cygnus X-1. Astronomers have postulated that the unseen companion in Cygnus X-1 has a powerful gravitational field which is pulling the matter of its blue giant companion along in a steady stream towards itself. As this star's matter spirals in towards the invisible companion, it becomes super heated and the x-rays are released. Although white dwarfs and neutron stars could also cause this same occurrence to take place there is one shred of evidence in favour of this unseen companion being a black hole. X-rays from neutron stars (or pulsars) should reach the Earth in steady bursts like the regular flashing of a light. While, as is the case with Cygnus X-1, the x-rays escaping from matter which is dropping into black holes should fluctuate wildly in intensity. Astronomers are now almost certain that the x-ray source in Cygnus is a black hole.

Once the matter and energy spiraling in towards a black hole is firmly held in its gravitational field, it passes a point in the black hole known as the event horizon. This is the point of no return. For once beyond the event horizon, not even light can escape. Absolutely nothing known to man could ever break free from a black hole once it has passed the event horizon.

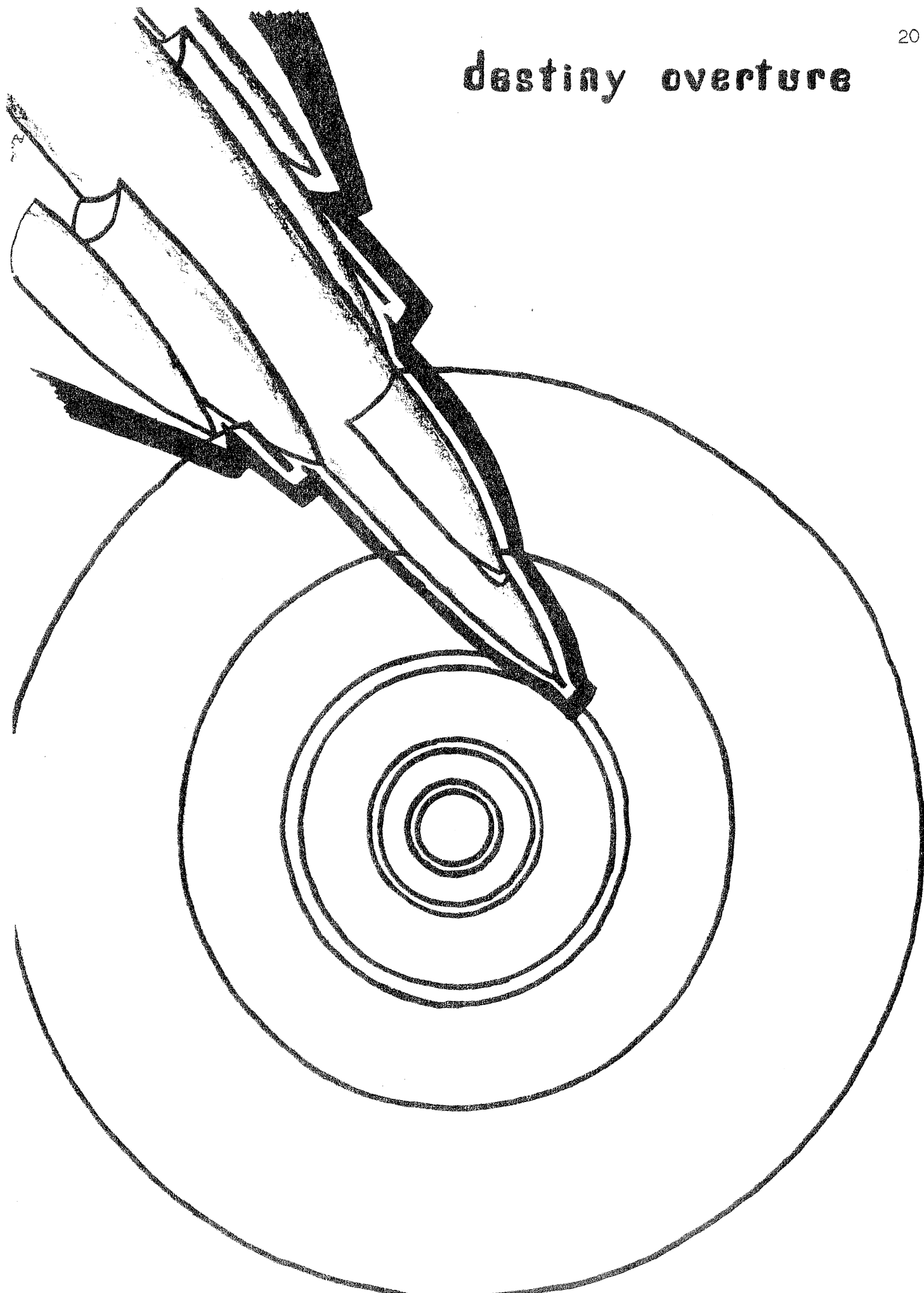
This matter is completely isolated from the outside universal and it is in a universe of all its own. Once at the hole's center the entire atomic make-up of the matter disintegrates into oblivion. This is known as singularity. Even if the matter had escaped singularity or even escaped being crushed upon entering the hole for that matter, it could never gather enough energy together to escape. For in order for one to escape from the clutches of a black hole he would have to exceed the velocity of light and according to modern physics that is impossible.

So in conclusion; a black hole is a tremendously massive object (at least three solar masses) with its mass crammed into a very small area which results in a powerful gravitational field were the escape velocity has exceeded the speed of light.

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destiny overture



The great silver ship floated in the aeons-long twilight of deep space. Although the ship was crossing the void at more than one-quarter lightspeed, an observer standing on the micro-meteorite-pitted hull would not be able to detect the motion, for space is so immense. Indeed if it had not been for the steady, pale violet glow of the ionjets and the great, almost invisable, beam of photon drive, the ship could have been mistaken for a derelict. Suddenly, the scene was broken by another ship, far more streamlined than the spheroid one, flashed by at fully nine-tenths lightspeed and disappeared into the cosmic depths.

Number Eleven was sitting back in the Pilot's Chair, surveying the control room, when the alarm went off. By rotating the Chair he could see that the light above the stress-field pickup glowed orange. He swung back and lightly tapped the Scan/3 touchplate. Screen/3 lit up with the characteristic stress-field wake of the Alien starship.

That settled it. The Perseus had stumbled upon an Alien tradelane, for this was the third such ship detected this week. Although the stress-field pickup operated at infinite speed, its range was strictly limited. It could pick up those Alien ship's wakes which did not pass over the great stress-fields of the Galaxy's core, at distances up to a light-day. The first Alien ship's closest approach had been .78 of a light-day, and the second ship had passed by less than half a light-day distant. Wearily, Eleven desensitized the alarm circuit to this last intruder. The churr of the alarmsystem, which had automatically quieted after the first ten seconds, faded away completely. It would still activate, however, should another Alien ship draw near. Eleven then touched the Systems/9 plate and the Scan/2 touchplate. As the data glowed on the screen apprehension rose up inside him. This Alien ship had passed by .27 light-days distant. It was still a safe distance; as distant as Pluto is from the Sun. At perhaps a quarter of that distance, an Alien ship's wake would begin to disturb the Perseus. Any closer and danger levels would be exceeded. The speed of the ship was high—.902 lightspeed. The Aliens were driving this ship at a towering velocity. That fact constituted the main body of knowledge about the Aliens. And now, the Perseus was closing on an Alien tradelane.

Since this was a long run—117 light years—the Perseus had peaked at a high speed relative to other Terran ships:— .590 lightspeed. Now, 100 years into the deceleration mode, the Perseus was still clipping along at .251 lightspeed.

Eleven gazed over the main datascreen.

DISTANCE REMAINING: 34.8 LIGHT YEARS
 TIME IN TRANSIT: 302 YEARS, 3 MONTHS, 5 DAYS
 TIME TO TRANSIT TERMINATION: 118 YEARS
 DECELERATION: .00295 LIGHTSPEEDS/YEAR
 NO EMERGENCY FUNCTIONS ACTIVATED

Eleven sighed. At the end of the voyage, he and 13 other people would have spent thirty years apace as backup pilots for the computer pilot. Of them all, only One would not have a thirty-year block of duty; as most qualified pilot One would handle takeoff, turnover, and the terminal leg of the journey. Thirty years alone in deep space, a fifth of your life spent... Of course the other pilots who were in deep freeze could be called up, but that was restricted to emergencies, and it took them two days to be revived.

So early psychologists had had a dilemma: only one person could be functioning at any one time. Thirty years along in a ghostly ship crossing space the person must spend without going insane. If Eleven became deranged now, it was possible that he could destroy the ship's cargo of three hundred deep-frozen colonists and machinery. And Inverness Colony, not to be founded until some two years prior to the Perseus' arrival, would wither. Psychologists of nine hundred years ago had pondered this. They

had reached no practical solution until someone asked the crucial question: "What is out there, and what kind of person would it attract?" And then, the solution was obvious.

So, while a computer guided the Perseus, in the Pilot's Chair sat an amateur astronomer. He had had, Eleven reflected wryly, the most inferior equipment possessed by any of the fourteen pilots- a 10 cm refractor. In the smoky atmosphere of Earth, lit up by the lights of a hundred thousand cities, it was capable only of planetary observing, and he yearned for the Milky Way. Here, in deep space, but for the machinations of the computer, the seeing was perfect. However, the image in the mock telescope's eyepiece depended on the computer; thirty years of perfect seeing would cause apathy in even the most ardent of observers. If the seeing was poor Eleven would go to the view-room. The computer seemed to be in a particularly vile mood, shattering the stars into fragments, so he did this now.

He sat down in the reclining chair and keyed for the galactic circle. Instantly the great viewscreen of the domed room activated. A hemisphere of the sky could be seen. At eye level all around lay the glow of the Milky Way, invisible anywhere in Earth's brightly-lit, foggy skies. After swinging the chair about in an arc, Eleven gazed up at the zenith. There the stars lay few, for there lay one of the Galaxy's poles. They up there must be lonely when compared to the density of the low-lying stars. Yet despite the brilliance of all these far pinpoints, deep space is but a grey twilight. Only solar systems enjoy day, while their sun burns; the planets create their own nights. In deep space, there is only the dawn and day of the beginning of the universe and the Age of Quasars. Then the long twilight stretches to the end of the universe and of time itself; a brief false dawn, then eternal night...

Eleven gazed upon the sight, and reflected that only one of humanity's achievements to rival this splendor was the program that led the colonization of other stars.

Two thousand years ago it had began, in the form of likely stars by lunar observatories. Stars up to 120 light years distant were catalogued and analyzed. After the survey, robot probes had been flung into space, each to rendezvous with several likely stars. The probes traveled at high velocities, being able to use more efficient drives than could be utilized by manned ships due to radiation hazards. Despite their great speed, the first probes returned after nine hundred years had elapsed. Four hundred years later the last stragglers crawled into port. Three never returned. The world had become stagnant since the probes departure, as the makers of the probes had predicted, so the return of the star-voyaging probes was heralded by spectacular events to awaken the populace. And so began another age.

When the data brought home by the probes had been analyzed, manned survey ships were sent to the best targets. The entire crew remained in deep freeze, for human pilots are only a safety measure on colonist ships. Again, after the departure of the starships culture atrophied, but only for two hundred years, when the first survey ship returned. The last ship made port after an absence of nine hundred years and found that colonization had begun six hundred years before.

Only those planets which were rated excellent were being considered. The first wave of colonists would terra-form small islands and as numbers swelled larger bodies of land would be tackled.

Eleven keyed for Destination-zenith. A new orientation of stars appeared. Eleven gazed directly upward. That faint point of light was Inverness Colony's sun. The Colony would be settled by Scots who wished to escape the cities-overrun Highlands. In climate, landform, even vegetation, the habitable areas were similar to that of Scotland. Up there, also, was the Centaurus, three years ahead of the Perseus, and the crew of the Centaurus would wait for the arrival of the Perseus. Then the Pilot sections of both ships would be linked to take both ship's crews back to Earth.

Eleven beheld the entire tapestry of stars. Perhaps in those cold, distant beacons lay humanity's salvation and destiny. For on Earth, since even the beginning of the Second Millennium, had not civilization left unclimbed the tall peaks it should have attained? Instead, the downward-sloping way had been taken, for civilization and humanity lacked the strength and will to choose the rocky path that led to the

pinnacles. Under a strange distant sun, far from the ancient ways, culture might perhaps flourish anew. Space is but a testament, yet unwritten, and the last page will remain blank even as the Galaxy's multitude of lights ebb...

Eleven's reverie was rudely torn apart by the strident noise of alarm. No, not strident, it was the alarm that told of the proximity of an Alien ship, a soft churr. But...slowly yet, then swiftly reaching crescendo's peak, the wail of a banshee. The Collision Alarm. Eleven's blood ran cold, and he curled up for impact. It seemed far less, but after ten seconds the noise automatically quieted. He straightened out. Of course. The simultaneous tripping of the proximity and Collision alarms was no coincidence. The Perseus had been closing on an Alien tradelane. Now it and an Alien ship were converging to an apex of collision. Eleven sat in the dark, unmoving. The stars around him were no longer beacons, but cold eyes that intently watched him. Suddenly, an overpowering clacking noise eclipsed the two diminishing alarms. Eleven's breath came in ragged bursts, for that clacking meant that the computer had analyzed the impending collision, and decided that it had no recourse in logic, it had called for the human pilot. At the Academy, the instructors had passed this over, but in the high, vaulted halls it was common knowledge that if the computer calls for assistance, you have one foot in the grave. Eleven's hand was trembling so much that it took him three tries before the unwinking stars were erased and replaced by a soft, even light.

Then he made his way out of the view-room, and using the half-walking, half-flying technique of movement peculiar to low-G ships progressed down the passageways to the control room. There was no lateral drift, a bad omen, since it meant the computer was sufficiently puzzled to not fire any jets. Eleven had reached the entrance to the control room, so he grasped a handle and swung inwards.

It took him a minute to assess the situation. Immediately he channelled all available power into lateral jets 3, 4, and 5. The vectors of approach were strange. Even with the Perseus taking maximum evasive action, the Alien ship had to turn also to avoid the collision. And the later the Alien ship began to evade the faster it would have to move to miss the Perseus. If the Alien ship took no action within the next-Eleven glanced at the datascreen-twelve point seven minutes, collision was inevitable unless the Aliens could drive their ships faster than light. Having done all he could, and calm now, Eleven watched the screen which indicated whether the Alien had begun evasive maneuvers. The screen still said NEGATIVE BELOW, figures flashed, indicating the time left before collision became inevitable. Alternately, they flashed by fast and slow, until the last minute was upon them. As if in haste, the last seconds flashed away.

And suddenly the screen read: COLLISION INEVITABLE.

Yet one small grain of hope survived; that perhaps the Alien ship would destruct. Eleven eyed his control board. In the corner was not a heat sensitive touchplate but an old-fashioned toggle switch with a safety pin. The switch Eleven regarded gravely. Pull it and the Perseus would become in an instant an expanding bubble of gas. Perhaps he should keep on this doomed run. But then, at least one ship would be destroyed in this encounter. If one ship destructed, the other would pass harmlessly through a cloud of metallic vapour. If neither destructed... The most preferable course, to Eleven, would be if the Alien ship destructed, thus saving the Perseus. Second best would be for the Alien ship to survive, for Eleven was not vindictive. It seemed to him better that one ship carried on than none. The worst course would be collision, littering both the route to Inverness Colony and the Alien tradelane with debris. A chilling thought came into Eleven's mind-the Centaurus, somewhere ahead...or strewn across interstellar space. Eleven made his decision. He reached across and pulled the safety pin of the destruct switch. Permitting himself one last breath of air, he pulled the switch.

As the Alien ship passed through the region, where once a starship had been, alien counters clicked. Alien minds wondered what could have created such a strange, metallic-gas bubble in deep space, and what force could have sent its periphery into motion, outward bound at the speed of light.



Your nice friendly editor lately took a trip down to the movie house to see what was cooking; filmwise. As I approached the billboard I noticed the word BUG staring me in the face. Since I definitely didn't want to see Bambi and didn't think I could survive another showing of Drowning Pool I inquired at the box office. I was kindly told that the show was about some fire-making, carbon-eating butts that came from the center of the earth. The center of the earth? Uh... yeah, sure. The center of the earth, they got to be kidding, that stuff went out with Verne and Burroughs. I had the film condemned as I walked in. While passing by the snack bar I heard one kid say to his friend, "I hear the bugs grow as big as a car!" I almost puked. Giant bugs? I wandered into the theater and smoked two cigarettes to calm my frustration.

At this point the film started. I lit up a cigarette and decided to watch it with an open mind and keen eye, special effects had to have improved since "Them". They had, and so had movies too.

To make a long story short it was excellent, great, fantastic. The acting...supurb. It just went merrily along as if it was really happening. The story idea and script was good though a little weird at the end. The electronic music by Charles Fox was okay but not anything better. They should have saved his billboard blub for the guy who did the insect sequences(whose name unfortunately slips my mind) for he did one hell of a job. But in all it was a great movie and had me scared(as one of the charactors said) shitless. Definitly well worth seeing.

The Editor

Editorial continued.

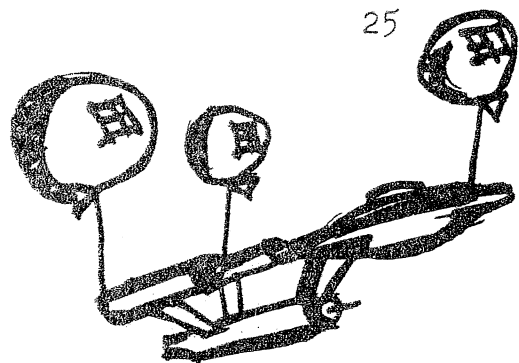
years of science fiction when the pulps were coming out. There was a lot of good fiction then but then...there was a lot of bad fiction too. But it was a time of confusion and change. No-one knew where the field was going and many mags were born and died. It slumped in the Forties killing most of the pulp fanzines but the Fifties came and things picked up a little. Then, disaster struck.

The movie industry became interested in science fiction and Space Opera roamed the movie screens with checkered rockets and monsters. There was a few good movies such as Them and The Day the Earth Stood Still with a message and good story lines and special effects but the magority went something like this...

A giant silver spaceship, no we won't use that, rocketship blasts off into space. Onboard is an aging old scientist who either built the rocket or is an astronomer and knows all the answers, his beautiful young daughter, the Captain, and of course a dashing young recruit who wants to make out with the daughter. The ship lands on the planet or runs into danger and has to land on an asteroid. The Captain and scientist go out to explore where they find a monster that kills the Captain and either wounds the scientist or vice versa. Our dashing young hero like the knights of old must slay this monster. He grabs his handy-dandy laser gun and goes out to do his gallant duty sometimes accopanied by the beautiful maiden who lets him know

STAR ZWI

25



The credits came up and the music started. Suddenly... the announcer's voice, "We regret to announce that STAR TWIT has been canceled from this station. Next week at this time we'll be premeiaring a new series, GET SMART."

Spook turned to the Captain, "Sir, do you know what this means?"

Twerp looked puzzled and said, "No Spook, I don't think I do know."

"It means, sir, that we can go home."

"Home? You mean home, home. Home with grass....trees and...you mean Earth home?"

"Thats the one, sir."

"Holy shit,Hurray!"

"Please Captain, this is a family show."

"Yes but a canceled family show. Mister Solo, set us on course for home."

"Home sir?" questioned the helmsman.

"Earth...you know Earth. Home."

"OH, that one. I'll have us one course in two shakes of a rabbits tail."

"Two shakes of a..." Twerp pushed the intercomm button, "Scotsie?"

"Aye Captain."

"Scotsie we're going home. Push those bloody engines to their limit, we want to get dere fast."

"I'll do my best sir, but the poor lass is still recovering from my proposal an' I wouldn't want to tire 'er out completely."

"Uh...alright Scotsie, Twerp out." Gadfray! Had the whole ship gone crazy or was it just him. He didn't know what to think...

"Captain," it was Spook,"according to my calculations we should be home in aproximently ten hours. I suggest during that time that you, Dr. McQuack, Scotsie, and myself catch a quick 18 holes of golf. Agreed?"

"Excelent idea, Spook. Lets go."

The pair quickly left the bridge.

"Bonehead?" Twerp inquired as he entered the Medical Lab.

"What...oh hiya Jimmy-boy." McQuack replied. He held up a bottle of Saurian Brandy, "Hey Jimmy-boy, ya wan' some?"

"Uh...no thanks, Bonehead."

"That's alright, Jimmy-boy, the more for me." According to Twerp, McQuack had already had too much. Perhaps he should step in. No! He hated liquer, and women and all the things the producer had forced him to do. When he asked what he did like two things registered; Spook and his rubber duckie.

"Dr., may I please have a swig of your bottle?" Spook asked.

"Of course you can you pointy eared coputer, I didn't think you had it in you," replied McQuack.

"Well Dr., since the show is finally over and we're alowed to go home I am free to be human again." He downed the remainder of the bottle.

"Home?" it came from McQuack. "You mean we can go home?"

"Yes Bonehead," Twerp cut in. "Isn't that why your getting drunk?"

"Of course not, today is Galactic Medical Day."

"Spook that was an excelent idea making McQuack our caddy," Twerp said as they approached the green of the 18th hole.

"It was all very logical, Captain. After all, he was too drunk to play and would only keep us behind so we might as well have made him caddy, which we did."

"You're right as usual Spook. Caddy!!" McQuack wandered up to the green and pulled the flag out of the hole. Twerp putted his ball into the hole. Spook did the same. Twerp tallied up the scores, "Shit, tied."

"I'm afraid not, Captain. It seems you cheated on the first, ninth, eleventh, and sixteenth holes making me the winner."

"I did not."

"I'm afraid you did."

"Didn't."

"DID."

"DIDN'T!"

"DID!"

"DIDN..."

The argument was halted by the intercomm bleep and Lt. O'Whore's voice, "Oh, Captain. We have a slight problem with the Romulips and the Klingoffs, they seem to be attacking."

"Holy Moses! We'll be right up."

Twerp raced out of the elevator onto the Bridge. "Scotsie get out of my chair and down to the engine room. O'Whore get the commanders of the attacking ships on the screen."

"Yes Captain, honey. Calling all attacking ships...calling all attacking ships...this is the USS ENTERFRIZE calling an' our grat powerful Captian wishes to speak to you. Their on the screen now, love."

"Uh...thank you Lt. This is Captain James T. Twerp of the starship ENTERFRIZE. Screw off, you bastards. We've been canceled. The show is over, repeat over. Good bye."

"Captain, how did you do it!" exclaimed O'Whore. "They're leaving!"

"I just used some shady and underhanded diplomatic tactics, I swore."

"Do you know any bedroom tactics, Captain?" she asked coyly.

"But of course."

"Do you wish to try them out?"

"Don't mind if I do." Mabey women weren't so bad after all. He might as well try it at least once.

"It will cost you," she said

Twerp paused, "How much?"

"Fifty."

"But by gosh the price is right." He placed his arm around her and strolled off the Bridge.

Twerp sat streached out in his chair with O'Whore draping herself over him watching the stars. Spook turned to him and said, "Captain, we are recieving a message from orbital assist."

"Place it on the screen, Spook."

TODAY IS SHIP RETURN DAY...PLEASE CHECK THE DATE DUE CARDS AT THE BACK OF YOUR SHIPS...THAMK YOU...TERRAN ORBITAL ASSIST

"I have sent the tape down to them, Captian We should be recieving a reply shortly."

USS ENTERFRIZE...YOUR SHIP IS FOUR YEARS OVERDUE TOTALING 1,654,930,243, 006, 629. 75 CREDITS...YOU ARE TO INEADIATLY REPORT PLANETSIDE TO DISCUSS THIS MATTER WITH THE FEDERATION PRESIDENT...THANK YOU...ORBITAL ASSIST

"Spook do you have any explanation for us arriving late?"

"Yes sir, reruns."

"The President will see you now," came the voice of the electronic receptionist.

"Do you have any idea what the punishment will be?" Twerp asked meekly.

"Either you'll be allowed to go free whereupon you'll be attacked by fanatic fans, or you'll be placed elsewhere and rerun over again."

The choice was not that fantastic as Twerp, Spook, McQuack, Scotsie, and of course, O'Whore marched into the President's office. Spook's mouth dropped. A rising chorus came from Twerp, McQuack, and Scotsie, "Oh no!"

"Aw, isn't he cute," said O'Whore as she stroked the President's head.

The tribble trilled softly.

Neil Williams

Editorial continued

the monster is coming by letting out an earpiercing scream in the vacuum of space. Our hero blasts the creature with his ray gun and wins his girl. All happy the ship returns to Earth for a big welcome. The End. Mind you I was just skimming the surface here. There is many other combinations of people and incidents but it all adds up to one thing, TRASH.

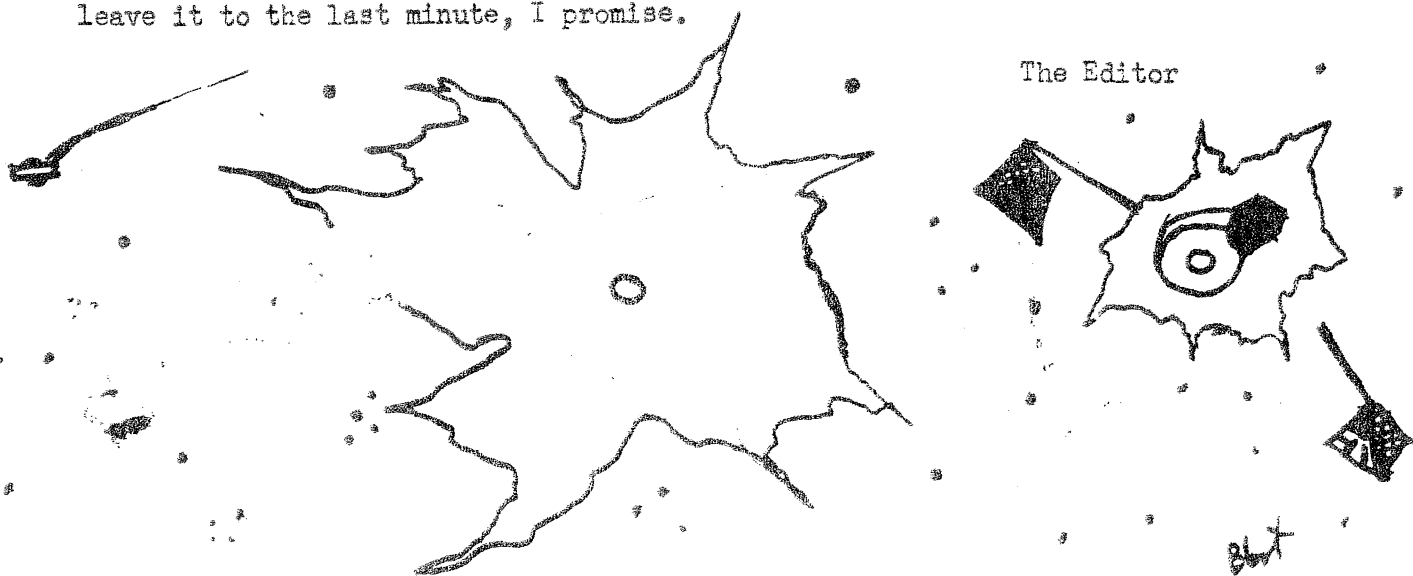
The Sixties were plagued with the blobs which is worse. These things come down from the sky, ooze all over the place and eat people. Where's my airsick bag?

But then there was 2001 and the pictures been slightly improved aside of Zardoz and it's kind. So the movie industry is beginning to shape up. I shall be writing Visual Review each issue keeping up with what seeps out of Hollywood.

Though the movies did their harm science fiction is still standing on its and is doing better than ever. Space opera is back with both old and new heros. The garbage is back again and the good stuff is here once more. Science fiction is now as firm as the Rock of Gibraltar.

Though this editorial has been most disorganized and I've done nothing but spout off at various things and the spelling is poor (Because I have eight hours before it goes to the printer) I will most sincerely try to do better in the future. It seems I am definitely lousy at first issue editorials where I write about the first issue sort of. The next will be on the FAN FAIR 3 convention being held in TORONTO, August 1,2,3, at the King Edward Sheriton Hotel. I shall keep a dictionary at hand and try not to leave it to the last minute, I promise.

The Editor



GALACTIC MAILBOX



DEAR EDITOR,
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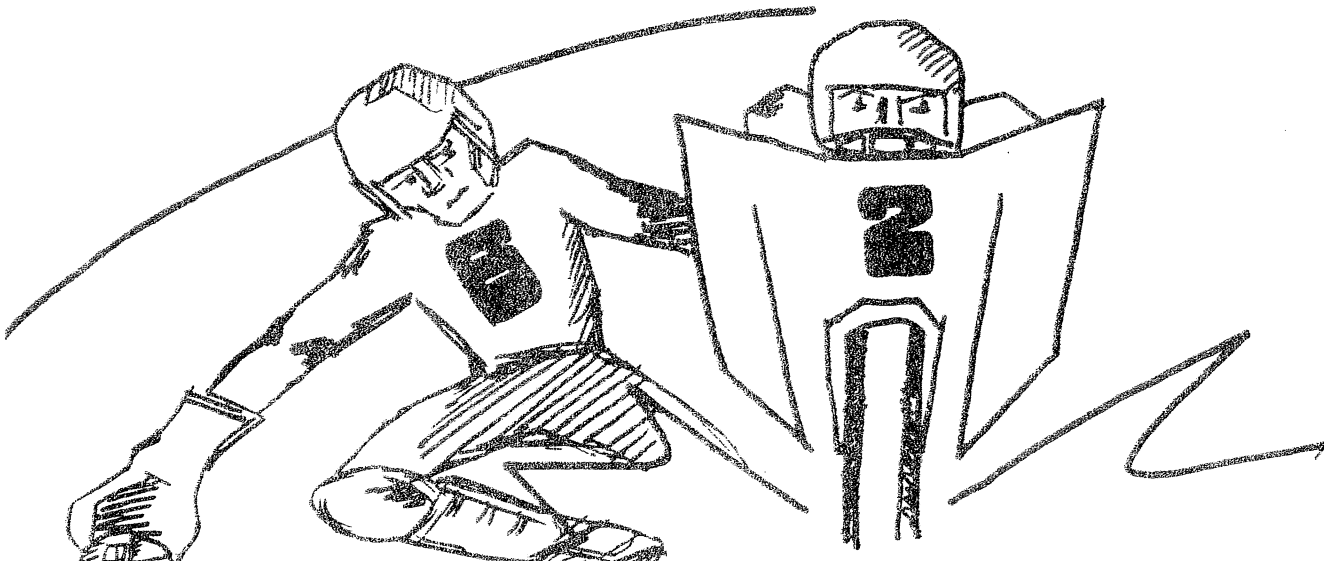
Emperor: Tjdgeme
Imperial Buildings
Capella.

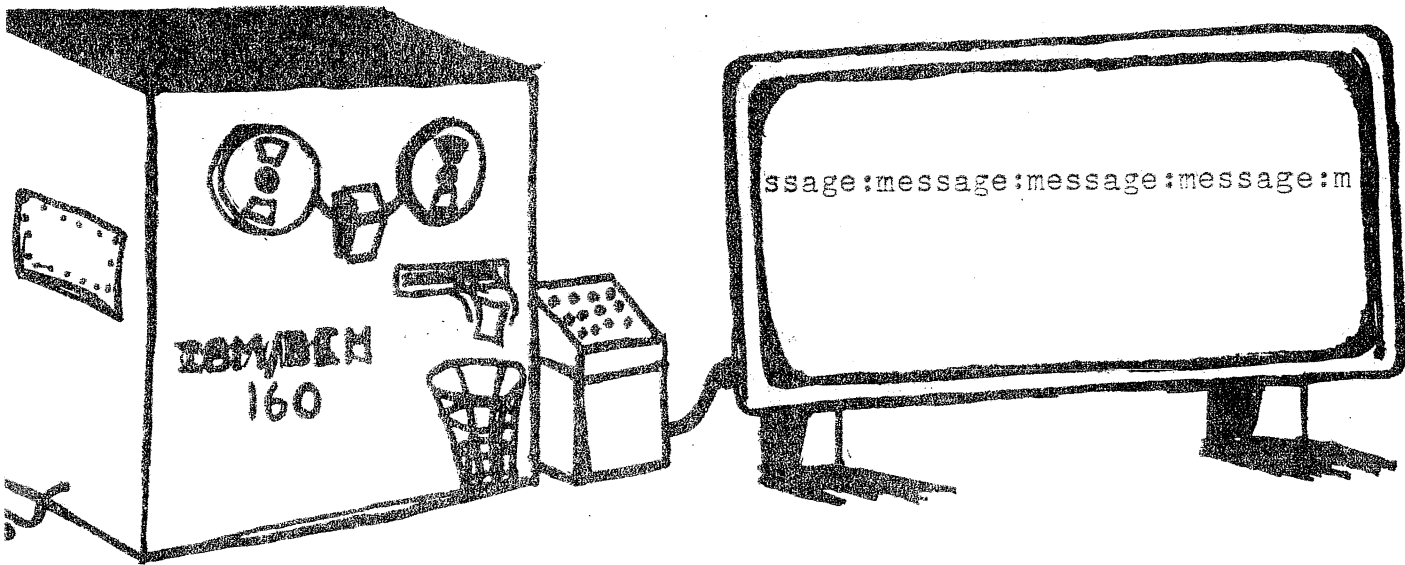
YEAH! I've sent the letter back for translation. It
will appear in the October issue. Please in the future send your
letters in ENGLISH-please.

The Editor

IN THE FUTURE

Appearing in the October issue will be another story
by Lester Rainsford "The Four Strong Winds"; it should prove interesting.
also if we are once more in lack of stories I shall publish one of
mine titled "The Edge". We will also have Literary Review by Dave
Barker plus Visual review by myself on Rollerball this time with more
space than a page. We will have a science fact article on the plaus-
ibility of giant insects and possibly the first part of a serial by
Nivek Lee Apkin.....It should be an intresting issue.





*** THIS IS IBM/BEM 160...IBM/BEM 160...AS YOU MAY HAVE NOT
 -ICED THE TYPING, GRAMMAR, AND SPELLING IS NOT SO HOT, LIKE BAD...WE
 CAN'T BITCH, NOT REALLY, FOR OUR TYPISTS DECIDED THEY WOULD TAKE A
 TRIP TO EUROPE AND LEFT OUR POOR LITTLE EDITOR TO TYPE UP ALL BUT THE
 LAST TWO PAGES...IT ALSO CUT TIME SHORT GIVING OUR ARTISTS ONLY TWO
 DAYS TO DO THEIR STUFF...WELL THAT'S THE WAY THE FRENCH FRY BOUNCES..
 .IT DOESN'T...THE MAGAZINE ITSELF WILL BE MUCH BETTER NEXT TIME FOR
 WE'LL HAVE TWO MONTHS TO PREPAIR INSTEAD OF A WEEK...BY THE WAY THE
 EDITOR HAS TOLD ME TO TELL YOU THAT THE EDITORIAL SHALL BEE A DEAL
 LONGER AND BETTER THAN THIS TIME...OKAY...SIRIUS MAGAZINE HAS ONLY ONE
 ADRESS AS FOR THE EDITOR HANDLES JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING...IT IS,,,,..
 SIRIUS MAGAZINE, 39 DEESIDE CRESCENT, BRAMALEA, ONTARIO, CANADA, L6T-
 3L8...SIRIUS IS BIMONTHLY AND WILL STAY SO UNTIL WE THINK WE CAN AFF~~X~~
 -ORD TO GO MONTHLY...PLEASE, IF YOU ARE REQUESTING SOMETHING SENT A
 SELF ADRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE OR TO BAD...SORRY BUT WE DON'T REALLY
 HAVE THE MONEY...THIS IS IBM/Bem...ERROR...ERROR...ERROR,,, ERROR,,,
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THIS IS IBM/BEM 160 SIGNING OFF ***



Foot