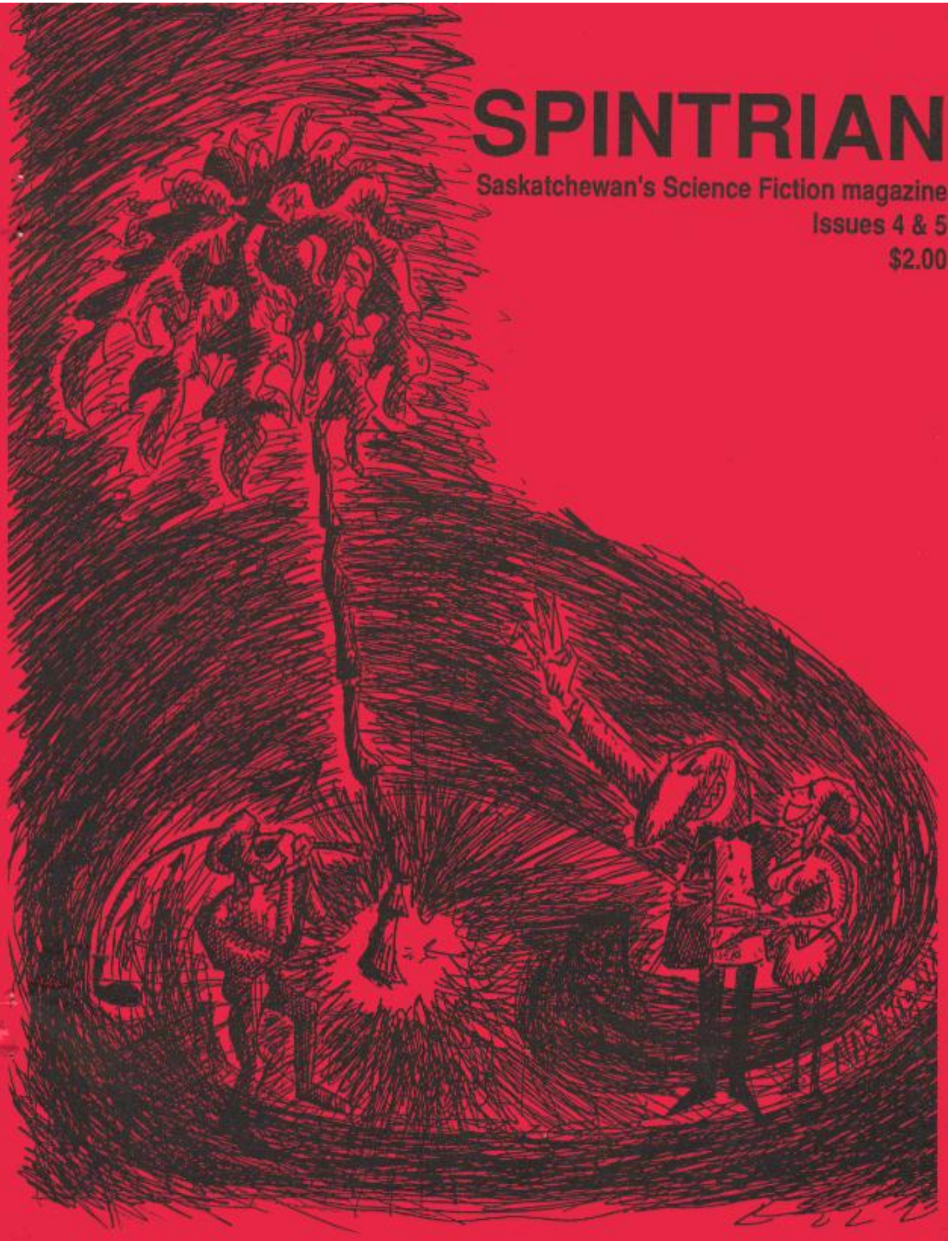


SPINTRIAN

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University of Regina



Introduction

by Dave Panchyk

It's Harlan Ellison, actually, who has made me feel a lot better about all this.

He didn't hear about my general malaise and make a cheer-up phone call; rather, it's something he *hasn't* done that has consoled me.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to present *The Last Dangerous Spintrian*.

Actually, this is going to be the last Panchyk-produced *Spintrian*. The next ones are going to be more collective (and regular) efforts on the part of the Speculative Fiction Society, with Andrew Quick willing to take the reigns as God-Editor. My attempts at running the magazine singlehandedly (despite many people's kinds offers of help) simply have not worked well, and this, my last and busiest year in Regina, is the worst time to continue to do so.

My leaving will, I think and hope, usher in an era of new beginnings for the SFS. Conveniently for the new organizers of the club, I will be far away and very eligible to take the blame for past foul-ups; I accept the role of being the Speculative Fiction Society's Trotsky.

One of the gross errors I've made (aside from the chronic lateness of issues) was my handling of the interview with Gene Wolfe that ran in #3. The transcription was not checked with Mr. Wolfe before I rushed it to print, with the result that it contained a number of unfortunate and avoidable errors. I would like to take this

ANDREW QUICK
14 CULLITON CRES
REGINA, SK
S4S4J6

opportunity to publicly apologize to Mr. Wolfe for my mishandling of that interview.

This is an exciting time for Canadian speculative fiction and art, and those who wish to publish it. I'm confident that Andrew and Margaret and all the other members of the latest incarnation of the SFS will make it a more worthwhile and interesting zine.

Good night, Harlan, wherever you are.

Introduction

by Andrew Quick

It has been a long time since Spintrian's last issue and I think it appropriate that our beloved and loving readership be reminded of the perils faced by a small publication.

I'm told that student operated publications can run like clockwork, though I've yet to see one put to bed without a fight. Sometimes the problem is insufficient funding. Often a flexible publishing date is one that is long on flexible and short on publishing. A lack of copy can put the brakes on any magazine. One of the most frustrating of setbacks is when someone fails to deliver a promised article at the promised time (a peccadillo peculiar to me that makes Panchyk passing pale with passion).

We think we have the money problem handled and whose business but ours is it when we publish? There is nothing we can do except promise ourselves, perhaps futilely, that we will publish more frequently. But, wait! Maybe there is something you can do!

Please, oh puhleeeeeeze (rending garments with a wild demeanor on one knee) send us more submissions! We can't give you any money for them just now but Dave's planning to contract a rare and telethon-worthy disease so we may be able to cough up the lolly in future issues.

We're very isolated from the North American SF community here in Regina. Please send us mail. Our mailbox is dusty and likely to induce

allergy attacks in its present state. Send us your story, tell us about your convention, draw us a picture, anything but silence will bring contentment to our souls.

Enough of these mendicant ways! No more mister nice entity. Since you signed up for a subscription we have your address on file. We expect a letter praising Spintrian within two weeks of receiving the magazine or we're gonna tell Student Loans where you live. So there!

Maliciously and with forethought,

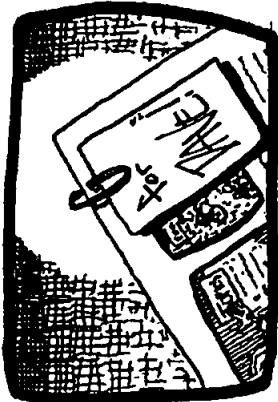
Your servant,

Andrew Quick

--pukka stuff--



Welcome back ladies
and gentlemen.
Welcome back to your
Worst nightmare.
Welcome back to your
Most deep rooted fetishes.



Welcome back to a
little thing i call...
a
strip for
DAVE!



when DAVE!™ first asked
me to do a strip, i asked
him "what about?" to
which he replied "anything
you want." hoo-boy did
my head spin something fierce!



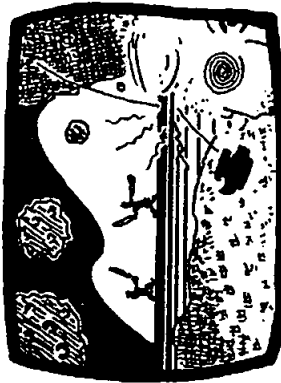
naturally my first thought
was science fiction.
but my frame of reference
was limited.
i had never ever really
explored this genre before.



(but i have found
that no matter how
deep you dig,
you will never find
gold in your nose.)



for days i agonized
about what i could write.
nothing else seemed to
matter.
Nope.



then it hit me.
like a ten pound anvil
i hit me.
ideas came rushing to
me like bricks on a load.



i hate that part.
Moral: science fiction.
yeah!!!

The Shark

by Catherine Girczyc

CHARACTERS

MARLIN

a male Mflan, humanoid in appearance. He is wearing a white dinner jacket, tuxedo shirt, black tie and black pants. He has concocted his costume from old 40s movies, e.g. Casablanca. There is a black fin poking up through the back seam of the jacket. He often affects accents from movies or television he has seen.

GERRY

a young ice cream shop franchise tycoon, Gerry is in his twenties, rich and famous. He is wearing walking shorts and a shirt. There is something not right about his costume. He isn't as slick and confident as he tries to appear.

CHARLEEN

a young beautician, Gerry's fiancée. She is overdressed in a tropical beach outfit featuring bright pink or red. She isn't as old as she dresses. She loves Gerry, but she can't help thinking of just how to spend all his money on her schemes.

WOMAN

MAN

offstage voices of the next couple to experience a DesIsle island vacation. British accents.

SCENE 1

There is the sound of SURF. The audience enters. They take their seats. They notice, in the semi-darkness

onstage, a palm tree. A 'man', MARLIN, is tied up to it. He looks relaxed. He's flipping coins which he attempts to catch. After he loses three coins, he stops, waiting. He hears something. MARLIN is not upset at being tied up. On the contrary, he is quite philosophical.

MARLIN: There should be music. You know -

He hums the theme from James Bond as the LIGHTS come slowly up and the SURF fades slightly. It is early evening, the sun is setting. The moon and some stars are appearing in the sky during Scenes 1 and 2.

MARLIN: - them and us. Us and them. A curious thought - has their constant moral whining got to me? Have I been here too long? Where's Kirk when you really need, him, eh? But who would he save? Good question. Besides, it's very nice here. Beach, sand, sea, surf, a paradise. And the constellations at night. They come out to comfort me [Pause] No, to terrorise me. A star traveller's dream/nightmare. Someday I'll see the bright light of the cruiser come for me in the night sky. And what will I tell them? [Pause, then a rueful smile] That the food was good — a teeming, writhing sea of meat. Not bad to drink either. Nice anachronism in our bodies - being able to drink the salt stuff. They can't. They have to have salt free — Caffeine free/sodium free/everything free. No responsibility, I think, Everything free [Pause, HELICOPTER

SOUND starts] Well, Stargazing . . . hours over. Time to get to work. I do hope they're the sympathetic type. I'm getting a cramp here.

[**SOUND OF HELICOPTER** hovering then leaving. **SPLASHING** and **PEOPLE** noises. **CHARLEEN** and **GERRY** walk in from the audience. **CHARLEEN** is carrying all the baggage while **GERRY** only carries his putter.]

CHARLEEN: My instant tan's coming off — eck — I look like a zebra.

GERRY: I don't know why the damn pilot had to dump us offshore.

[The **SURF** and **SPLASHING** sounds fade out.]

CHARLEEN [on island]: Oh, what a beautiful island! Where's the hotel?

GERRY [on island]: There isn't any hotel. It's a private retreat, for us along! There's a cabin back there somewhere.

CHARLEEN: Eck.

SCENE 2

[**CHARLEEN** AND **GERRY** on the island. **CHARLEEN** sees **MARLIN**.]

CHARLEEN [Somewhat frightened]: Look, Gerry — a-uh — a palm tree.

GERRY: Uh, Charleen [He sees **MARLIN** who smiles at them.]

MARLIN [As James Bond]: The name is Bond. James Bond [Pause, return to normal voice] Naw — just kidding. My name is Marlin.

GERRY: But there isn't supposed to be anybody else here.

CHARLEEN [Not too happily]: — DesIsle Desert Island Vacations Guarantee of Privacy. [**MARLIN** nods happily] I didn't think they'd leave use

out here in the middle of no where without even a caretaker —

MARLIN: Don't worry, your vacation won't be ruined.

CHARLEEN: You work for them, right?

MARLIN: I could die of heat exhaustion tied up here. Think of that. You compassionate species. [Smiling to himself]

GERRY [Looking around for whoever tied **MARLIN** up]: How did you get tied up?

MARLIN: My fault. Me. I. Marlin at your service, sir.

CHARLEEN: What a nice dinner jacket. Gerry thought no one dressed for dinner here.

GERRY: They don't. There's no restaurant here. It's a nature preserve, sort of. [Moving closer to **MARLIN**] You were saying, about the, uh, rope?

MARLIN: Fishing line. Would you believe, I threw it up and around - trajectory error - and got confused and ...

GERRY [Breaking in]: Sure. Sure.

[**GERRY** moves into a private huddle with **CHARLEEN**.]

MARLIN: A being could starve here, looking at the plentiful sea.

CHARLEEN: Oh, Gerry, don't be so cruel. I'm sure I'll get wrinkles worrying about him tied up there.

GERRY [To **CHARLEEN**]: And we could get killed letting a crazy go. [Pause]

MARLIN [Maxwell Smart voice]: Well, Chief, would you believe — I was coming back from my mission and I stopped for a bite of dinner and the plate was fastened to a very tiny rope which was fastened to a very large fish which swam around and

around and jumped over the island and tied me up!

CHARLEEN [Amused]: A fish wrapped you up in that? You're funny. [Laughs then aside to GERRY] There is the radio, Gerry. We could call the company.

MARLIN: Oh yes. Call the company. A definite possibility. [CHARLEEN looks embarrassed at being overheard]

GERRY: Awfully heavy line. Catching whales?

MARLINE [To CHARLEEN]: Well, I always let the little ones go.

CHARLEEN: You are the - uh, caretaker, right?

MARLIN [In a loud voice]: Am I the Caretaker? Are we our brother's caretaker? Saving him from destruction because he shares a familial descent from water? Good question. [In a Bob Barker voice] Good question. Answer in Ten seconds for the Jackpot! [Normal voice] I don't know.

[The couple are visibly unnerved by this. They decide he's a little unhinged, possibly he's been in the sun for too long.]

GERRY: You've been out here too long.

MARLIN: Centuries.

GERRY: You know, when our island retreat is over, the helicopter will come back. There's room in it for you.

MARLIN: How kind of you. Meanwhile back at the ranch, I die of lack of food and water.

GERRY: You are the caretaker, eh?

MARLIN: Caretaker. Well, yes. Sort of. Not much to take care of here, but...

GERRY: What about that other couple we met — the ones who just left here. They never mentioned you.

CHARLEEN [sarcastically]: Oh, Gerry, you're brilliant. Of course. Why would they tell us that they had their cruel way with this poor fellow and then tied him up.

GERRY: Did they have their way with you, Martin?

MARLIN: Marlin. More of a blind man's bluff.

CHARLEEN: They were playing a game? How silly.

GERRY: Look, if I untie you, will you promise not to bother us? We came here to be alone.

MARLIN: Oh, of course. Absolutely sahib.

GERRY: You understand that I purchased this vacation in order for Charleen and myself to be alone for a time — away from offices, telephones, ice cream orders, franchises, loans, banks, and business meetings —

[GERRY gets carried away here thinking of what really turns him on. CHARLEEN gives him a swat.]

CHARLEEN: We're engaged, see — [Shifting into her spiel] We need this time together to decide where our relationship will lead — we're young yet — if it will disturb our careers — if we will go up the path of love and duty, the roses and thorns of matri —

GERRY [Angry]: Charleen! Cut the romantic crap. Now, you, Marlin, what do you intend on doing while we're here?

MARLIN [In a suave villain voice]: Simply pursuing the relaxation of a gentleman, Mr. Bond. [Pause] Fishing and enjoying the sun. I won't bother you.

GERRY: Alright, I'll let you go then.

[GERRY unties MARLIN who looks up. There is an unseen albatross flying over the stage. Its droppings land

square in the middle of the playing area. All onstage watch the invisible droppings hit.]

CHARLEEN: Eck. What was that?

MARLIN [As the Captain from Gilligan's Island]: That's the fourth albatross. Time for Gilligan's Island, [to GERRY] So long little buddy! [to CHARLEEN] You know, you are almost as pretty as Ginger!

[MARLIN turns to leave. His FIN is revealed. They stare at it, then at each other. There is a definite pause. This is the first time they have seen the fin. GERRY untied MARLIN from the front.]

CHARLEEN: The fourth albatross?

GERRY: It's the fin that bothers me.

CHARLEEN [Pause]: Shouldn't we call DesIsle or somebody?

GERRY: He's their employee - he's got to be. After all, this island's been booked solid since November. I'm sure he's harmless. Probably supposed to keep out of our hair and clean up when we're gone.

CHARLEEN: Maybe it was diving thingie. You know, not a tank but some kind of deep diving fin or something. Like those fins you put on your feet.

GERRY: No. I know all about diving. That isn't any diving rig I ever saw. [Proud of himself] And I've been to coral reefs all over the world. Why when Jacques Cousteau —

CHARLEEN [Breaking in]: Don't be so know-it-all. [Pause] Maybe he's deformed. You know like — humpbacked.

GERRY: Maybe. Well he seems harmless. [Pause]

CHARLEEN [Wrapping her arms around him]: You know, Ger. — I

don't even really mind there not being a hotel —

GERRY [Unwrapping her arms carefully]: C'mon let's go look at the campsite. [Pause] For this money it better have an indoor can.

CHARLEEN [Angry now]: If we have to use palm fronds, you ask for a refund!

[They walk out. **BLACKOUT.**]

SCENE 3

[Lights up on the second day. GERRY is putting an imaginary golf ball and CHARLEEN is doing the laundry by beating it against the shore and rinsing the sand out.]

GERRY: A hole-in-one! Hey!

CHARLEEN: Don't talk to me. You wouldn't talk to me all night, why start now?

GERRY: I was addressing the ball.

CHARLEEN: If you'd stop acting like a big ice cream mag-nate you might enjoy yourself. Let your hair down. Be a person. Learn what it's like to really be in love!

GERRY: But I am a big ice cream magnate. The biggest. And golfing is a recognized magnate sport.

CHARLEEN: You always get a hole-in-one when you pretend. Why don't you stop now? You don't have any balls left!

GERRY: Getting personal? [Pause. Looking out to see.]: It's better than swimming. There's a shark fin out there.

CHARLEEN: This horrible, dumb, stupid, boring island. I don't know why I agreed to come here.

GERRY: I enjoy this — so keep your grouching to yourself.

CHARLEEN: I don't know why you brought me. I thought this was going to be fun — And romantic! I thought it would bring us back together! [Pause.

GERRY doesn't know what to say to this. He won't talk about it.

CHARLEEN sees he isn't going to comment then bashes the lingerie on the rock again.] They don't even have washing machines — some exclusive vacation —

GERRY: But Charleen, this is exclusive. I've been all over the world. I'm constantly bothered by people who want my autograph or want a franchise of Grandma Spanner's Ice Cream Parlours.

CHARLEEN: No one chases the old money people around — you know why? Cause they don't write books like — Make a Million on Maple Walnut — Franchising with Gerry the Wonder Kid - Father of Screaming Cream the Dieter's Dream.

GERRY: Hey — I'm not going to apologize for my success. My analyst says that's retrograde. He says, "Success is, uh, fleeting so fleece everyone you can."

CHARLEEN: Never trust a guy with a correspondence degree in medicine.

GERRY: Now you're on his case. [Upset] I thought we agreed we weren't going to try changing each other — My Ex tried that — said I ought to give up the business and go to school. Dumbest advice I ever got. No wonder I ditched the — uh — lady. Didn't believe in me.

[During the next speeches, CHARLEEN attaches the laundry to a line fastened around the palm tree. She waves the end of it to speed drying.]

CHARLEEN [Angry]: I believe in you — too much! I read the dumb book and believed every word. I even followed the workbook for designing

your own franchise and then what? You won't back me! You don't believe in me!

GERRY: The idea's dumb, Charleen, only word for it: Dumb. [Still golfing] Missed dammit!

CHARLEEN: How can you tell? [Pause] Dumb, humph. My only dream is to sell Charleen Cosmetics — to revolutionize the way women buy beauty. That's not dumb.

GERRY: Not exactly classy.

CHARLEEN: Class! [In an advertising voice] Being beautiful is always classy — Every morning, wash your face, dress and — leave the makeup and breakfast to Charleen's Drive-In Beauty Salons! That's the beautiful way to go to work!

GERRY [Getting silly]: Fill'er up! Paste'er on! Gas coupons with every facial!

CHARLEEN: Very funny. I'm going for a swim. [Leaving the laundry, she sits down and starts to take her high heels off.] I want to enjoy this vacation.

GERRY: Look [CHARLEEN turns around] You were the one who threw the contractual agreement into the lobster tank at L'Poisson Vert! My advisors are, uh, naturally, uh, suspicious of a young and beautiful woman who say she loves me and will marry me then instead of a wedding date and a church, she asks for a half a million dollars to fund some kind of loony-tunes scheme. it just doesn't turn me on. I mean — I love you — but Char — couldn't you be a bit more interested in me? [GERRY pauses. CHARLEEN looks somewhat contrite.] I mean, Karen couldn't understand it. She didn't even want me to try this one last trip with you —

CHARLEEN [Angry]: Karen. Aha! I knew it was her.

[CHARLEEN throws a shoe at GERRY. It hits him. He looks at it and doesn't move. He realizes that he's screwed it up now. She was listening to him and now she's mad again.]

GERRY [Resigned]: Look, she's the VP. She knows all about money and such. She's good for business.

CHARLEEN: She's a barracuda. She's trying to get me out — she wants to make sure that we never get married! She's jealous of me cause I look pretty! Well, of course I look pretty, it's my job. Who would hire an ugly beautician? [Pause] And she doesn't want anybody with ideas around you. She wants to spend all your money herself!

GERRY [Looks down at the imaginary balls again and swings]: Water trap. Lost it. [He looks at CHARLEEN]

SCENE 4

[MARLIN arrives. He's carrying several golf balls under his arm. He pulls them out, magician-like and hands them to GERRY.]

MARLIN: For you, as a token of my thanks.

GERRY: Thanks.

MARLIN: No respect for gravity — things in the water just move with the currents. My payment for use of your radio last night.

CHARLEEN: But you only got static.

MARLIN: Ah, what mysteries there are in the universe.

GERRY [Teasing up]: I'm glad to get these back.

[While speaking, CHARLEEN picks up the laundry - a shirt - and ties a string to the palm and hangs the shirt on it. She waves the other end.]

CHARLEEN: You know, Marlin. A day here seems like a week anywhere else. I mean there really isn't anything to do but swim or lie in the sun. Or cook or do laundry. Or golf.

MARLIN [TV Ad voiceover voice]: A small suggestion that has saved me many an hour. For your laundry — not Sparkle-Allot, no need for detergents here — use the handy Remora. [He pulls a small fish out of his pocket and waves it.] Yes, friends, lovely little fishes with tiny teeth — no barnacles ever. Dip your skins into the sea and they will clean them completely!

CHARLEEN: Eck. Very amusing, what are we, sharks?

MARLIN [a la Groucho]: And what are you, an ichthyologist? [GERRY laughs]

CHARLEEN [Innocently]: A what?

[GERRY becomes more intent on his game again and gradually moves away from the other two.]

MARLIN: The ocean is amazing here. If you are bored, you could come fishing with me. It is a very exciting experience. You would just scream. [Pause. He smiles] Perhaps I shall bring you some conch tonight. It is a delicacy - a very tasty shellfish.

CHARLEEN: Thank-you. The company supplied us with frozen fish, but I don't think I could eat some of it. Like dolphin, I mean really. My friend Alice says they're intelligent beings. Just like on Star Trek 4.

GERRY [Correcting her and then going back to his game]: Those were whales.

CHARLEEN: Well, close.

MARLIN: Very tasty, dolphins. What about the 'shark' steak? Are sharks to your taste?

CHARLEEN: Sharks? Oh, I don't know. They're mean, aren't they?

MARLIN: But intelligent. The most intelligent of all the species — [Catches himself] that is, of all, fish. Intelligence. It is a moot point. Something for Judge Wapner to decide. [Pause] What is an intelligent species? Here it seems that if a species can talk and is not eaten by the superior species it is deemed intelligent. Take the slave species - dog and cat — [Reflective Pause] Small, useless and able to communicate somewhat. Or dolphins. I know dolphins. They speak only of useless things like [In a squeaky voice] "Where the water's warm and how much fun they are having. Or where the nearest shark is." [Pause] They neither reap nor sow. How can that be intelligent?

CHARLEEN: You're so funny, Marlin. But it's nice to talk to someone different [At GERRY] once in a while. And what a striking outfit. I bet you get all kinds of island girls chasing you.

MARLIN: Well, to be truthful, it is the other way around. I would enjoy them but they won't come near me. I am a lone shark — caretaker. [Pause] But I think, I prefer visitors. Such excellent specimens, like you.

CHARLEEN [Pause]: I wonder, would you be offended if I asked a little, itty-bitty question?

MARLIN: No, certainly not.

CHARLEEN: That - on your back there. What is it?

MARLIN: My first dorsal fin.

CHARLEEN: But, how did - er - were you born with it?

MARLIN: Yes.

CHARLEEN: Were your parents upset?

[GERRY starts watching.]

MARLIN: No. Does it bother you? Upset you? I too have seen the movie pictures. The great white and his fin. [Hums the theme from Jaws while circling around CHARLEEN sinisterly.] I would understand.

CHARLEEN [Standing up quickly, embarrassed]: No, it doesn't bother me. It would take a really — unfeeling person not to look past it and see what a sweet, caring person you are. Gentle even.

MARLIN: So, my fin doesn't bother you. Very good, very good. And gentle. Ah a 'human' compliment.

CHARLEEN: You watch over people here and do small favors like - um, returning his balls. I bet you'd do anything for someone who loved you. And wouldn't care about the cost.

[MARLIN moves in very close to CHARLEEN. GERRY looks angry and swings his golf club. No one notices.]

MARLIN: Why don't you feel my fin. It is very hard. Vestiges of original sin—skin. it is considered a very firm, upstanding fin where I come from — that is very attractive to the females. Perhaps you share this attraction?

CHARLEEN: Well, perhaps. [Puts her hand out. MARLIN rubs his fin up and down on the hand, excitedly. GERRY looks on unapprovingly] O-oo, Aaah, Ouch. Ow!

[CHARLEEN has cut her hand on the fin. GERRY comes closer.]

MARLIN [a la Bela Lugosi]: Let me, my darling.

[MARLIN takes the hand with an almost hypnotic stare and sucks at the cut strangely and erotically a la Valentino.]

CHARLEEN: Oh, o-oo, Marlin.

[The sucking goes on for a moment or two. CHARLEEN seems to be enjoying

herself. GERRY is getting mad — he goes over to them.]

GERRY: Now just exactly what are you doing there? Marvin let go. [When MARLIN doesn't let go, GERRY shouts] MORTON LET GO!

[CHARLEEN looks up, embarrassed.]

MARLIN: Ah, excuse me. [Dropping CHARLEEN's hand]

GERRY: Charleen go get a bandaid.

CHARLEEN: Gerry, I —

GERRY: Go get a bandaid. NOW!

MARLIN [To CHARLEEN]: Sorry —

[CHARLEEN shakes her head and goes offstage, somewhat bewildered.]

SCENE 5

MARLIN [In a frenzy]: Sorry — I am sorry. Reflex action. To, ah, clean the cut.

[Long pause. GERRY is going to confront MARLIN but thinks better of it. He'll win a different way.]

GERRY [Fake jovial]: You know, a person like me is very self-assured. Confident. Not a jealous guy. Hey, she's mine and I'm going to keep her. And why? Hey — success. I'm not afraid.

MARLIN: You are not aggressive, then? Where I come from those in command are very aggressive. They prefer to enslave rather than to co-exist. I myself am in dilemma about this, being a scholar of Human Nature. [Rather than MFLAN nature]

GERRY [Hasn't been listening to MARLIN]: You must have heard of me! I command, as you say, Grandma Spanner's Ice Cream Parlours — coming soon to a Mall near you! Featuring the first Totally Synthetic Ice Cream! Guaranteed to have No Caloric Value at all!

MARLIN: I have seen this on tv [TV silky announcer's voice] "The decadent pleasure that's not sinful". Have I the honor, then, of addressing 'Grandma' himself?

GERRY: You do. And don't forget it. [Pause] Hey, this beach bum caretaking stuff is alright but when you want to impress a woman, it's success does it, Marlin.

MARLIN: You like to conquer things. [Taking out notebook, making notes.]

GERRY [Groping in his pocket, as he does when he is not as confident as he pretends]: I've conquered the ice cream business — no more Hippety-Hop Ice Cream Shoppes. They're dead, like the dodo.

[Gesturing] I've conquered numerous mountain peaks — my hobby. And [Taking MARLIN aside] I've conquered more women than I'll every say.

MARLIN: Where I come from, females have very sharp teeth.

GERRY [Laughs]: Yeah. They do, but the rest of them makes up for it. [Laughs] Ok, I admit, I have a few problems with Charleen. We aren't married yet. She, uh, has a lot of ideas, expensive ideas. I don't know how far I can trust her yet. And me, I'm not entirely lily-white either. Ok, I'm not 25 yet and was married before. I've had lots of women, right! Ok, I'm tremendously successful and busy and rich and I did it all myself. Ok, I'm a little proud of that — what's the problem? I've succeeded at everything I've done before, why not marriage?

MARLIN: I, too, am in a dilemma. My duties. But I can see where my heart leads. [Meaning CHARLEEN]

GERRY [Laughs]: I guess every job can get to you. I've seen ice cream scoopers get nervous breakdowns if

the shop isn't just right. Yeah. Even caretaking, eh?

MARLIN: Caretaking. Good word. [a la Barker] The secret words in the bonus square, worth all the money are —

GERRY [Breaking in]: All the money, Yeah, That's what I got. And I got it young — don't want to be an old geezer of thirty driving a porsche, eh? And you can have it too. Hey, you could have a very nice life on one of the bigger atolls here with a franchise of Grandma Spanner's — Our biggest demand is in holiday spots! It's a recorded fact that ski resorts normally do a better business in ice cream than Club Med does. Why? Fat. You don't notice it in the ski suit. But with No-Cal ice cream you make a mint! Just hire a couple locals to dish it out and haul in the profits. What'dya say? Eh, little buddy?

MARLIN: [perplexed]: But my fin? Doesn't it bother you anymore?

GERRY: Nothing a little plastic surgery couldn't cope with. Hell, look at Charleen. Her perfect face didn't just grow there, eh?

MARLIN: She is not real?

GERRY: No, of course she's real, what else would she be? A robot?

MARLIN [a la Balkie from *Perfect Strangers*]: Well, of course not, don't be ridiculous.

GERRY: What do you want, eh? Yes or no - be a 'Real Scream Ice Cream' guy or not? You can have any island girl then! Not mine though ...

MARLIN: There are bad feelings towards me in these island. I am - er - um - a product of certain forces...

GERRY: Well, how can you expect ignorant savages to understand birth defects, eh? Where I come from we know about these things. It doesn't

mean you're stupid or different or anything like that.

MARLIN: It is not a defect. I am perfectly formed.

GERRY: Oh, yeah? So what bugs them?

MARLIN: I - uh. Certain myths, legends concerning sharks. You know.

GERRY: Yeah, I been to Hawaii. They used to worship sharks. Throw kids to them. Real backward.

MARLIN [British voice]: Rather civilized, I should think, what.

GERRY: Oh, yeah. I bet this is some kind of recessive gene. Occurs every few generations in an inbred island population. You're probably seen as some kind of sign from the gods, eh?

MARLIN: I am a sign.

GERRY: Like the year of the monkey, eh? In China, like?

MARLIN: The sign of the Shark — [He realizes he's said too much] Enough. I must go. The reef awaits.

GERRY: [Holding him back from leaving]: What do you mean? You're a guy. With a fin. A guy.

MARLIN: I, uh — It has been said that I am a son of the Seagod and a local girl. It is the god's right to a virgin every seven years.

GERRY: Hey, these archaic religions are real hilarious, you know. If I was a god I wouldn't want to wait seven years for a scared amateur.

MARLIN: You don't believe me? [perplexed]

GERRY: No. But it's your right to believe whatever you want. Be Hercules, who cares? Just keep the resort Casanova act for some other girl, ok? And we can be real good friends. I mean that about the franchise, you know.

[GERRY smiles and CHARLEEN returns.]

CHARLEEN [Worried]: So, how are you two boys getting along?

MARLIN: Very alright. Your mate here —

CHARLEEN: He's not my mate.

MARLIN: Not your mate? But he implied —

CHARLEEN: Not yet.

MARLIN: All the previous visitors have been mated pairs. [Takes notes]

CHARLEEN: Well, alot of people aren't 'mated'. You should visit a city sometime, or even a village.

GERRY: He came from a native village.

CHARLEEN: Oh.

MARLIN: I did not.

GERRY: But you —

CHARLEEN: You assume too much Gerry. You think people will always do exactly what you want. And be exactly what you want them to.

GERRY: And what does that mean?

CHARLEEN: Like me. I'm not supposed to have ideas of my own. I'm supposed to be pretty and follow you around and not think for myself! Well I do think, so there! [GERRY and CHARLEEN are facing one another and circling around He has been trying to interrupt her.]

MARLIN [Notebook out and taking notes]: One is dominant usually, correct? Is this the dominance dance? How long does it last? What percentage of males attain dominance here?

GERRY [Gives up]: I'm going to get a beer. [To CHARLEEN] Now don't get too cozy. I hear that resort gigolos don't make much money.

CHARLEEN: Money is not the reason I said I'd marry you!

[CHARLEEN makes a face at GERRY. GERRY leaves.]

SCENE 6

MARLIN [Picking up the club]: I would like to try this golf thing.

CHARLEEN [Sitting, dejected on the rock]: Fine.

MARLIN [Aiming carefully at the ball]: It is a ritual I have seen on the TV. [Swinging wildly for a moment]

CHARLEEN [Looking up in alarm]: Just don't throw the putter into the ocean. You know, I'm sick of arguing with him. You know what he's being so stupid about?

MARLIN: No. I wish to learn. For research purposes. [Notebook out]

CHARLEEN: Well, I've come up with this really smart idea for a franchised business.

MARLIN: Franchise?

MARLIN: Like Macdonalds.

MARLIN [Computer sounding]: Ronald Macdonald: Unusual humanoid with facial discolouration. Serves several billion food items daily. Hyperactive.

CHARLEEN: Well, sort of. [Smiling] Every morning the working women of the world get up, get breakfast, get hubby and kids ready and go to work. A lot of them drive their cards to work. Now Macdonalds sells breakfasts on the way. To save time. [Pause] What if two morning problems could be solved at once? Jackpot! DIBBs! Drive-In Breakfast and Beauty! You'd stop at one window, order and get your face made up, go to the next window, get your breakfast and go. [Pause] The windows would have to be specially made, of course, to get just

the right angle but that's a minor problem. [Pause] Great, eh?

MARLIN: Great. [Doesn't quite get it] Where do the faces detach? I have seen none that appear detachable.

CHARLEEN: Oh Marlin — Make-up — you know — warpaint. Like the colours I have on my eyelids. Lipstick to go, get it? [MARLIN tries to look like he understands. She looks up.] Oh, look another albatross. [MARLIN and CHARLEEN move back out of the albatross's line of fire] Eck. What time is it now?

MARLIN [In a British voice]: Teatime, Watson. Don't you think? [Looks at her very closely] You are a tasty little specimen, aren't you?

CHARLEEN [Laughs]: You watch a lot of TV, don't you. You know it can be bad for you.

MARLIN: I could have you for dinner — er - we could have dinner. [Seductively pinching her fat.]

CHARLEEN: But what about Gerry?

MARLIN: You are not mated. And I need to find out more about you. Of all the humans I've seen here you two are the most — the least typical. You do not see my fin for very long. You are attracted to me. As I am to you.

CHARLEEN: What if I am?

[GERRY coughs loudly from his area of the stage and looks disapprovingly at them. MARLIN jumps back from CHARLEEN and decides to take another tack.]

MARLIN [Notebook out]: And I have so many questions. Little research project I'm hired to do. Check out the natives, sort of. Now, could you tell me a little about how you live...what you do...what Gerry does.

CHARLEEN [Bored]: Gerry is the owner of a very large franchise

operation. For ice cream - all over the world. His company's formula for no calorie ice cream made him what he is today — worth millions. He bought it off a chemistry student for a case of beer, a bag of tacos and a solar calculator.

MARLIN [In a mad scientist voice]: The formula, eh? Da formula! [Pause] And Karen is his Igor, right??

CHARLEEN [Laughing]: Yes, you could say that, only she's a reptile.

MARLIN [Notebook out. Aside]: A reptile. First non-monkey descendant reported here. [To CHARLEEN] And what reptile does she resemble? Of your reptiles, of course. I watch all the nature shows with avidity. My name is Marlin from the man who wrestles [Checking notes] alligators, rhinos and chipmunks.

CHARLEEN: Not Marlin Perkins? From Wild Kingdom?

MARLIN: My equivalent, in a small way. A traveller, and explorer. A taster of untasted delights....[Moving in close to CHARLEEN]

CHARLEEN: Oh, really. You should have picked Marlon Brando, the great actor. He's a world class talent — ever seen the old movie Streetcar Named Desire? [CHARLEEN does her imitation of Brando] "Stella — STELLA" You know.

MARLIN [Thinking]: I do. I do. Superman's father, correct?

CHARLEEN: And he was in Apocalypse Now. Do you have pay TV? The movie channel?

MARLIN: Alas no. They are very harsh over deductible expenses where I come from. It's the clause about feeding the fish, I worry about. You know, cement shoes? [Pause] but about this reptilian creature?

CHARLEEN: Oh, I was just kidding. She's human, well relatively, everybody's human, don't you know that? Star Trek and those shows are just pretend, you know.

MARLIN: Just pretend.

CHARLEEN: Yes.

MARLIN: I knew that.

CHARLEEN: Oh.

MARLIN: You are like a real friend. Someone I could get into a feeding frenzy with.

CHARLEEN: Me? I've always been the friendly sort. I have all kinds of friends. Not like Gerry.

MARLIN: But you — you are more than din- [He is going to say dinner but thinks better of it.] dull, more than dull. You are truly exciting, Charleen.

CHARLEEN: Thank-you. You know, I have to be honest. I was flirting with you before to get Gerry mad. But he's so stupid. [Closer to MARLIN] There's something in me that's curious about you. You're a mixture of gentleness and some sort of — power. It's not something I've seen before. Usually Gerry outshines any man he's near. But not you — you have your own kind of strength.

MARLIN [Seriously]: And I have duty, too. Personages of great importance are relying on me. Worlds hand in the balance. One world anyway.

CHARLEEN [Running her hands up his arms.]: Don't let your work get you down. It's really a small atoll. It isn't even dirty. Just kind of hot.

MARLIN [Stroking her face]: You and I would be an experiment, truly. A forbidden one. Certainly a forbidden one. [Breaking away in distress] Oh, Kirk. All those females of alien races!

[a la Bones] Dammit Jim, I'm just an old country doctor!

CHARLEEN: You really like Star Trek, don't you? My favorite episode was The Trouble with Tribbles. [She hugs him from behind, around the fin.] That's the one with the furry little things that reproduce at amazing speeds —

MARLIN [Nervous]: Oh, yes. I've seen that one. Alien reproduction - a very interesting topic — one which is avidly studied, for g-g-good reason. [He turns to face her.]

[GERRY starts to sneak up on them, eventually hiding behind the palm tree with his putter. He is very upset.]

CHARLEEN: You know, you and I might just have a future. Gerry and I were on the rocks before we even got here. He's too in love with his money. And I just want to do things! To grow, expand, develop myself! And he was too worried about his stupid money to let me! [More playfully] What would you and I be like Mr. Mysterious Fin? You know, I always did have a taste for different guys, and you're about as different as they get....

MARLIN: I don't know. You are very appealing. You smell so good. [Sniffing her arm upwards] And you look very good. Appealing in more than one way. I am tempted, I am. [Abruptly turns from her]

CHARLEEN: But you have a rule against fooling around with guests?

MARLIN: Yes, but — perhaps the rules could be stretched.

[MARLIN looks hypnotically into CHARLEEN's eyes. She looks back. Then MARLIN looks up and sees GERRY peeking out from behind the palm. CHARLEEN does not see.]

MARLIN: Maybe I am a spy. For his competitors. Have you thought of that?

CHARLEEN: Don't be silly.

MARLIN: I am never silly, just misunderstood. The formula, the formula.

[GERRY reveals himself as MARLIN turns CHARLEEN around so she sees.]

CHARLEEN: Gerry!

GERRY: Has he told you yet?

CHARLEEN [Disconcerted]: What?

GERRY: That the natives are afraid of him? [GERRY grabs CHARLEEN by the neck and pulls her back to him.] He's dangerous.

CHARLEEN: No! [Struggling with GERRY who manages to keep a grip on her.]

MARLIN [a la PBS]: The natives tell a tale of how the great god, who fished the islands out of the ocean for man, was bothered one day by a large shark. The god captured the powerful clever shark and with a mighty heave threw him up to the sky where, according to the Maoris, the Pukapukans and the Raratongans and [a la Groucho] not to mention the Rotar-iar-ians. [PBS voice] He can still be seen lying upon the Milky Way. [Normal voice] Their superstitions say I am of that ancient Shark.

CHARLEEN: Yeck. How creepy of them. Let go!

GERRY: Charleen. [GERRY has both arms around CHARLEEN from behind and drags her away from MARLIN.] I have to talk to you. Let's go back to the camp.

CHARLEEN: No.

GERRY: If I can be understanding, seeing what I've seen here, the least you can do is to listen to me.

CHARLEEN [CHARLEEN finally breaks GERRY's grip]: Hi-yah! [CHARLEEN hits GERRY in the

stomach, he crumples, she then composes herself.] Alright. I won't be long, Marlin. Catch you later —

[CHARLEEN and GERRY exit.

MARLIN watches them, then starts talking to himself. He is very troubled.]

SCENE 7

[The lights change to a night scene. Only the rock and a small area around it are lit for MARLIN's solo.]

MARLIN: It is me. The desire to kill, to feast. But the other is in me as well. To mate, to enjoy, to luxuriate in the other sort of fleshly delight. Ah, Spock, Spock! Humans are so full of emotion. All of them. But one of them in particular.... Have I been seduced? Become gentle and soft — perceiving that species as equal — falling for that female? [Pause] Of course, I have. I was never M'flan enough. I loved the sitcoms, the gentleness, the way it always came out great in the end for Lassie and Mrs. King. [Pause. He looks out to sea.] There is a fin out there. The mako circling, waiting for the humans to enter the water. Having gained a taste for human. [Pause] My fault that, too. Before I got used to their smell. Before I would betray my own biology for an hour with her. [Pause] And they are back there, with their shark steak and their radio, arguing over me - the unknown — the rival — the alien. What is 'alien'? What is 'human'? Where do food and friendship separate? Could they resist us? Should they? — ah logic, Mr. Spock, logic. [Pause] [Quoting by heart from his Training Manual] "The beast must follow instinct but the intelligent species must not be tempted by desire." The question is: what to do when instinct and desire war? Like their old joke — when men were men and sheep were scared. [Pause] No, I don't belong here. I can't take her. We

are too different. This forbidden love would cost her; her life, eventually.

[BLACKOUT]

SCENE 8

[Later. MARLIN is not onstage. CHARLEEN is sitting with her back to the palm, ignoring GERRY, who is still putting.]

GERRY: He's a spy. For Superdooper Ice Cream Scooper. Or the 24 Flavor Stop.

CHARLEEN: Spies don't tell you they're spies.

GERRY: That's to fool us into thinking he couldn't be one.

CHARLEEN: Besides he was only doing it to cover up.

GERRY: Cover what up? Not you and him again. What's gotten into you Charleen? He's a beach bum. A resort gigolo. Besides being a freak of nature.

CHARLEEN: Like the elephant man? Well, I loved that movie. [Gets up and walks to the edge of the atoll.]

GERRY: A large, well shaped fin is not a disease. The real question is: What is he? I'm disgusted at you.

CHARLEEN: I don't care. Alright, maybe this is just the romance of the salt air — being isolated in an exotic place — but it does tell me one thing. Even if I never see Marlin again.

GERRY: What?

CHARLEEN: That you and I are through, Gerry. I'm sorry. I thought this was it, my ideal relationship.

GERRY [Goes after her, tries to hug her. CHARLEEN won't let him.]: But it is. It is. What can he give you that I can't? And I love you. He's just never seen somebody as young and beautiful as you here. Most couples who can afford this are old — I'm just a young achiever and —

CHARLEEN [Breaking in]: And you brag too much! And you don't care about me! I have dreams too, but what do they matter? Not at all. I can't have even one little test Drive-in Beauty and Breakfast Salon. Marlin doesn't claim anything from me and I like that.

GERRY: Aw, Charleen, please ...

CHARLEEN [Turning away from him]: No.

GERRY [Every time she turns away he moves to the other side.]: Think about it. Look a salesman like me doesn't give up easy — you just do-don't be hasty. [Meaner. Stomps his foot on the side she thinks he's moving to and then doesn't. He looks her square in the face.] And don't fool yourself about that bum, either. Something about him's not right and I don't just mean the fin.

SCENE 9

[MARLIN comes in dressed in a spy hat.]

GERRY: Well, hello 'Melbourn', if that's your real name.

MARLIN: My real name has a curious power. Those who hear it forget things. [Looking up. In a poetic voice.] Another albatross. [ALL ONSTAGE step back and watch the imaginary dodo hit the stage.]

CHARLEEN: Eck.

MARLIN [a la heavy pompous poetry reading]: "And heavy is my heart as the body of the sea lion upon the ocean. The blood slowly seeping and flowing, calling to the feeding hammerheads." [Sad voice] My way is plain, dear human.

CHARLEEN: Is that from Jacques Cousteau?

GERRY: Say, Mort what's with the hat?

MARLIN: Double nought spy. My disguise [British accent] I am very fond of your Bond.

CHARLEEN: Me too, you know I can hardly wait to see the new movie. I love Bond.

GERRY: Very funny. Look, you're not a spy. And you weren't hired by Desisle and you aren't a native. Just what are you? [To CHARLEEN] I wouldn't put it past Karen to dream this one up. She never liked the idea of us. Hired an actor in a wetsuit to try to make us break up. [He goes over to MARLIN and pulls at his skin, etc.]

CHARLEEN: A direct hit is more her style. Gerry, I'd like to talk to Marlin, privately. Please.

GERRY: Fine. What do I care? Weirdos. Maybe Karen was right.

[GERRY moves away, picking up his putter. He is out of earshot.

CHARLEEN tries to hug MARLIN who pushes her off.]

MARLIN [To CHARLEEN in a menacing voice.]: I will invite you both to dinner. I never should be concentrated on one person. I get too involved — forgetting what I am. [Computer voice] WARNING! WARNING! Does Not Compute! [Normal voice] I can enjoy Gerry just as I can enjoy you, Charleen. In a number of ways. [Leers]

CHARLEEN: Yeck. Marlin. Don't joke around like that.

MARLIN [a la Fantasy Island]: Welcome to your Fantasy. [CHARLEEN looks at him strangely] De Plane boss, De plane! De plane! I am your host!

CHARLEEN: What's the matter with you?

MARLIN: I am behaving naturally. [Pause] Do you recall Dr. No and his nefarious experiments? Which were

foiled by the suave and very aggressive Mr. James Bond?

CHARLEEN: That was a movie. The island blew up. Real exciting sixties stuff.

MARLIN: The evil scientist had been secretly modifying fish - and making strange beings — combining fish and humans. Voila, into very hungry persons like myself.

CHARLEEN [Backing away from him]: But that would mean —

MARLIN: Yes. I am part shark. [Smiles] The best part of course. The appetite.

CHARLEEN [Thinks she's figured it out. Enthusiastically]: And the government covered it up and we thought it all was fiction! Yeah. I can believe that! You poor thing all alone here.

[GERRY starts to move closer to the other two. He sneaks up with the putter, gradually throughout the next speeches.]

MARLIN: But I am not a 'poor thing'. I am healthy, strong, dangerous ...

CHARLEEN: Stranger things have happened. [Quoting Enquirer style story titles] Alien Space Ships in my Baby's Teeth Boy Eats AMTRAK Train? And Lives? And that story I read about the woman who gave birth to twin porcupines. [Pause] Now that would hurt!

MARLIN: You believe me? [Looks puzzled. Comes in closer to her] Maybe you would like to join me for an evening on the atoll listening to the blue sharks sing? They are such a brilliant blue. Come with me my dear Charleen. Let's go listen to their seductive sound. [Takes her arm and tries to pull her into the sea.

CHARLEEN is resisting, can't understand his behavior.] So violent in

their passions — like the sea is — unforgiving — deadly. [CHARLEEN motions at GERRY. MARLIN pulls her into his arms.] Don't worry about Gerry. After I finish with you, I would go on to him. I would have a very nice time. I haven't enjoyed so much human flesh ever. The mako would be jealous.

[CHARLEEN tries to break away from MARLIN, but he's holding her fast.]

CHARLEEN: Yeck, it's disgusting. [Breaking away] Both him and me? Yeck. Go away Marlin. Yeck. That's disgusting. Yeck. [MARLIN catches her in his arms again]

MARLIN [a la Dracula]: And later there would be one of us. My appetite would then be thoroughly satisfied. Think of that. I am like some of your Transylvanians. My pleasure involves the teeth. Very beautiful neck you have my dear. [He uncovers her neck and prepared to bite it.] Very well, my darling — Ha hahah ha.

[MARLIN motions to bite her on the neck, baring his teeth so she can see them. CHARLEEN is quickly terrified and squirms. MARLIN's hold is strong. The teeth are coming towards her. GERRY is now close to them. He raises the putter as a weapon and yells.]

GERRY: LET HER GO YOU FREAK!
OR I'LL KILL YOU WITH THIS — uh
— PUTTER!

MARLIN: Adieu, my darling [Lets her go free. He is sad] The die is cast.

CHARLEEN [Running to GERRY, throwing herself on the ground and grovelling at his leg]: Oh, G-G-G-Gerry, I'm so glad you're here. You know what he wanted to do? To—to—to bit me on the neck — He thinks he's a-a-a- vampire

GERRY [Brandishing the putter]: Get lost, you, Sharkie, get lost — and don't come back here, either! [Draws an imaginary line on the floor] Stay on your own side! [Walks backwards, brandishing putter, with a terrified CHARLEEN still stuck to his knee. He drags her along the floor.]

MARLIN: Very well. But I confess to a certain fascination with you both. And duty demands my return [At the centre back exit MARLIN pauses.] Chow, babies!

[MARLIN elegantly retreats. After he's gone, GERRY puts down the putter. CHARLEEN and GERRY embrace.]

SCENE 10

CHARLEEN: Oh, Gerry — Oh. You wouldn't believe what he said — like he wanted you too, not just me! [Burying her head in his chest] Oh, Yeck, yeck, yeck!

GERRY: And he doesn't have human appetites. He said that. He has shark appetites. Now think for a minute about that.

CHARLEEN [Getting more and more hysterical]: Dinner. He always mentioned dinner to me. [GERRY shakes his head] With me. [GERRY shakes his head] OF ME?

GERRY: Y-yes.

CHARLEEN: Now I wish he was a regular bisexual.

GERRY: So do I. [Pause] Well, I mean I don't — oh hell why can't we just get out of here!

CHARLEEN: We've got call Desisle Tours and tell them!

GERRY: Tell them what? That a shark is hunting us? They'll tell us to stay out of the water? That James Bond is real? What? What?

CHARLEEN: No wonder no one said anything. [Pause] You know Gerry,

that was a very brave thing you did for me.

GERRY: Well, got to look after my fiancée. If she — uh — will be my fiancée.

CHARLEEN: Oh, yes, Gerry, yes! I never realized how much I needed you til Marlin went strange. I mean, hey, I can wait for the Drive-ins. You aren't perfect, but neither am I. I shouldn't have been so selfish. My body-guard! [Hugging him and making lovey-dovey noises] I don't know how I could have fallen for that- that-thingie.

GERRY: That's more like it! See, I knew you'd come around. True love has a way of doing that. I knew I could prove that I was better. I knew it.

[GERRY has an idea that startles him.]

GERRY: You know, I think he might be telling half the truth.

CHARLEEN: What?

GERRY: The military used places like this to test things. Look at the deformed babies they're getting in the Marshall Islands. Nuclear testing. Maybe they did something like that here.

CHARLEEN: Radiation?

GERRY: No, more like-um—uh, an-uh, aquaman. Think how useful that would be to the Navy. A military aquaman! And what is the meanest, most feared fish?

GERRY and CHARLEEN: The shark. [CHARLEEN picks up the umbrella. They begin to pace back and forth across the island.]

CHARLEEN: Oh, no. And he always talks as if he isn't the only one!

GERRY: What if they couldn't be controlled? And were just stuck somewhere so remote that they

wouldn't bother anybody. And left to die out.

CHARLEEN [Half crying]: But his kind mates.

GERRY: Exactly.

CHARLEEN: So if anything happened to him — [CHARLEEN stops pacing]

GERRY [GERRY stops pacing facing CHARLEEN]: The others would follow.

CHARLEEN: Oh, oh. We have to evade him somehow then until the helicopter arrives and then tell DesIsle not to send anybody here anymore.

GERRY: Right. Unless...

CHARLEEN: Unless what?

GERRY: Never mind. [To himself while looking around the area at the rope, etc.] It could be done. It could be done.

CHARLEEN: He says that he has everything he wants here. [Looking up suddenly, realizing that another albatross is about. She snaps open the automatic umbrella. GERRY jumps under it with her.] Ecky, messy old albatross.

SCENE 11

[MARLIN arrives. The others are wary of him. CHARLEEN holds the umbrella like a weapon in front of her. GERRY picks up the putter and holds it in front of him. MARLIN is inbetween them.]

MARLIN: The albatrosses are very regular.

CHARLEEN: Eck!

MARLIN: How are you feeling. Like feeding? I like feeding. Which you must know. You smell so delicious.

GERRY: Don't you threaten us.

MARLIN: Why not? It is very interesting. How a species reacts to

aggression. I have made a great study of sharks in your waters. Some are 'known attackers' some only when they are provoked, some never.

CHARLEEN: Don't provoke him.

[GERRY siddles past MARLIN and runs to CHARLEEN's side. MARLIN smiles wickedly. During MARLIN's next speech, GERRY siddles towards the palm tree where the rope is. He almost gets it but at the end of the speech, MARLIN turns and sees him. GERRY stops cold.]

MARLIN: The profusion of species is amazing — whites, blues, hammerheads, makos, wobbeongs, killers — one of the visitors - former visitors - left me a very interesting book, Dictionary of Sharks. I am learning it by heart. [Quoting] "Several reports credit the Blue shark with both an insensitivity to pain and a willingness to eat almost anything. 'Anything' in this case extends to old boots, blocks of wood and garbage thrown from passing ships. It also includes people." Charming, don't you think?

CHARLEEN [Trying another tactic]: Marlin, gentle Marlin, would you mind if I just went to the cabin for a moment? My sunblock is getting low. And you wouldn't want me to get a sunburn.

MARLIN: No. I wouldn't. You would be all dry and leathery.

GERRY: Don't threaten us. [Waving the putter. MARLIN graps it from him]

MARLIN: I'm not threatening anybody. [Pretends to play golf] I am once again practicing golf. No one can get off this island without me knowing it. And you have no weapons.

[CHARLEEN goes offstage.]

GERRY: We know all about you, mystery man.

MARLIN: You do?

GERRY: I figured it out.

MARLIN: Yes?

GERRY: You aren't the son of the Seagod.

MARLIN: No. I am not.

GERRY: And you aren't a creation of Dr. No.

MARLIN [Fake Chinese accent]: No. I am no a No creation.

GERRY: That leaves one thing.

MARLIN: Yes chief?

GERRY: The military.

MARLIN [Long pause]: My congratulations, Grandma. A hole-in-one, as you say.

GERRY: And I think you should come back to civilization and tell the world about it. We could get you help.

MARLIN: That is a curious thought. Help. You are a compassionate species, are you not? Though you do not hesitate to kill or threaten to kill.

[CHARLEEN returns, trying to make a sign to GERRY behind MARLIN's back. MARLIN doesn't even turn around.]

MARLIN: So, when is the helicopter coming?

CHARLEEN: I- Gerry did you —

GERRY: How could I? I didn't know —

MARLIN [a la James T. Kirk]: When being threatened by an alien, call for help. The first thing a starfleet captain learns.

GERRY: What?

CHARLEEN: You just go and disappear in the ocean and no one will ever come back here again. You can terrorize the fish, Mr. Whoever-you-are.

MARLIN: Blackbeard was wrong. No one believes that son of a seagod stuff. Stupid, smelly, swine of a star-pirate!

GERRY: A star-pirate? Come off it.

MARLIN: Had to eat him. Flesh stank to high heaven.

CHARLEEN: You really ate someone? Yeck! Yeck! Yeck!

MARLIN: We never waste meat. And the cabinboy was a real treat.

CHARLEEN: Yeck! Yeck! Yeck!

GERRY: But Blackbeard was a legendary pirate. Never really lived.

MARLIN: So it was a pseudonym. What do I know? Did I ask to see his birthpapers? But what with all the diseases going around maybe a guy should ...

CHARLEEN: Yeck! Yeck! Yeck! Yeck!

MARLIN: Stop making that noise Charleen. It makes me very hungry.

CHARLEEN: Yeck — er I. [GERRY puts his hand over her mouth]

GERRY: Getting back to earth here — the military — what government? What branch did this?

MARLIN: I thought up the Dr. No theory myself. Very adaptive, eh? Knowing Charleen's love of the movies. That was a master stroke. [Swinging putter gracefully]

GERRY: Well, sometimes she's not too smart. [She looks at him] But I love her anyway [GERRY grabs the putter.] And you are not going to hurt her or me!

MARLIN: Assumption of aggression [Gets out notebook] Anything else?

GERRY: Yes, I think so. [Grabs the notebook and throws it into the sea] THERE!

[During the following speech GERRY is inching towards the rope which is still onstage from the first scene.]

MARLIN [At the water's edge]: My Field notes! All my research! Washed up, washed out, washed away. Sunk! What will I tell them?

[During the next section, GERRY and CHARLEEN each take an end of the rope and throws it around MARLIN. Then they run around him in circles wrapping it. He stands silently.]

CHARLEEN: Gerry! Get him!

GERRY: I'll drag you backwards. That kills sharks.

MARLIN: Sharks, not Mflans. Distant cousins.

GERRY: I will know who you are. I will!

CHARLEEN: Gerry! Here! Got him!

MARLIN [As GERRY finishes tying him up.]: It hurts me that you are so willing to aid him, Charleen. To tie up the gentle fish.

GERRY: Now who's scared, Sharkie? [Threatens him with a blunt object like a bottle of suntan oil] Huh?

MARLIN: The inhumanity of man to m'flan.

CHARLEEN: I don't like being looked at as dinner. [Takes the suntan oil and threatens him too.] It isn't nice.

MARLIN: Sorry. It has been most difficult for us to adapt to intelligent species who smell good.

CHARLEEN: That's the cocoanut oil. [Smelling her arm. Almost letting MARLIN smell it. He snaps at it with his teeth]

MARLIN: Synthetic flavour? Like your ice cream, Grandma.

GERRY [A little afraid but brave sounding]: You live a few miles from

the natives here. Your people must trade with them. Where are they?

MARLIN: My people don't live here.

GERRY: Then where are they?
[Threatens him again] I mean it! Come on Sharkie or I'll cut off that dorsal fin of yours — I'll have Chinese shark fin soup, I will!

CHARLEEN: Gerry —

MARLIN: You'd eat it? And you were offended by my appetities.

CHARLEEN: But we weren't going to eat it.

GERRY: I'll go back and find a nice sharp knife, Marlin, I warn you.

CHARLEEN: Gerry! How could you be so cruel?

GERRY: I'm defending us. You didn't complain when his teeth were at your neck. I'm always defending you. Like I was trying to defend you from failure with dumb makeup huts.

CHARLEEN: Oh, Gerry. I understand now. [Pause] But it could be very big. And we could test it with one itty-bitty shop. See if it would work before franchising it. Come on Gerry. Karen isn't the only woman you need.

GERRY: You know, you could be right. Why not? Yeah, let's do it! But we need a better name than drive-in beauty — hey — Whiz in and Doll up — no, too old fashioned. I don't know.

CHARLEEN: Oh, Gerry! Gerry! I'll never ask you for anything again! Oh, Gerry!

[MARLIN is being totally ignored by the two lovers who are embracing and making cooing noises. This upsets him somewhat.]

MARLIN [To himself]: Yeck! My sacrifices go unrewarded. [Louder] What if I said, I am an advance scout for the civilization of the Mflans?

[GERRY and CHARLEEN do not believe him. It looks like a desperate bid for attention.]

GERRY and CHARLEEN: Never heard of them.

CHARLEEN: Flans? Like cakes? [She giggles] You should make it sound more menacing like, uh — Darth Vader.

MARLIN: Mflans are like me. Millions of them. I am a shark man just as you are a monkey man. We live in a star cluster quite close to this one. My employers seek a world where water is open and game is plentiful.

GERRY: Why?

MARLIN: We need to always keep moving — increasing. This world is ideal. The recreation possibilities are endless. The water creatures are not intelligent. There were only the land creatures to investigate.

CHARLEEN: You're, like, from Outer Space? [Pause. Trying to be funny.] Gee, Gerry, like we really blew it, eh? First contact and we tie him up and threaten to cut off his fin.

GERRY: This is even flakier than the James Bond story.

MARLIN: We monitored your television to learn about you.

GERRY: How much danger is the world, supposedly in here? A bomb pointed at us and poof, up goes the whole place.

CHARLEEN [a la the little Martian from Bugs Bunny]: Where is the earth-shattering Ka-Boom?

MARLIN [As if quoting his orders]: "You are instructed to order an attack only if the world in question, known locally as the Earth, is a threat to our domination of Sector 9.0 of Known Mflan Space in this galaxy."

CHARLEEN [Beginning to believe
MARLIN]: But you were going to bit
me! I never threatened you.

MARLIN [Sadly]: You weren't for me.
I am Mflan, much as I deny it. Your
Lassie, did she not still retain her
teeth? Mflans are not domesticated.
We are rulers not pets. And we do not
consume intelligent species. I wouldn't
—

GERRY [Beginning to believe also]:
But the pirate was of an intelligent
species.

MARLIN [A la Groucho]: Believe me,
it was hard to tell.

GERRY: But he was.

MARLIN: Alright, it is not considered
polite to eat an intelligent species
member. Occasionally appropriate, but
never polite.

CHARLEEN: And the world, what
about it? Your people sound
blood-thirsty and cruel —

MARLIN: They are. I am too infested
with your humanity to go back,
myself. I would be torn to pieces in an
instant if they knew —

GERRY: When that helicopter comes
we're going to take you back to land
and into a biology lab as fast as
possible. We'll see what you're made
of.

MARLIN: You don't believe me?
[Pause] And what if, in retribution, the
entire Section 4.0 Star Gunner
Squadron of the Mflan fleet came to
this planet and it rained blood?

GERRY [A bit uneasy]: You were
looking for vacation spots earlier.

MARLIN: For peaceful vacation spots.
And your kind was reputed peaceful.
You have never vaporised another
planet.

GERRY: No. We haven't.

MARLIN [Sadly]: The official Mflan
fleet information states that your kind
are not peaceful, only backward.

CHARLEEN: We are trying to learn to
be peaceful.

GERRY [Brandishing bottle]: We are.
We are!

MARLIN: So it seems.

[Helicopter sound]

MARLIN: De Plane! De Plane!

GERRY: We're going now. We'll be
back with the pilot.

MARLIN [a la The Friendly Giant]:
You stay here. And I'll call Rusty.

CHARLEEN: We have to have you
analysed. You might be dangerous.
With your crazy ideas and all. You
know I actually like you before you
turned mean. You're sweet.

MARLIN: Thank-you for that. I will
treasure it.

GERRY: Shut-up. He's dangerous,
Charleen don't go near him.

[CHARLEEN goes gingerly up to
MARLIN and kisses him on the cheek.]

CHARLEEN: Good-bye, Marlin. I
hope the authorities are kind to you,
even if you can be pretty dangerous.

MARLIN [Rod Serling voice]: But the
world will never know the mystery.
Because of the powerful effect on the
name.

[The Helicopter sound is louder.

GERRY and CHARLEEN turn to go off
— but as they hear MARLIN's last
speech, they stop and look at each
other strangely. At the word
'Mokoroa' they freeze and in a few
seconds they unfreeze.]

MARLIN [Very loudly]: My name is
Mokoroa the one thrown to the Stars.
Mokoroa.

[Staring to walk into the water.
Sounds of splashing. GERRY follows
her. They walk offstage and up the left
aisle of the audience while talking.]

CHARLEEN: We had a wonderful
time, Gerry, didn't we?

GERRY: I think so. I — uh, can't
remember. Will you marry me,
Charleen?

CHARLEEN: I don't know...

SCENE 12

MARLIN [Sadly]: And so it goes. [a la
Kirk] Bones, they were afraid of me.
Me! With my strong shoulders. Ha.
[Storyteller voice] He saved her with
his club. And they lived happily ever
after. The monster pined away and
died. [Pause] [British voice] Oh, I'm
alright, Jack. Alright Jack. [Pause]
Wish I could have told her about
violence being an instinct and desire
not being enough. It sounded very
good at the time. [Pause] Still, I don't
know who I am going to make my
report. Being here too long. [British
voice] Gone native! [Normal voice] I
dare not stop sending reports. No.

[Helicopter noises. MARLIN looks up
at the helicopter, resignedly.]

SCENE 13

BRITISH MAN [offstage]: Oh, what a
lovely little atoll. So romantic!

BRITISH WOMAN [offstage]: It
should be darling, I paid enough for
this holiday.

[FINAL BLACKOUT. Music, possibly
SECRET AGENT MAN sung by Bruce
Willis is heard through the Blackout.]

Mystery, Myth, and Music: An Interview with Charles De Lint

by *Dave Panchyk*

DP: de Lint is a name found in the Netherlands, in which the bio for the program book for ConText '89 says you were born, and it's not normally the kind of area that's associated with Celtic mythology, which you're most famous for writing about. Where did your interest in Celtic mythology come from?

CdL: The way the Celtic stuff comes into my writing comes from the fact that I got very interested in Celtic music a very long time ago, and I got interested in that because I've always been interested in folk tales, folk stories, legends, mythologies and that kind of thing. The Celtic stuff isn't the only thing I'm interested in, but it always struck a chord in me, and then when I discovered there was music to go with it, that just took me away. I concentrate on the music mostly, but you can't get away from good stuff — just the two names alone fill your head with interesting ideas, and there's always stories to go along with these things. You get an old piper like Seamus Ennis and he'll be playing a tune on his pipes called "The Gold Ring" and he'll have a whole story behind it about how some man found a little tiny gold ring and he knew it belonged to the Fairies so he took it back to the Fairies and in return for this they gave him this tune, which everyone calls "The Gold Ring."

My interests are a lot broader than just Celtic — as the books come out you can see there's Native American stuff,

there's Gypsy stuff, there's stuff that just comes out of imagination. It's an ongoing process. To me, the process of creativity is synthesis; all your influences, whether it's music or writing or movies or just talking to people, comes together and then it comes out from you into your creative outlet, whether it is painting, writing, or making more music.

DP: Ottawa, for you, in the books, is always fraught with that kind of magic, and in *Moonheart*, it is both the Celtic and the Native American. Is there any one kind of mythology that holds more power for you? I suppose the last question would seem to indicate that you are more favoured towards the Celtic.

CdL: In a way I suppose I am, the sense of the music — I'm still totally enthralled with Celtic music. I've just taken up the button accordion (I play fiddle mostly), my wife and I play tunes together, we go to sessions and stuff, so that's very strongly there. But in terms of my own writing... it's hard to say. I don't really do a lot of Celtic research, I don't look back into what the ancient Celts were doing in Ireland and stuff like that. I don't really write about it any more except that I have a book I just finished, it's set in Cornwall and it's all got to do with stoneworks and traditional music, and Cornwall is one of the six Celtic countries, so obviously my interest hasn't waned, it's just spreading out a bit.

DP: Your books have mythic pattern to them, where you've got a powerful, dark, ancient figure and then other figures that are archetypes as well. Are you going to be moving away from that with any future projects?

CdL: Well, I don't think that all the books have had that in them. I've got about twelve books out at the moment, and though there are the archetypal good and evil struggles in them, they're not in all of them so clearly defined.

The books aren't always what they seem to be about. To me, Jack the Giant-Killer, for instance, is a retelling of the story "Jack the Giant-Killer" and yes, it's a story of the struggle between the two courts of Faery. But to my mind what the book is about is a friendship between two women. The other stuff is just the plot. This new book that I've done a couple of readings from here at the convention — I have a theory that's borrowed or stolen from Gurdjieff and Ouspensky and people like that, that the universe is based on musical notes and the postulation in this new book called *The Little Country* is that there was a "first music," there was one tune and that everything has grown out of that — all the music we have, all the arts, ourselves even, because tables and our bodies and everything are all made of molecules and they all vibrate, and what does music do? Music is just vibrations in the air. So we're all a kind of music. There is at the same time in the book good and evil struggles going on as well, but that wasn't the main reason why I wrote that book.

So, in terms of fantasy, I'm writing different stuff all the time: sometimes it's a thriller, I have a horror novel coming out next year, I have a mystery novel I'm rewriting this year, I've done *Svaha*, which is a sort of near-future

science fiction thriller with fantasy overtones, I've done a couple of sf pulp things for *The Dungeon* series; I try to keep doing different stuff.

DP: Somebody has pointed out that there isn't always a clear-cut struggle between good and evil, the good people aren't always purely good and the evil people aren't always purely evil.

CdL: It's true. It's interesting, in *Greenmantle* for instance. What that book was about for me was the role that mystery plays in our lives in the present day. Not just religious mystery, but that sort of undefinable mystery, the kind that keeps us asking, "Why are we here? What are we doing?" It's what the Native Americans called "beauty;" you stand in a place, a woodlands perhaps, or a hilltop, and you're struck by a sense of awe and wonder that's got nothing to do with God or anything, it's just — something. That mystery is important in our lives, I think to a large degree because we're living in cities and we're bombarding ourselves with video and all this peripheral stuff; we sometimes lose touch with that kind of thing. So what *Greenmantle* was exploring was mystery: where it came from and what it means. In doing so, I used an archetypal figure of a horned man, but he was also a boar, a stag — an archetypal figure, the Horned Lord, the Moon Mistress type thing. What happened in that book was that listening to him, the people would hear that music come into contact with mystery and it effects them. Some people like Lance, it turns them into a rutting animal, and drives him crazy — he kills the dog. Other people, like the Mafia killer, it brings out a gentleness that he didn't realize was there.

DP: The overwhelming majority of Charles de Lint readers don't ever get to know anything about MaryAnn de Lint. What is her role in the production of your work?

CdL: A very important role. In the one sense, she's my contact with mystery, because another aspect of mystery is the fact that I'm a man, she's a woman. The opposite sex to me is something of utmost interest in mystery. Because we can never be that person, we can share so many experiences and try to relate them in as many ways as we can, but they're still an entirely different sort of person. Of course, we're all like that individually, but the term is taken in the sexual sense here.

That kind of thing obviously helps spark things that are going on; on a more mundane level, what MaryAnne does is — she's my first editor. And it's not just a matter of her reading something and going, "Oh yeah, that's okay!" she goes through every one of my manuscripts, painstakingly — just like the editor does at the publishing house, except she does it first. It's made an incredible difference in the work; I think the work is always much better for it.

She's very supportive. Writing is sort of a lonely profession. It seems silly to say that at a convention where we're all sitting around drinking beer and having fun and chatting up, but that's not what it's really like. Really it's working all by yourself, so having that support there — you can't measure it, you can't describe it.

DP: What impact has your work had outside the realm of "normal fantasy fandom?" I'm thinking especially of the impact it's had on the pagan community.

CdL: That's something I don't think I can answer. I think to get an answer to

that you'd probably be better off to talk with people who are actually involved in the pagan community. I'm not involved myself; like I said, I'm interested in all the mysteries. It's emotive but it's also an intellectual curiosity. It's not something I practice or am involved in in any way; I'm interested in Zen, I'm interested in Taoism, I'm interested in Buddhism — it's this thing I'm interested in. A lot of people have told me that they're pagans — they said they like [my work] a lot, they're often actually surprised that I'm not involved in it. So I'm assuming they're appreciating it, but I couldn't tell you what the influence is because I'm not involved in the community.

DP: What's your favourite form of writing — novel?

CdL: Yes. To me, everything starts with a spark, an idea. It's just as hard to start a novel as it's hard to start a short story, to get your cast of characters, to get your setting, to get your idea rolling. The nice thing about a novel is that once you've done that hard work of starting, you get to go. You get to spend all that time with those people, in that situation, you get to experience and learn about them — it's like a long friendship. You do a short story, you put that same amount of work into it at the beginning and bam, it's over. It's like being at a convention, meeting someone and talking to them for a few hours and having to say goodbye. I just find it a little more... comfortable. Obviously there's a lot more work involved, but it's just practice to sustain things at that level.

DP: What do you think about writing poetry? I've seen some of your verses and they were very, very beautiful.

CdL: Thank you. I like writing poetry; I don't seem to have much time for it

any more. I used to write lots and lots and lots, but that's when I wasn't writing fiction. It was part of the music — I must have written ten million songs, which I never do any more, and I wrote lots of verse at the same time. Some of it I really like, still, and I'd really like to do some more, but I just haven't had the time to do it; you only have so much writing time. At this point in my life I'm still exploring proper fiction. I did little bits and pieces here and there, sometimes to go with a story.

DP: Here at ConText'89 there's been a lot of talk about the difference between Canadian writers and, say, American writers. Do you see any kind of difference?

CdL: I don't know what the difference is. I have been told by American writers that my writing has a different flavour to them, and I'm assuming that's because we all have different voices.

You know that a Canadian voice is slightly different from an American voice. I wouldn't be able to pin-point it. I guess we're in between the British voice and the American voice. I can't really tell you. As far as writers themselves go, I don't really see a difference. I think we're all trying to say the same thing, we're trying to communicate to people. They're trying to communicate their ideas to their readership and I don't think that's going to change anywhere in the world, no matter what language they write in or what country they come from, at least I hope it won't.

DP: Okay, what projects, briefly, are you working on right now that will be out in the next few months, or farther along the road than that?


CdL: It's a funny thing. When I finish a book, I usually put it aside for a few

months to begin with, if it's a first draft, and then I re-write it again, and then I give it to my publisher. And, by the time they get it, it could be a year from when I began a project. As soon as they get it, it's anywhere from a year to two years before it comes out, so there's a real long time lag. What's coming up next year is a sequel to Jack, or a novel and a heroic fantasy novella that's part of the Tor double series it's going to be backing a Fritz Leiber, and so that's what's coming up. But these are all projects I finished years ago.

Currently what I'm working on, well, I just finished a first draft of that book, *The Little Country*, which is great big massive book about traditional music. That's one way to describe it, I guess, and a young adult novel, a young adult contemporary fantasy utilizing an odd sort of Tarot and North American Indian stuff again. I don't have a day, but I do know it's coming out. And, also, some time in the next little while the fifth book of the Phil Jose Farmer's *Dungeon Series* will be coming out as well...

DP: Do you have any horror stories about the covers that have appeared on your paperbacks?

CdL: Unh, horror stories. Well, my first book had an awful cover on it, but I was lucky because my editor at Ace at the time, Terri Windling, is an artist, a really good artist, and she offered to do, for free, *Celtic Ribbonwork*. *Celtic Ribbonwork*, I think, is gorgeous. My only real horror story got sort of stopped before it even happened in a sense. I had that moment of panic when I got back that cover proof in the mail. I just about died. But, luckily, it never went anywhere. The only sort of problem I have with my covers of my books is the fact that I don't feel they're representative of what's inside the book. You know, they give one impression, and I don't think it's an



exactly fair impression. Later books now, like Svaha at least tells you what the book's about. You look at the book and sort of know it's a near-future. It's got Indian stuff, Japanese stuff in it and I like that aspect. Something like Greenmantle, I think is misrepresentative because the character on the cover never really appears in the book. He's mentioned in one line somewhere in the book and the book is actually a contemporary thriller. I would really feel bad if someone bought that book expecting a nice, light, high fantasy, and instead they got this gritty contemporary thriller. I wouldn't want that to happen. I want people to be happy with what they're reading. And, on the other side of the coin, there are people who are looking for really contemporary thrillers, and I wish that they would have had the opportunity to read that book, but they look at the cover and think, "It's a high fantasy, it's not for me." So it's not real horror stories, just frustration, something we're kind of working on as we go along. Hopefully, subsequent books are going to have some representative covers.

DP: Hopefully. Is there anything you've always wanted to say in an interview, but you've never been given the chance to?

CdL: Yeah. I'd like to thank the people reading the books and buying them. It makes it worthwhile, as far as I'm concerned. Again, as I was saying, the whole thing is a matter of communicating. I get to say this on panels at conventions, but no one ever asks you in an interview because it's usually coming from a newspaper. They just want to get some bio facts down and a couple of good quotes and away we go. So that's why I'd just like to thank people for the support they've

given me, for listening to what I'm saying and I'm appreciating it.

DP: Last question. What do you think Hell is like?

CdL: Hell? Oh God (no pun intended). I wouldn't know where to begin. There's just too many things. I guess Hell would be the place where everything is boring all the time.

Ink, Hot Lead, and Silicon

by Dale Speirs

Just as the commercial use of the printing press displaced the scribe, and changed intellectual life in the process, so is the personal computer now changing the face of publication. Dislocations such as these are never accomplished without a fair amount of grumbling and complaining, but the trends are irresistible and not to be thwarted. SF fandom, being the reactionary backwater that it is, has a few people who insist that if it ain't mimeo then it ain't a fanzine, but they are rapidly being buried under a blizzard of photocopied or desktopped fanzines. The Alcuin Society, of Vancouver, British Columbia, published a book "In praise of scribes", written by a scribe in protest against the newfangled lead type. It is a well-written defense of hand-copying books and enumerates the benefits of doing such. The benefits of moveable type were even greater, though, so it all came down to being a lost cause.

Desktop publishing has been a wonderful boost to small-press publishers, be they fanzine editors or neo-Nazi hate literature mongers. Personal computers have made life easier in assembling books or periodicals, but there are pitfalls as well. Computers certainly do reduce

** This word will quickly determine if your program was written by an American cultural imperialist who insists on spelling it "center".


some types of publishing problems, but create new ones.

Matters such as spelling and grammar have always been difficult for people, and today's desktopper can hardly be blamed for making the same errors that careless typesetters and scribes did. Spellchecking programs have reduced the problem somewhat but are not perfect and never will be. If you have such a program, test it out by running the following paragraph and see how good it is.

"It was a site for sore ayes, I tell ewe. The night in shining armour road his hoarse down the rode at full speed, his lance aimed at the target. The rings of the target were painted read, white, and blew. He hit the centre** of the target and punched a whole one signed of it."

Memos used to be important before the age of the photocopier, there being so much trouble in making up a stencil for one, or setting up multiple copies of carbon paper. The alternative was to circulate a single copy for initialling. As the photocopier spread, so did the amount of trivia generated on paper. In like fashion, desktop publishing is producing a flood of material that would have been better stillborn. Separating out the chaff from the good seed has become harder as the proportion of chaff increases.

Desktop publishing now allows people to fiddle about with typography, distorting fonts beyond readability. Type is enlarged or



reduced without respect for what happens when letters are printed so small that vertical lines (ascenders and descenders) thin out so much that they disappear entirely. Loops in such letters fill in with ink and become blobs. Some people appear incapable of using a typesetting program without trying to change roman letters into script letters, or distorting an italic type into roman letters. This leads to nomenclatural problems as runamuck typographers change an alphabet into their own form but keep the old name. It has been suggested that museums should maintain type samples and the actual lead type to preserve the true thing. Lead type has been compared to fossil specimens, needs for the identification and study of extinct species.

For those whose publishing experiments are avowedly art for art's sake, illegible fonts can be accepted. This is not the case for those who are publishing information for information's sake. Times Roman and Baskerville may not be as exciting as do-it-yourself, but do have the advantage of being readable. An ideal type should be unnoticed by the reader. One that calls attention to itself by curlicues and all manner of ornamentation is competing for attention with the content of the word. It becomes harder to read because the eye and the mind are constantly wavering back and forth between the letters and the information that is to be conveyed in those letters. I recall one periodical I used to subscribe to that was set up entirely in capital letters, boldface.

It can be argued that content is more important than form, but this is not entirely true. It is indeed the case that a beautiful layout cannot overcome a bad story. Much of the poetry published as modern first editions is

unreadable, but the books themselves are collected for their physical beauty of the binding and print. The poems are not the attraction of such books. Good content, however, can be overlooked or ignored completely because of the form. A Hugo-winning story in poorly-printed books may find itself being read as often as most of the BEM pulp stories are. A reader does not want to have to work to read the ornamented type, or have to use a bench press to open the book because it was bound so tightly. Content and form go together. Poor content will not be saved by excellent form. Excellent content will not be helped by poor form.

The age of the personal computer means that many people are using desktop programs without understanding the meanings behind the reasons why certain things are done a certain way. This produced poor work in greater quantity than ever before. I am not saying that only the older fanzines were good, and today's computer-assisted fanzines are crud. The fanzines published in the 1950s had just as much crud as we see today. The difference is in the fact that computers allow us to make mistakes much faster and easier than ever before. A typewritten fanzine will at least have legible type, but a computer-written fanzine may have the editor's idea of what type is. Good taste cannot be taught in a computer program.

Does all of this matter? Perhaps it is just grumbling, as in the case of Prince Charles complaining about "bloody awful English" used by his secretarial staff. Presumably the purpose of publishing is to communicate with the reader. Throwing roadblocks in the way is counter to what should be intended.

The Hibakusha*

by Cliff Burns

She was getting desperate.

Despite her heart-rending pleas the doctor remained unmoved.

"No! Absolute not, Mrs. Morrow. We cannot provide the level of care in this facility that your husband requires."

"This is a hospital. You're supposed to care for the sick or have you forgotten your Hippocratic Oath?"

"I'm quite conversant with the Oath, ma'am, but these are desperate times and I'm afraid it can't be taken quite so literally any more." The doctor pointedly began to flip through the thick wad of papers on his clipboard.

"He's dying and you know it! You can't just let him —"

"Mrs. Morrow." He fixed her to the spot with a penetrating glare. "I am aware of your husband's delicate condition. Believe me —" A hand swept at the crowded ward. "I've seen many similar cases, enough for me to consider applying for specialist's credentials. These people here are in need just as Mr. Morrow is in need. We're having enough trouble tending to them without straining our resources further."

"So you're just going to write him off," she spat.

"Mrs. Morrow, take a look at this please." The doctor rolled up one sleeve of his crusty smock, revealing a series of purple blotches originating

*hi-bok-sha. "This word was newly coined after the bombing (of Hiroshima and Nagasaki). It meant 'explosion affected person(s)' or 'the people who received the bomb.'" From *Day One: Before Hiroshima and After* by Peter Wyden.

just above the wrist, spotting his forearm, the trail leading up past his elbow. "I'd say it's going to be two weeks, more or less, before I have to write myself off." The sleeve slid down once more.

"A — at least let me have some pills, something to —"

"As I said, our quantities are limited. However, I think I can let you have six penicillin tablets and perhaps fifteen aspirin."

Kay Morrow regarded the doctor with shock, with despair.

"That's not enough to cure a sore throat!" The doctor shrugged. "What about the stories I've heard about the stockpiles of drugs —"

"Absolute nonsense! There were over 100,000 pounds of morphine stock-piled before the war — I know that sounds impressive but those supplies were gobbled up in no time at all. Pharmaceuticals will be in short supply for a long time to come, take my word on that."

He scribbled something on a pad, handed the slip to her.

"Present this to Captain Rutherford upstairs. He's in charge of the detail guarding our medical stores. He'll draw your allotment for you."

Kay took the ineffectual piece of paper from him.

He wanted to say something as she turned away, wanted to apologize for his brusqueness, perhaps express words of commiseration.

He closed his mouth.

Would he ever be able to dispense anything else?

She leaned against a pillar outside the hospital.

What was to be done?

If she didn't get help soon he would die.

"Didn't get anything, did you?"

The sallow-faced, perspiring man, attired in what had once been an expensive parka shivered up at her from the bottom of the steps.

She decided to ignore him.

"Told you there was nothin' they could give you, right?" He persisted.

"Leave me alone."

"What have you got?"

She decided that he was crazy. She walked down the steps, bumped him aside with her shoulder as she passed him. She heard him grunt with anger, heard him moving up fast behind her. A hand tagged her shoulder, sought purchase. She balled a fist, preparing to let him have it —

"I can get you things." The words were spoken conspiratorially, dipped in greed, coated with self-interest. But they sounded sweet to her. "Pills. Dope. Uppers. Downers. Bottles of miracles, lady."

She turned around. "Where?"

"What have you got to trade for them?"

"Enough." The past few months had taught her to be discreet when bargaining.

"Are you sure?" He was sneering and she didn't like it.

"I'm sure."

He nodded. "Okay, lady. If you're lying...you'll be the one who suffers, not me."

"Don't threaten me."

"You meet me back here in an hour with as much as you can carry."

"And you'll —"

He raised a finger. "One hour."

The trip home was accomplished with brisk, springy strides.

Maybe...maybe just this once things would turn out all right. There had been so many disappointments...

She pushed open the door to their small apartment, old habits causing her to feel chagrined at the dirt and grime embedded in the carpet. Her footsteps raised small dust devils as she crossed the floor to the bedroom door. She opened it slowly.

"Kay?"

"Hi, sweetheart." She knelt before him, wriggled in closer so he could see her.

"Everything...?"

"Shhh. Fine, baby, fine. Here." She lifted his head, pressed the pills past the frayed lips. The accompanying water caused him to choke but they went down. "There. That wasn't bad." She resettled his head on the pillow.

"I...have to —"

An excellent interpreter of this verbal shorthand, Kay nodded. "Don't feel bad, just go ahead and I'll wash you up after you're done."

As she looked on he endured a terrible coughing fit. Stop coughing, she silently implored, coughing means that you've caught a bug and right now you don't have enough white blood cells to combat the common cold.



The fit subsided.

"Better?" He nodded. "Want to know what I did today?" Another nod.

"Well, after a VERY lucrative trip to the hospital I stopped by the farmer's market and picked up a drumstick that will make a tasty broth later on tonight. Only had to trade four carrots for it, not bad, huh?" When she checked for his reaction she found him fast asleep.

Good.

Sleep and thousands of milligrams of antibiotics and he might live.

She stood, looked down at him, a sad song playing in her head for the millionth time:

I should have been in the city that day.
I should have been with you. I heard about what you did, about how you were one of the first to dig yourself out, were one of the first to try to get to the worst hit parts, pulling people out, trying to save as many as you could.

Some called you a hero.

Look at the hero now.

Around ninety pounds, as bald as a new-born baby and about as strong. He had to be changed constantly, dined on pablum and evaporated milk.

She feared his occasional bouts of lucidity for during these times he was fully aware of his condition. As she fluffed up his pillows she could feel his eyes upon her and he would make the request again:

"Kay...let me die. Christ...Jesus...walk away...and let me die."

She would stroke his forehead, sting his lips briefly with a kiss, sit at his side until he dropped off. All the while wondering if she could.

Not today, she would finally conclude.

But...

Maybe...

Tomorrow...

After removing and replacing the soiled bedclothes Kay wandered into the kitchen to collect the goods she would barter. The cooler was in urgent need of another block of ice; the lettuce had blackened around the edges and some of the oranges were spongy when she gripped them. She would have to pay another visit to old man Frank's ice house. The old bastard wanted more and more each time she went. The virtue of controlling a monopoly.

She finished packing all she could afford to take, closed the hasps on the bag.

She debated going in, kissing Sebastian Morrow good-bye.

She didn't like the finality the gesture implied.

She DID allow herself to blow a kiss toward the bedroom just before she closed the door behind her.

He was right on time.

"Sure you got enough in there? You'd better have or —"

"I told you to stop threatening me. Don't do it again."

"A real tough babe, huh?" He muttered. "We'll see how tough you are."

"Give me the pills, will you?" She waited impatiently.

"I don't have them."

She wanted to punch him, split his lip, maybe knock out a tooth or two. "You said —"

"I'm takin' you to somebody who has 'em." She stood nose-to-nose with him, butted his chest with her finger.

"You don't get a damn thing until I get the pills, got it?"

"You'll get 'em, don't worry." He started away, saying under his breath: "And a lot more if you ain't careful."

She was tired.

So much walking.

Further and further into the city, each step drawing them closer to the central regions.

They couldn't keep this up much longer.

When she called out to him he wouldn't answer her queries, kept on walking. Walking. Walking.

Kay following.

This can't be, she was thinking, he can't be serious. He's trying to pull something on me. This is very bad. We're almost into the Core and THAT is the last place I want to be.

They entered the Core of the city.

Here the blast's effects had been concentrated. A falling star had alighted, flared for a nanosecond, long enough to liquefy the multi-tiered titans that had held sway immutably for a long, long time. None had been spared by the splitting atom, all shrivelled before its glory, only a few brazen girders crucifying the earth here and there kept its triumph from being complete.

The wasteland.

No sound entered the vacuum.

The light, as it had been all over since Day 10, was muted; occasionally the clouds would part, grudgingly admit a brief dance of sunbeams but the curtain was wrung down prematurely by the surging puffs.

Below, the show went on.

Kay and her guide crept into the glimmering graveyard, crawling across, between, under, through and around the behemoths interred there.

He was ten yards ahead of her when he stooped, rapped at a panel beneath his feet.

Three quick-two slow-three quick.

She joined him, caught her breath as they waited.

"What now?"

"Be quiet!"

The answering knock resounded twenty seconds later. He looked at her.

"Well, babe, this is as far as I go." He was sneering again. Her eyes flicked down to the door. "What you waitin' for? Go on down and you'll get what you're lookin' for." She made no move toward the door. "Go on, babe. Or maybe you ain't as tough as you pretend to be."

You could be right, she admitted, but only to herself.

"Go on." He gave her a push.

For Sebastian.

She reached down, gripped the knob, pulled.

The door was lighter than she expected. It sprang from its frame, slapped to the ground an inch from her toes. He chuckled.

A crude ladder led down into a dirt-walled cavity, the floor of which was not visible. She took a deep breath as she stepped on the first rung.

The second. Third. Fourth.

"Tell'em Kenny sent you," he called down to her as he shut the door, depriving her of what little light she had.

She took two more steps. How deep was this Hell-hole?

Four steps later her foot touched the bottom.

Any light entering the cavern from the doorway would be of little use anyway for she was now faced with an unlit tunnel stretching into a sullen recess. Somewhere down that expanse was something alive — it moaned and muttered intermittently, gutturals that filled her with fear.

Nothing to be afraid of, she told herself sternly.

Keep walking. Keep wal — Whup!

She rubbed at her barked nose, picked at the furled skin.

Damn. Kay swung her arms away from her body, sounded for obstacles as she advanced, all the while realizing that the grumbling was getting louder; it was approximated some kind of language but nothing she could identify yet.

The tunnel took a sudden turn and she was among them.

A few candles provided adequate illumination but it was her nose that supplied the first convincing evidence of the identity of the inhabitants of the grotto.

Scabs. Talk about rotten luck, he had led her to a den of Scabs!

Of all the post-apocalyptic horror stories, the Scabs had acquired a special distinction as the most repugnant living examples of the perversity of nuclear war.

Their ranks were composed of those survivors who were closest to ground zero. Flying glass and debris should have eviscerated them, the intense radiation should have cooked them outright...somehow neither happened.

Suburb-dwellers suffered untold hardships, there was no disputing that, but those closer to the city's centre,

those unfortunate enough to survive the initial blast, they were the worst off by far.

They were doomed to short lifespans, their bodies wracked with pain, malfunctioning constantly, betraying them with cruel relentlessness.

But they lived.

Some were blind, many were without limbs, most were undoubtedly mad.

All bore the hideous stigmata from which their nickname was derived.

The keloids, layered scar tissue caused by the intense heat generated by the blast, swelled their faces, scored their bodies with minute craters.

Almost immediately they became the shunned, the outcasts, their approach provoking a hail of rocks as the more able-bodied recoiled at the sight of them. The common people might be forgiven for this un-Christian attitude but the Scabs fared no better with the medical staffs when they sought to have their condition treated.

They were 'goners', with their infirmities they should have been dead.

They weren't. Dying maybe but not dead.

The Scabs retreated to the only locale that did not deny them access, the largely uninhabited Core of the city. They did not thrive there but they did survive...how no one was really certain. Occasionally one heard about them raiding gardens in the outer regions and like everyone else they looted abandoned stores and houses. There was talk of cleaning them out once and for all, seizing all the goods they had accumulated and distributing them among those who really needed them.

Nothing had come of the idea...not yet.

Better, maybe, to just let them rot away.

That's what Kay's nose had detected: the rot. Untended, infected tissue falling away from faces that ran like rivers.

She had to get out there, had to make her way back up the ladder. Muscles coiled, she prepared for the bone-jarring sprint that with luck would carry her —

"You'll never make it," a Scab hissed as he pushed himself up from one of the low benches lining the walls. The others still seated stared at her, her appearance remarked upon by the same gruff utterances she'd heard earlier.

"I'm sorry. I-I didn't know —"

A hand rose painstakingly. "Doesn't matter. What is it that you want?"

"I want to leave. I'll go and —"

"You go and you die." She choked on her heart. "You stay and you might live. **Might.**"

"What do you want me to do?"

"What have you got for us?"

Kay pawed at the pack on her back, held it out to the Scab.

"Empty it. On here." The Scab tapped a desk that must have once seated a small child. Kay stepped forward awkwardly, blanching at the smell the Scab's body gave off, avoiding looking at his face. She opened the pack, removed an orange, an apple, a small head of lettuce. "That's all? Most of us —" Something in his voice drew her eyes irresistibly to his face. The Scab had no lips, his black, moldering teeth were starkly prominent; when he spoke his teeth remained locked together, the words escaping this throat in a rush of air. "Most of us have a lot of trouble eating."

"I...brought this." She pulled out the real prize: a half a jar of milk. Some in

the chamber sucked in their breath, began to rise from their seats. The authoritative Scab waved them back. They complied, grumbling ominously.

"That's good...that's very good." A pocked hand stroked the jar. "What is it that you want from us?"

"Pills," she blurted. "Antibiotics. My husband...he's dying, his immune system's broken down and he's dying. I need —" She tried to calm herself. "He needs antibiotics."

"Who told you we might have them?"

"Kenny. He said his name was Kenny." The Scab nodded.

"Well...I think we might have what you seek." She forced herself to look at the Scab with what she hoped resembled gratitude. "And these materials should cover the cost."

"Thank you, I —"

"Pack this up and put it over there." Kay did as she was instructed. When she returned the desktop was raised and the Scab was rummaging within. He was handed several large vials of tablets. "Penicillin." More. "Vitamins." He proffered another batch.

"Valium...I think." A few made sounds of protestation from the benches but he ignored them. Finally he closed the lid, watched as Kay stuffed the precious vials into her pockets.

She was elated. She had done exactly as she said she would, had shown great courage, had not failed him. She wanted desperately to leave now; despite the charity the creature had shown her he was still an ugly sight to behold and Kay wanted to get out of there. She backed toward the passage.

"I — I want to thank you for —"

"No." The abrupt coldness of the single syllable raised hairs on the back of her neck. "You owe."

"I don't —" A few of the seated rose, then more, stepping between Kay and the way out.

"You owe," the Scab repeated.

"B-but I paid you for the pills!" Her voice was shrill with fear.

"For the pills, yes, for your life, NO."

She felt heavy all over. "I have nothing left to trade."

The desktop rose again. The Scab reached in and withdrew a polished scalpel, its silver cast reflecting the feeble light of the candles onto the earthen walls.

"Yes you do."

The others moved up behind her, enfolded her in their arms, their doughy faces pressed against her ears, their breath rasping as they struggled to subdue her.

"Such a beautiful woman," the Scab crooned, his gruesome hands tracing her face. "So smooth...untouched. I once loved many women like this one."

The scalpel rose and fell.

She couldn't remember her tottering, faltering flight.

She had managed to rip a sleeve off her blouse, wrapped it tightly around her forearms, slowing the flow considerably.

She did not feel any pain. The incision had been a deep one; she had felt first skin, then vein, then tendon severed by the instrument but couldn't recall the pain that accompanied the sensation.

What Kay wished she could forget, what she wished could be excised forever from her mind was their excitement as the blood spurted from her wrist, the way they had fought savagely to get at the wound and when one gained predominance —

— how it had positioned its mouth over the tear, drawing the blood into its mouth, gulping audibly, gorging itself, relishing the taste of a living being —

— until another pushed it aside and took its turn.

And on and on it went.

The flow had subsided near the end. As she swooned she could hear the late-comers snarling in disappointment.

Had they released her or had she finally broken away from them, battled restraining claws, fled down the tunnel to the ladder?

Trivial.

She was alive.

And, she patted her pockets, now Sebastian Shaun Morrow had a fighting chance.

A little victory in the valley of the shadow of death.



