

WINDYCON XVIII



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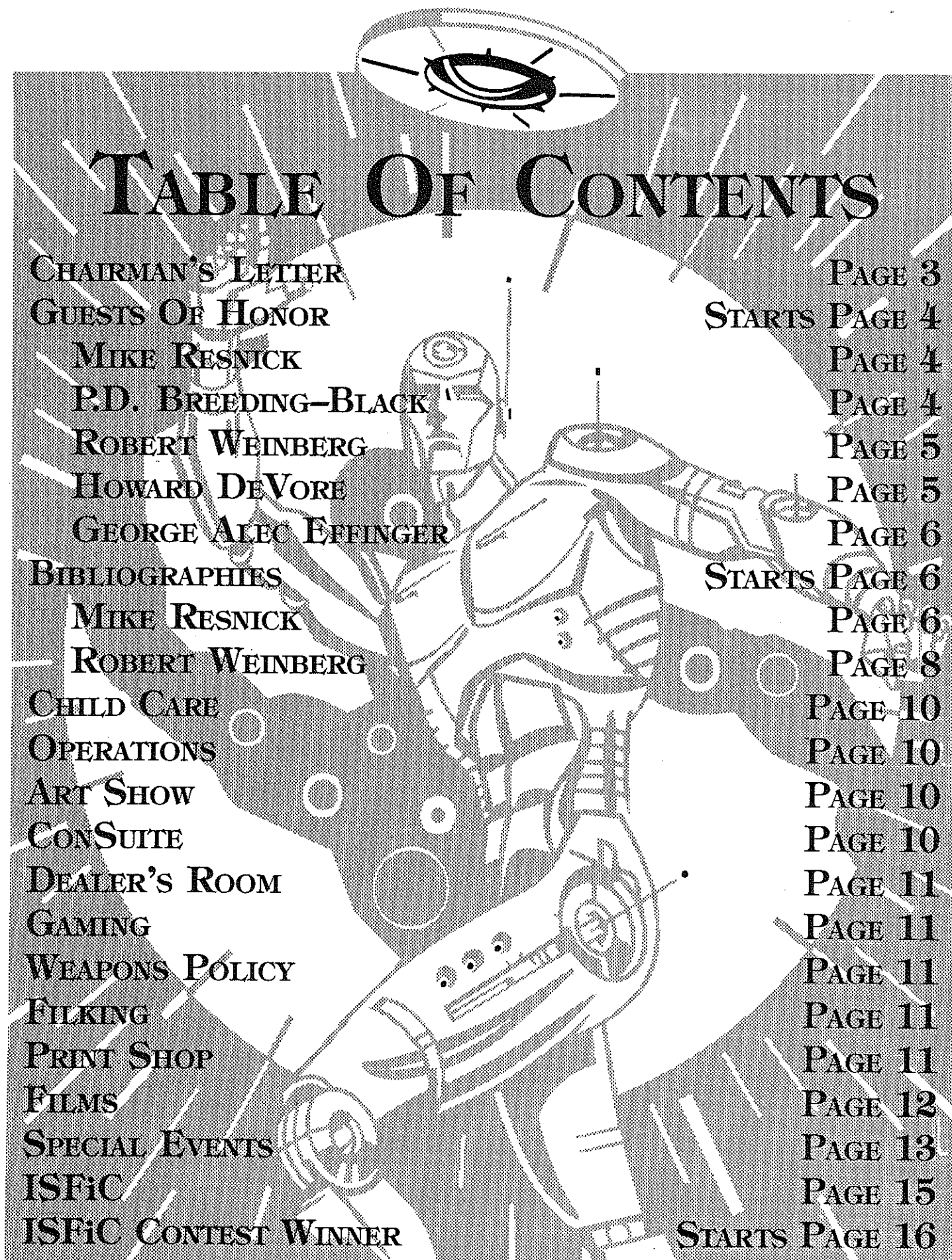


TABLE OF CONTENTS	
CHAIRMAN'S LETTER	PAGE 3
GUESTS OF HONOR	STARTS PAGE 4
MIKE RESNICK	PAGE 4
P.D. BREEDING-BLACK	PAGE 4
ROBERT WEINBERG	PAGE 5
HOWARD DEVORE	PAGE 5
GEORGE ALEC EFFINGER	PAGE 6
BIBLIOGRAPHIES	STARTS PAGE 6
MIKE RESNICK	PAGE 6
ROBERT WEINBERG	PAGE 8
CHILD CARE	PAGE 10
OPERATIONS	PAGE 10
ART SHOW	PAGE 10
CONSUITE	PAGE 10
DEALER'S ROOM	PAGE 11
GAMING	PAGE 11
WEAPONS POLICY	PAGE 11
FILKING	PAGE 11
PRINT SHOP	PAGE 11
FILMS	PAGE 12
SPECIAL EVENTS	PAGE 13
ISFiC	PAGE 15
ISFiC CONTEST WINNER	STARTS PAGE 16

WELCOME TO WINDYCON XVIII!

First off, I'd like to thank our Guests of Honor for gracing us with their presence this year. Be sure to search them out and say hello at some point this weekend. They're not only beautiful and talented, but friendly as well. Thanks also to all the other guests, the program participants, and the concom for all the blood, sweat and tears they've dripped all over this convention. We all appreciate it, but hope you clean up after yourselves.

As I sat down to write this, I realized that I've been in fandom for thirteen years. I've been to 65 conventions, for a total of 214 days spent wandering around strange hotel corridors. That's 7 months and 4 days...a not inconsiderable amount of time! But when you add in all the rest of the time spent doing fanzines, organizing cons, and general fannish running around, well, the mind boggles.

It's the people, of course. You're a fascinating group...cranky, easygoing, serious, silly, curious, maddening, open minded, hilarious, kind, loving, fun. You're some of my best friends in the whole world. You're where I found my husband. So, if you're a long time fan, pause a moment and think of your friends, then tell them how much you appreciate them. That's something we don't do often enough. And if this is your first con, jump right in—we're friendly and we don't bite (much).

Enough of the maudlin. I'm going to stand on my prerogative as Chairman now and insist that you adhere to the following:

1. No important body parts in the fish pond. Those goldfish bite HARD!
2. Do good.
3. Avoid evil.
4. Throw a party.
5. Have a very, very good time.

Marie L. Bartlett-Sloan
Chairman

In Memoriam
Gene Roddenberry
1921 - 1991
We will miss
"The Great Bird
of the Galaxy"

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THE GUESTS OF HONOR

Ordinarily, a friend or associate is asked to write a little something on a guest to fill this spot in the program book, but I thought I would try something a little different and try to tell you why I as Chairman chose these particular people as my guests. Read on.

MIKE RESNICK JUST DESSERTS.

This man is partly responsible for us being here. He was one of the founders of ISFiC, which is the parent organization of Windycon. (Others responsible include his wife Carol, the Aronsons, the Stopas, Larry Propp, Ann Cass, and Midge Reitan.). He was in charge of programming for Windycon 2, thus ensuring its success and continuing existence. Look all about you, at the art show, the dealers room, the gaming, the con suite, and the fans. This is his fault. His feeble attempt to escape to Cincinnati and become a dog farmer won't work. He won't, we can't, we must not let him forget it.

What's more, he's one of those fans who has made good...hailed off and become a successful writer, and even has a good start at his own rocket-shaped picket fence, having won Hugos for *Kirinyaga* and *The Manamouki*. Pleasant things to have, and useful too if he gets enough of them...he can keep the collies penned in.

How does a nice Joe Phann make this transition? Beauty? Talent? Bribes under the table? The love of a good woman? Blood, sweat and tears? (see Chairman's Letter, above) Talent, no doubt. Blood, sweat and tears too* Let's see.

Mr. Resnick is rumored to have attended the University of Chicago, where he is reported to have consistently received more remuneration for his literary efforts than the professor of his writing class. I can imagine that this did not endear him to that man. That time period produced such works as *The Goddess of Ganymede* and *Pursuit on Ganymede*. It is also rumored that during this general time period, Mr. Resnick wrote fictional works based on the emotional and physical interplay of men and women deeply under the influence of certain essential hormones. (I don't see them listed on his bibliography, so I must assume this is only a rumor...)

He wrote. He wrote lots. Magazine articles. Trash newspaper fill (thus showing an early leadership role in the composting movement). Screenplay treatments. Dog stories. Remember the old canard, "How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice?" Well, how do you get to the Nebula Banquet? He's done the practice part. He's been nominated. He's eaten the food. It's only a matter of time now.

I mean, after all, check out all the other awards he's won...The American Dog Writers Awards for Best Short Fiction (happily combining two careers...now there's efficiency!), the Hayakawa Award, the Japanese Hugo. Check out those wonderful titles..."*How I Wrote the New Testament, Brought Forth the Renaissance, and Birdied the*

17th Hole at Pebble Beach", "*Every Man a God*", "*Revolt of the Sugar Plum Fairies*". More than just a pretty title here. There's content and great ideas and a tasty writing style.

And far be it from me to neglect his editing skill. One of the funniest collections I have every read anywhere, anytime is *Shaggy B.E.M. Stories*. Those of you who have not had a chance to read this have missed a great time. Go find it.

Go find Mike Resnick and his work. Talk to the man. Read his stories. You're in for a treat. And don't let him forget he's responsible.

*And of course the love of a good woman!

P.D. BREEDING-BLACK SWEET. AND TALENTED TOO.

The first time I met Pat, she walked up to me and gave me a wonderful hug. I knew right then that this was a very open, very nice, very kind woman. I just smile when I think about it. She's a real people person.

Pat comes from a background in theater. She directed stage design down in Texas, among other things, and loves to perform. That probably explains why she likes to do auctioneering at art auctions. That's performing too.

But about 6 years ago or so, she made the transition to professional artist. Quite a transition and quite a gamble. The theater is not the most secure of job worlds, but that of professional artist is even less so. There's a sense of adventure here, perhaps, or a sense of new challenges. Most certainly there's a feeling that she has to do what's right for her. I admire that.

She owns her own business in partnership with her sister, doing the Renaissance Fair circuit selling prints and originals of her fantasy and medieval work. This means she's on the road about 9 months out of the year. But she loves it. As a big time people person this is a great way to be with people.

It's also doing what is right for her. Pat likes to do what Pat likes to do. You can call it stubborn or you can call it being a free spirit. Perhaps more correctly you can call it being herself.

Pat's a fan. Fans are weird. Pat's weirder than most. She is interested in weird stuff and strange things. She gets cleaned bones from tanners. She collects "stuff". She has an excuse. One of her relatives worked for William Randolph Hearst. He was Hearst's collector. What Hearst didn't want, this guy got. Pat grew up surrounded by William Randolph Hearst's sloppy seconds. Just imagine! (boggle, boggle, boggle, boggle)

Combining all the above, we get Pat working for Bard Books. It's a small gaming company. She does cover work for them and gets free reign. Lucky woman.

Pat's got a touch of the teacher in her too. She loves to do workshops teaching non-artists not to be afraid of the paper. Sort of an art for the non-artist type of thing. (Finger painting for the adult disinclined?)

One of her major goals is to raise the consciousness of the fine art community to the merits of fantasy and science fiction art. This is something that I feel is very

important. For example, consider the art show at Chicon V. I would imagine that we had perhaps as much as a million dollars of art on display, judging by the portion that I saw. The vast majority of it was of the highest quality, beautiful, wonderful work, too often dismissed as "that science fiction stuff". It isn't something that should be dismissed, and she's letting people know it.

Take the time to look this woman up and have a chat. You'll be glad you did!

ROBERT WEINBERG CHICAGO TREASURE

Bob Weinberg was born and raised in New Jersey. He graduated from Fairleigh Dickinson University in 1970 with a Master of Science Degree with Honors in Mathematics, but while at Fairleigh he had begun what would ultimately become his career...writing. He moved to Chicago in 1970 to begin work on a doctorate in mathematics at IIT and while there continued to write. In 1973 he married his wife Phyllis and shortly afterwards dropped out the doctoral program, having had it with nine straight years of school.

In 1973, he and Phyllis started Weinberg Books, a mail order catalog business specializing in science fiction, fantasy, and horror books. It is now the largest mail order company dealing in those genres.

Bob has long been regarded as one of the most knowledgeable people in our genre and this knowledge has stood him good stead in his editing career. Back in the mid-1970s he began editing anthologies for Pulp Press and Popular Library as well as several other houses. The standouts for me from that period are the Seabury Quinn anthologies. Those books introduced the most popular Weird Tales author to a whole new generation of readers, and to this day, my skin still crawls at the memory of some of those stories.

Since then, he has edited in the neighborhood of one hundred anthologies and collections, covering in addition to Quinn, the works of writers such as Bradbury, Gardner, Daly and Woolrich. He has co-edited several collections with Martin H. Greenberg and Stefan Dziemianowicz including *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* and (coming soon) *Hardboiled Detective*.

If this wasn't enough, in the fannish arena, he has edited the 1983 and 1990 World Fantasy Convention souvenir books.

It was because of the 1983 World Fantasy Convention that Bob began the swing back to fiction writing. In 1988, Owlswick picked up his first novel, *The Devil's Auction*, and he's been going strong ever since. He has a new book, *Black Lodge*, out this month, short stories appearing in several anthologies, a nonfiction book on Louis L'Amour, and a number of pieces in progress.

You might think that a person as busy as this man is might not have a lot of time or energy left for anything, but that is far from the case. He's a very warm and congenial person, easy to converse with, happy to share ideas. I remember fondly a conversation he and I had with Micky Zucker Reichert at last year's Capricon on the storage

possibilities of safety deposit boxes. (Don't ask...you had to be there.) Be sure to look this man up this weekend. He's a fine fan, a fine editor, a fine writer, and a fine man.

HOWARD DEVORE BON VIVANT, RACONTEUR, FAN NICE GUY.

I met Howard many years before I saw him. We met in the pages of *The Cult*. Now, *The Cult*, for those of you who haven't heard, is the second oldest apa in existence. It was founded some 40 odd (and I do mean odd) years ago by a 14 year old kid who declared there would be thirteen members who would publish thirteen times a year. Those thirteen came to be known as "the thirteen nastiest bastards in fandom". I'm proud to say that I have been one, and Howard is one too.

The membership of *The Cult* has changed a lot down through the years. George Scithers was a member for something like 25 of them. Others have included people like Terry Carr, Nancy Kress, Bruce Pelz, Mike Glycer, Ross Pavlac, Larry Propp, Joyce Scrivner, Dal Cogger, Catherine FitzSimmons and Yale Edeinken. And Howard.

You must understand that Howard has been deep into fannish publishing for lo these many years. Rumor has it that his garage is filled with old mimeos and small printing presses he has dug up at church sales and flea markets. Some of them even work! He has boxes and boxes of type, reams of twilltone, cardstock.

And speaking of cardstock... Howard is responsible for some of the most infamous cards in fannish history. Not just the printing but the contents as well. "Elephants at Stud - I Start 'Em, You Stop 'Em" is one of my favorites. But the best of all is the one he came up for Bob Tucker. What? You don't know about that one? Ask Howard!

He'll be easy to find. He's got a table in the dealer's room where he'll be holding court behind piles of pulps and old books. Not just used books but small press too.

Well, Howard got a lot more involved with *The Cult* once he retired a couple of years ago. He worked for many years in the Detroit Post Office. You can ask him about that if you like, but be prepared for LOTS of stories. Now he goes to cons and sells his stuff, pokes around in junk shops looking for old magazines, that sort of thing. And hangs out in *The Cult*.

So, ok, fine. Now I have to tell you about the first time we met. It was the 1986 Confusion. Kirby and I had slogged through the Midwestern Winter to throw one of the early Chicon V bid parties. It was of course, a success, and as successful parties go, there were some guests who just stayed and stayed and stayed, until there were just three people left in the room... me, Kirby and Howard. We must have talked until 4a.m., sitting cross-legged on the floor with a cold draft coming from under the drapes. But we were all pretty well-supplied with anti-freeze by that time so it didn't matter. Most of talk was from Howard about what fandom was like in the early days. It was fun and very, very fannish. But I was the first one to pack it in and Howard went off to party some more. And that was that.

In the next issue of *The Cult*, the real truth came out

Howard revealed his true gallantry. He admitted that as much as he wanted to throw Kirby out and lock the door, he didn't want the guy to get cold and hurt his hands scratching at the door all night. What a thoughtful guy! You all ought to get to know him!

GEORGE ALEC EFFINGER

Bon vivant, raconteur, writer, nice guy. How did this quiet, unassuming man from Cleveland, ghu help him, come to be known not only as Senor Excitement but one of the finest writers in the science fiction field today? Well, he's been working at it for a while. Damon Knight took him under his wing, and eventually bought his first story in 1970 for an Orbit anthology. George sold a couple of other short pieces, and then, in 1972, his first book, What Entropy Means to Me. It promptly garnered a Nebula nomination. Since then, he's managed to pick up both the Nebula and Hugo awards, and the Seiun award (or Japanese Hugo), among others.

I first met George at Nolacon, though he probably doesn't remember. He had the look of a fried man about him, having somehow gotten himself into working on the committee. As a matter of fact, it was he who rescued the pocket program when a computer trashed the file. Twenty-four hours of data entry later, the pocket program went to press just in time. Not too many other Big Name Spec Fic Writers would be willing to do something like that, or be silly enough.

But that's our George. He uploaded his latest novel onto Compuserve so he could get some feedback before the thing went to press. He goes to as many cons as he can because he likes fandom and fans. He founded a writers workshop in New Orleans, and teaches writing in adult education courses there. He raises birds. He offers toast to his cat.

He's also a gourmet. Ask him about his favorite restaurants. He'll wax enthusiastic about Antoine's. He enjoys Mongolian barbeque. And I am proud to say that he considers my homemade macaroni and cheese the finest he has ever eaten. (*blush*)

The third book in his series started by When Gravity Fails...Exile Kiss...is out now. If you haven't read any of these books, you're in for a treat. He has created a future so real, so detailed you can smell it, taste it, feel the sweat running down your back and dripping from your chin, close your eyes and still squint from the sun's glare. This stuff is caviar.

But he's not always serious. His humorous work, most notably the Maureen Birnbaum stories, are wacky enough to lay you in the aisle. It's not a sane man that comes up with Maureen and Maid Marion facing off at the Sherwood Forest Mall for a shopping duel. Or how about the classic "The Thing from the Slush" featuring his often offed character Sandor Courane surcumbing to the perils of the editing field. It must be this streak that led him to collaborate with Mike Resnick and Jack Chalker on their new novel, The Red Tape War. This is a round robin effort, guys, with each one contributing a chapter in turn and each one trying their damndest to paint the others into a

corner. I guess what I am trying to say is this is a man of many facets and no facades. I'm proud to call him my friend. Get to know him. He's a great guy.

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SON...)

DEATH IS AN ACQUIRED TRAIT:
U.S.A. (Argos #1); U.S.A. (WILL THE LAST PERSON...)

THE CRACK IN THE COSMIC EGG:
U.S.A. (Argos #2); U.S.A. (Pulphouse weekly); U.S.A. (WILL THE LAST
PERSON...)

INQUIRY INTO THE AUCTION OF THE U.S.A.:
U.S.A. (Pulphouse #2)

FOR I HAVE TOUCHED THE SKY:
U.S.A. (December, 1989 F&SF); U.S.A. (THROUGH DARKEST
RESNICK); Japan (Hayakawa SF); U.S.A. (THE YEAR'S BEST SF, 7TH
SERIES); U.S.A. (NEBULA AWARDS STORIES #25); U.S.A. (WILL THE
LAST PERSON...); U.S.A. (Pulphouse)

SLICE OF LIFE:
U.S.A. (Twilight Zone)

BALANCE:
U.S.A. (FOUNDATION'S FRIENDS); U.S.A. (THE ALIEN HEART)

Continued on next page

BWANA:
U.S.A. (January, 1990 Asimov's); Japan (Hayakawa SF); U.S.A. (Tor Double)

NEUTRAL GROUND:
U.S.A. (THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF BATMAN)

HOW I WROTE THE NEW TESTAMENT, BROUGHT FORTH THE RENAISSANCE, AND BIRDIED THE 17TH HOLE AT PEBBLE BEACH:
U.S.A. (June/July, 1990 Arboriginal SF); England (TALES OF THE WANDERING JEW); U.S.A. (WILL THE LAST PERSON...)

WAS IT GOOD FOR YOU TOO?:
U.S.A. (Pulsar #15); U.S.A. (WILL THE LAST PERSON...)

THE MANAMOUKI:
U.S.A. (JULY, 1990 Asimov's); U.S.A. (STALKING THE WILD RESNICK); Japan (Hayakawa SF); U.S.A. (Pulphouse)

ONE PERFECT MORNING, WITH JACKALS:
U.S.A. (Asimov's); U.S.A. (THE ALIEN HEART); Japan (Hayakawa SF)

FRANKIE THE SPOOK:
U.S.A. (October, 1990 F&SF); U.S.A. (THE ALIEN HEART); Poland (Fantastyka); Germany (Laurin Verlags; U.S.A. (WILL THE LAST PERSON...)

POSTIME IN PINK:
U.S.A. (NEWER YORK); U.S.A. (PINK ELEPHANTS AND HAIRY TOADS); U.S.A. (Pulphouse Weekly); Japan: (Hayakawa SF); U.S.A. (WILL THE LAST PERSON...)

MUSEUM PIECE:
U.S.A. (THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF THE JOKER)

ORIGINS:
U.S.A. (DICK TRACY: THE SECRET FILES)

THE NINE LIVES OF ISAAC INTREPID:
U.S.A. (Starshore)

PAWNS:
U.S.A. (THE FLEET, VOL. VI)

BULLY!
U.S.A. (AXOLOTL PRESS); U.S.A. (Asimov's); U.S.A. (STALKING THE WILD RESNICK); U.S.A. (Tor Double)

EXCERPT FROM THE DIARY OF DR. MORRIS FINKLESTEIN:
U.S.A. (THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN)

SONG OF A DRY RIVER:
U.S.A. (Asimov's); U.S.A. (STALKING THE WILD RESNICK); Japan: (Hayakawa SF)

WINTER SOLSTICE:
U.S.A. (F&SF); U.S.A. (WILL THE LAST PERSON...)

A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC:
U.S.A. (THE ULTIMATE DRACULA)

MONSTERS OF THE MIDWAY:
U.S.A. (THE ULTIMATE FRANKENSTEIN); U.S.A. (WILL THE LAST PERSON...)

THE BULL MOOSE AT BAY:
U.S.A. (Asimov's); U.S.A. (ALTERNATE PRESIDENTS)

MRS. HOOD UNLOADS:
U.S.A. (THE FANTASTIC ROBIN HOOD); U.S.A. (WILL THE LAST PERSON...)

OVER THERE:
U.S.A. (Asimov's); U.S.A. (WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN, V.3: ALTERNATE WARS); U.S.A. (WILL THE LAST PERSON...)

REVOLT OF THE SUGAR PLUM FAIRIES:
U.S.A. (AFTER THE KING); U.S.A. (WILL THE LAST PERSON...)

CLASSIFIEDS:
U.S.A. (Analog)

MALISH:
U.S.A. (HORSEFANTASTIC); U.S.A. (Pulphouse Weekly); U.S.A. (WILL THE LAST PERSON...)

TRADING UP (collaboration with Barbara Delaplace):
U.S.A. (STAR CENTRAL)

WILL THE LAST PERSON TO LEAVE THE PLANET PLEASE SHUT OFF THE SUN?:
U.S.A. (FUNNY FANTASIES, as "Final Solution"); U.S.A. (WILL THE LAST PERSON...)

EDITOR MEACHAM AND THE FATE WORSE THAN DEATH:
U.S.A. (SWASHBUCKLING EDITOR STORIES)

THE LIGHT THAT BLINDS, THE CLAWS THAT CATCH:
U.S.A. (Asimov's); U.S.A. (WILL THE LAST PERSON...)

THE LOTUS AND THE SPEAR:
U.S.A. (Asimov's)

THE PALE THIN GOD:
U.S.A. (XANADU)

LADY IN WAITING:
U.S.A. (ALTERNATE KENNEDYS)

THE B TEAM:
U.S.A. (GODS AT WAR)

EVERY MAN A GOD: U.S.A. (RIVERWORLD ANTHOLOGY) (collaboration with Barry Malzberg)

AWARDS:

Hugo winners: KIRINYAGA, THE MANAMOUKI
Hugo nominees: KIRINYAGA, FOR I HAVE TOUCHED THE SKY, BULLY! THE MANAMOUKI
Nebula nominees: KIRINYAGA, FOR I HAVE TOUCHED THE SKY, IVORY, THE MANAMOUKI
Clarke (British) nominees: IVORY
Hayakawa SF winner: FOR I HAVE TOUCHED THE SKY
Homer winner: THE MANAMOUKI
American Dog Writers Awards for Best Short Fiction: THE LAST DOG, BLUE
SF Chronicle Poll winners: KIRINYAGA, FOR I HAVE TOUCHED THE SKY
Japanese Hugo nominees: FOR I HAVE TOUCHED THE SKY, BWANA
Homer Runners-Up: BULLY!, BWANA, HOW I WROTE THE NEW TESTAMENT, BROUGHT FORTH THE RENAISSANCE, AND BIRDIED THE 17TH HOLE AT PEBBLE BEACH

EDITED BY ROBERT WEINBERG

Anthologies and single-author collections in the science fiction, fantasy, horror and mystery fields:

WT 50 [anthology] – (Pulp Press), 1974

REVELRY IN HELL [anthology] – (Pulp Press), 1974

THE MAN BEHIND DOC SAVAGE [anthology] – (Pulp Press), 1974

DR SATAN [anthology] – (Pulp Press), 1974

FAR BELOW & OTHER HORRORS [anthology] – (FAX Collectors Editions), 1974

FAMOUS FANTASTIC CLASSICS #1 [anthology] – (FAX Collectors Editions), 1974

THE BRIDE OF OSIRIS by Otis Adelbert Kline – (Pulp Press), 1975

LOOT OF THE VAMPIRE by Thorp McClusky – (Pulp Press), 1975

FAMOUS FANTASTIC CLASSICS #2 [anthology] – (FAX Collectors Editions), 1975

FAMOUS PULP CLASSICS #1 [anthology] – (FAX Collectors Editions), 1975

THE GARGOYLE by Grege La Spina – (Pulp Press), 1975

THE ANGEL [anthology] – (Pulp Press), 1975

THE ADVENTURES OF JULES DE GRANDIN by Seabury Quinn – (Popular Library, 1976)

THE CASEBOOK OF JULES DE GRANDIN by Seabury Quinn – (Popular Library), 1976

THE DEVIL'S BRIDE by Seabury Quinn – (Popular Library), 1976

THE HELLFIRE FILES OF JULES DE GRANDIN by Seabury Quinn – (Popular Library), 1976

Continued on next page!

LOST FANTASIES #4 [anthology] – (Pulp Press), 1976

DEATH ORCHIDS [anthology] – (Pulp Press), 1976

THE HORROR CHAMBERGS OF JULES DE GRANDIN by Seabury Quinn – (Popular Library), 1977

THE CORPSE FACTORY [anthology] – (Pulp Press), 1977

SATAN'S ROADHOUSE [anthology] – (Pulp Press), 1977

THE CHAIR WHERE TERROR SAT [anthology] – (Pulp Press), 1977

LOST FANTASIES #5 [anthology] – (Pulp Press), 1977

LOST FANTASIES #6 [anthology] – (Pulp Press), 1977

I FOUND CLEOPATRA by Thomas P. Kelley – (FAX Collectors Editions), 1977

DREADFUL SLEEP by Jack Williamson – (Pulp Press), 1977

THE LAKE OF LIFE & OTHERS [anthology] – (Pulp Press), 1978

HADES & HOCUS POCUS by Lester Dent – (Pulp Press), 1979

DEVILS IN THE DARK [anthology] – (Pulp Press), 1979

SLAVES OF THE BLOOD WOLVES [anthology] – (Pulp Press), 1979

DANCE OF THE SKELETONS [anthology] – (Pulp Press), 1980

THE DEATH DEALERS [anthology] – (Pulp Press), 1980

1983 WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION BOOK – 1983

A MEMORY OF MURDER by Ray Bradbury – (Dell), 1984

THE HEADS OF CERBERUS by Francis Stevens – (Carroll & Graf), 1984

THE CITADEL OF FEAR by Francis Stevens – (Carroll & Graf), 1984

CLAIMED by Francis Stevens – (Carroll & Graf), 1985

BLIND DATE WITH DEATH by Cornell Woolrich – (Carroll & Graf), 1985

VAMPIRE'S HONEYMOON by Cornell Woolrich – (Carroll & Graf), 1985

THE ADVENTURES OF MAX LATIN by Norbert Davis – (Mysterious Press), 1988

THE ADVENTURES OF SATAN HALL by Carroll John Daly – (Mysterious Press), 1988

THE ADVENTURES OF MIKE BLAIR by Hank Searls – (Mysterious Press), 1988

THE ADVENTURES OF CARDIGAN by Frederick Nebel – (Mysterious Press), 1988

THE ADVENTURES OF RACE WILLIAMS by Carroll John Daly – (Mysterious Press), 1989

THE ADVENTURES OF PAUL PRY by Erle Stanley Gardner – (Mysterious Press), 1990

DEAD MEN'S LETTERS by Erle Stanley Gardner – (Carroll & Graf), 1990

THE EIGHTH GREEN MAN & OTHER STRANGE FOLK [anthology] – (Starmont House), 1989

1990 WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION PROGRAM BOOK – 1990

HONEST MONEY by Erle Stanley Gardner – (Carroll & Graf), 1991

RED TWILIGHT [anthology] – (Starmont House), 1991

WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS [anthology] – (Starmont House) – (forthcoming)

....within Martin H. Greenberg
LOVECRAFT'S LEGACY [anthology] – TOR 1990

...with Martin H. Greenberg & Stefan R. Dziemianowicz
WEIRD TALES, 32 UNEARTHED TERRORS [anthology] – (Bonanza), 1988

RIVALS OF WEIRD TALES – (Bonanza), 1990

FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES – (Grammercy), 1991

HARDBOILED DETECTIVES – Outlet (December 1991)

WEIRD VAMPIRE TALES – Outlet (Spring 1992)

ROBERT WEINBERG IS THE AUTHOR OF:
(NON-FICTION)

THE WEIRD TALES STORY (1978 World Fantasy Award Winner) – (FAX Collectors Editions), 1977

THE ANNOTATED GUIDE TO ROBERT E. HOWARD – (FAX Collectors), 1978

THE BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY ARTISTS (1989 World Fantasy Award Winner) – (Greenwood Press), 1988

THE LOUIS L'ARMOUR COMPANION – (Andrews & McMeel) – (forthcoming, Spring 1992)

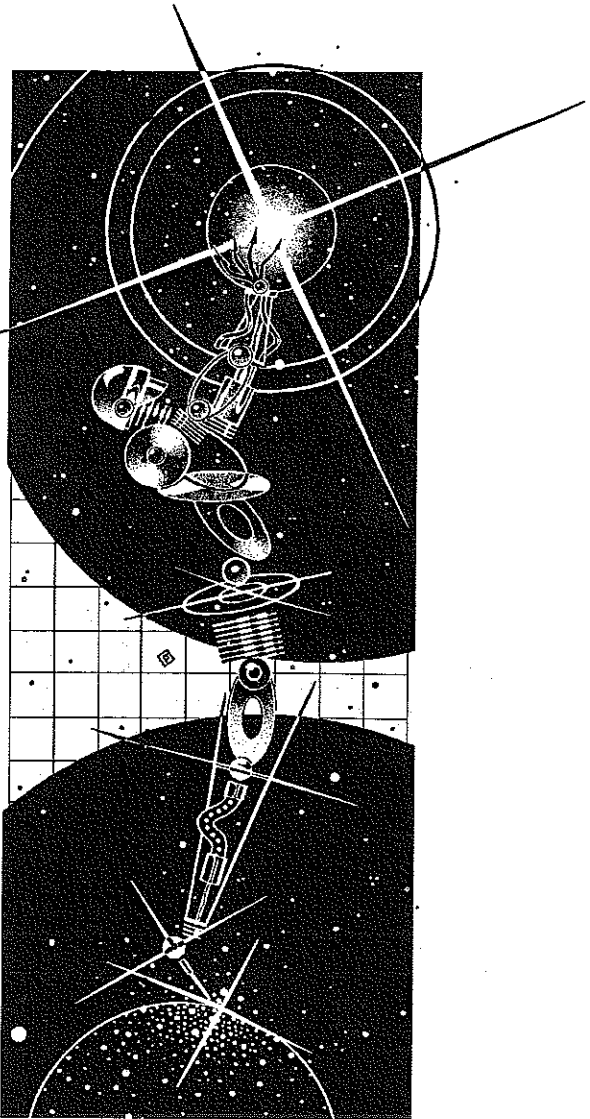
(FICTION)

THE DEVIL'S AUCTION – (Owlswick Press), 1988

THE ARMAGEDDON BOX – (Leisure Books), 1991

THE BLACK LODGE – (Pocket Books), 1991

THE DEAD MAN'S KISS – (Pocket Books) – (forthcoming, 1992)



CHILD CARE SERVICE

(KID'S CON SUITE)

Yes, folks, we will once again take care of your tiny (and not-so-tiny) tots and tot-ettes (ages 6 months to 10 years) while you enjoy the con. Professional child care will be available from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon. Check your Pocket Program for details.

OPERATIONS

Conventions such as Windycon don't work by themselves. They need able-bodied people to help run it smoothly. If you feel you would like to help, please stop by Operations and give us a hand. We are located in the Schaumburg Room. Workers will receive membership refunds as well as a few surprises. Come and be a part of the behind-the-scenes of a smoothly run Windycon. We'd love to see you help us all enjoy the con.

Thanks,
Bill Krucek and
Kathy Nerat

ART SHOW

This year the Windycon Art Show will be better than ever. We are again going to have an artists' studio demo area and are making arrangements for a print shop. Both of these are in addition to our regular, excellent art show, of course.

Art Show rules will be similar to past years'. For further information, look in your Pocket Program.

Vicki Bone

CONSUITE

Well, folks we made it past the Worldcon and survived! (sort of). The Windycon ConSuite will be open its usual late hours:

From 3p.m. until 5 or 6a.m. Friday

From noon on Saturday until 5 or 6a.m.

From noon on Sunday until ???

We will have the usual consumables, and possibly some unusual ones, too! The golden liquid (bheer) will be available from 5p.m. until 3a.m. on Friday, from 5p.m. until 4a.m. on Saturday and from noon on Sunday until the ConSuite closes. We have had some problems with our guests becoming over-served, so the Convention decided to limit the hours that bheer was being distributed.

Be aware, also that the legal drinking age in the State of Illinois is 21.

The convention badges will be color coded, but please don't feel offended if someone on the ConSuite staff for further ID, with increased awareness of alcohol problems, we're just covering ourselves from problems with the BLUE MEANIES.

The ConSuite staff would also like to issue an urgent plea—~~beg~~—for anyone who would like to work in the ConSuite during the convention. If you would like to work with our merry band of ~~maniacs~~ people, please see us in the ConSuite after you have registered, our see Operations and tell them you want to work in the ConSuite. Especially appreciated would be people over the legal drinking age to assist in the distribution of bheer. We would ask, however, that anyone volunteering for this job refrain from ingestion of the golden substance until their shift is over.

We will be in the same suite that we have had in previous years, and it will remain a non-smoking ConSuite. Smoking will be allowed in the elevator lobby on the 5th floor.

Come up and see us during the convention, it promises to be the usual crazy time!

DEALER'S ROOM

Once again, the Dealer's Room is located in the Mayoral Ballroom, on the lower level of the hotel. There are seventy tables of merchandise, where approximately forty dealers are presenting their wares for your perusal. Remember that it is not too early to begin Christmas shopping for your fannish friends. (And that it's never too early to begin Christmas shopping for yourself!)

Hours of Operation

Friday: 3p.m. - 7p.m.

Saturday: 10a.m. - 6p.m.

Sunday: 11a.m. - 3p.m.

Smoking will NOT be permitted in the Dealer's Room. Eating and drinking in the room are also no-no's (except for the Dealers while they are behind their own table).

At press time, a listing of dealers and dealer room layout was not available.

Mike Jencevice

GAMING

Yes. Probably lots and very late. Please check your Pocket Program. Our thanks to the people at Software Plus for once again donating their services for this year's Computer room.

WEAPONS POLICY

Past incidents have forced us to adopt a strict policy concerning weapons. Consequently, no real or realistic-looking weapons will be allowed anywhere at Windycon. Such weapons cannot be worn or displayed in any way, at any time, and their sale is prohibited.

Violators of Windycon's weapons policy will be required to relinquish their weapons for the duration of the con, or surrender their memberships. In all matters regarding weapons and the enforcement of this policy, the Windycon Committee reserves the right to be completely and viciously arbitrary.

FILKING

Yes, there will be filking at Windycon. We'll be back in the usual room (Arlington Heights) starting around 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday nights. Bring an instrument and/or voice and have a good time.

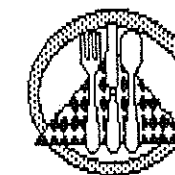
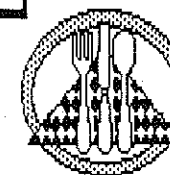
PRINT SHOP

The Print Shop run by, Denise Clift assisted by Pat Feldman, Juanita Nesbitt and Lynn Fancher, will be open,

Friday: 12p.m. - 8p.m.

Saturday: 10a.m. - 8p.m.

Sunday: 10a.m. - 3p.m.



Crumpets Cafe Welcomes Windycon XVIII

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8

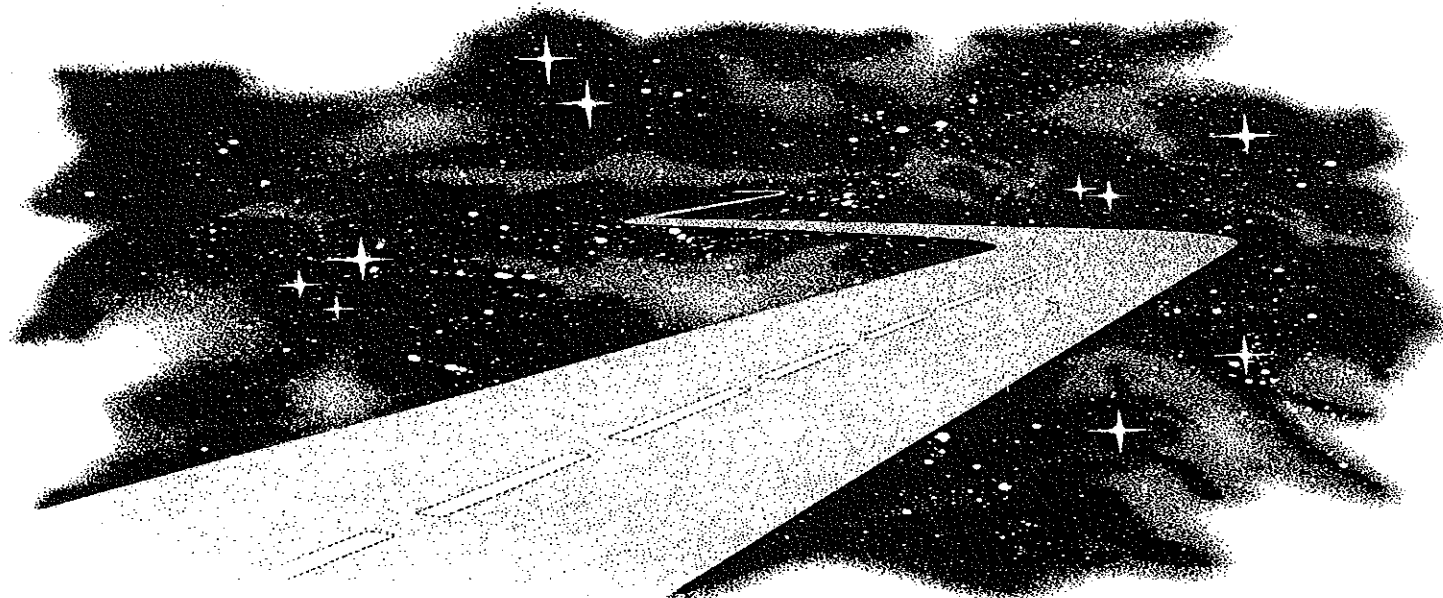
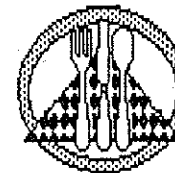
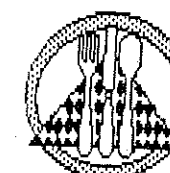
A.M. - Breakfast Buffet & A la Carte
Lunch - Salad Bar & A la Carte
P.M. - Fajita Buffet beginning at 5:00 p.m.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9

A.M. - Breakfast Buffet & A la Carte
Lunch - Salad Bar & A la Carte
P.M. - Cluckers Buffet beginning at 5:00 p.m.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10

7:00 a.m. - 12 noon - Breakfast A la Carte
9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. - Country Breakfast Buffet
12 noon - 12 midnight - A la Carte Menu



FILMS

Join us as we once again try to figure out what you want to see. We'll be bringing you recent Blockbusters and some old favorites as they were meant to be seen- On The Big Screen. All times are approximate.

Friday, November 8

4:00p.m. *The Muppet Movie* (1979) Kermit, Fozzie, Miss Piggy and the gang set out to find fame and fortune in Hollywood. We miss you Jim Henson.

5:45p.m. *Brazil* (1985) The twisted tale of an everyman caught in the bureaucratic gears of a world only Terry Gilliam could create.

8:00p.m. *Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey* (1991) Death steals the show as those most bodacious dudes go to Hell, Heaven and beyond in their quest to regain their lives, rescue the babes, and win *The Battle of the Bands*.

9:45p.m. *Star Trek II, The Wrath of Khan* (1982) Our concession to the 25th Anniversary hysteria. Well worth seeing again, especially in CinemaScope™ Wide-Screen Format!

11:45p.m. *Robot Jox* (1990) Battletech fans, eat your hearts out! It is the Future, and war is outlawed. All disputes between the superpowers are settled by single combat between... *The Robot Jox*

1:20p.m. T.B.A. *Trust Us...* Let it be a surprise!

2:45a.m. *Plan Nine From Outer Space* (1959) Voted "The Worst Film Of All Time". Night turns into Day, Fords turn into Chevys, Bela Lugosi turns into an unemployed Chiropractor, and the Earth is invaded by flying pie plates on strings. Screamingly Funny!!!!!!!!!!!!

4:10a.m. *Dracula* (1931) back when Lugosi was still occasionally sober. His definitive portrayal of the Count became a screen classic.

Saturday, November 9

The Star Wars Trilogy Next year marks the 15th Anniversary of *Star Wars* release. So we show all three films as they were meant to be seen - in CinemaScope™ Wide-Screen Format.

12:00p.m. *Star Wars* (1977)

2:00p.m. *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980)

4:00p.m. *Return Of The Jedi* (1983)

6:30 - 11:30p.m. Break For Auction

11:45p.m. *Terminator II* (1991) Last Summer's Blockbuster Hit stars Arnold as a good guy, Linda Hamilton takes a page from Sigorney Weaver's book and lots of explosions.

2:25a.m. *Outland* (1981) Sean Connery is the one good cop at a mining base and the bad guys are on the next shuttle... High Noon in Outer Space.

3:30a.m. *Robot Monster* (1953) What do you do if you have this great idea for a monster movie, but no monster? If you're Phil Tucker, and you know a guy with a gorilla suit, you slap a diving helmet on him and unwittingly create "The Most Ridiculous Monster In Screen History".

Sunday, November 11

9:45p.m. *Star Trek II, The Wrath of Khan* (1982)* Encore showing (See Friday, 9:45p.m.)

11:45p.m. *Terminator II* (1991) Encore showing (See Saturday, 11:45p.m.)

Plus our usual collection of shorts, clips, cartoons and other surprises. Stop by the Ballroom for updates or check our pocket program.

SPECIAL EVENTS

FRIDAY

Opening Ceremonies - A great way to start the convention!

Fannish Feud - Competing teams of four try to guess the results of a SF survey conducted at Chicon V. Music will be provided by the Windycon Staff Kazoo Orchestra.

SATURDAY

Masquerade - The costume artists take the stage! This year's theme: Robots and Cyborgs and 'Droids OH MY!

Bizarre Bazaar - Dance 'til your protons decay!

FANNISH FEUD

Friday Evening, Regency Ballroom A-D

Do you know how fandom thinks? Compete in Fannish Feud to win valuable prizes. Or join the audience and enjoy the show.

MASQUERADE

8:00p.m. Saturday, Regency Ballroom A-D

Theme: Robots and Cyborgs and 'Droids OH MY!

This year we are having a full Saturday Night Masquerade with a stage for your viewing pleasure. We have also enlarged the audience seating area to accommodate the traditionally excellent turnout.

Masquerade Winners will be announced 1 hour after the masquerade ends during an intermission of the dance. There will be a Special Prize for The Best Non-Organic Being.

Masquerade participant meeting: 3:00p.m. Saturday, Rolling Meadows

This meeting is for participants and their assistants only. Workmanship judging can be done at this time if bringing the costume is practical and will not detract from the participant's presentation. (The costume can be brought on a covered hanger, for example) Otherwise workmanship judging will take place at the Masquerade.

Masquerade participants are expected to come to the Rolling Meadows Room at 7:00p.m. Saturday, in costume for Polaroid photos and general preparation for presentation.

MASQUERADE RULES

1. Participants must attend the Masquerade Meeting at 3:00p.m. Saturday in the Rolling Meadows room.
2. A presentation is limited to 60 seconds (90 seconds for groups) unless you can prove to us that it will not be boring.
3. No open flame, projectiles or exploding penguins.
4. Only the MC has a microphone - Please bring a pre-recorded cassette tape for your sound.
5. Participants arriving after 7:30p.m. may be disqualified (Sorry).
6. Workmanship judging can be done either at the Masquerade Meeting or at the Masquerade participant arrival time.
7. If you want an exception to any of these rules - Ask us (Robert King or Nancy Mildebrant) at or before the Masquerade Meeting and we'll see what can be arranged.

The Masquerade Committee expresses deep thanks to Jeff Berry and The MDX Rainhill for the light and sound systems, plus the Special Assistants and Gophers who make things happen.

BIZARRE BAZAAR

Theme: Robots and Cyborgs and 'Droids OH MY!

10:00p.m. Saturday, Regency Ballroom A-D

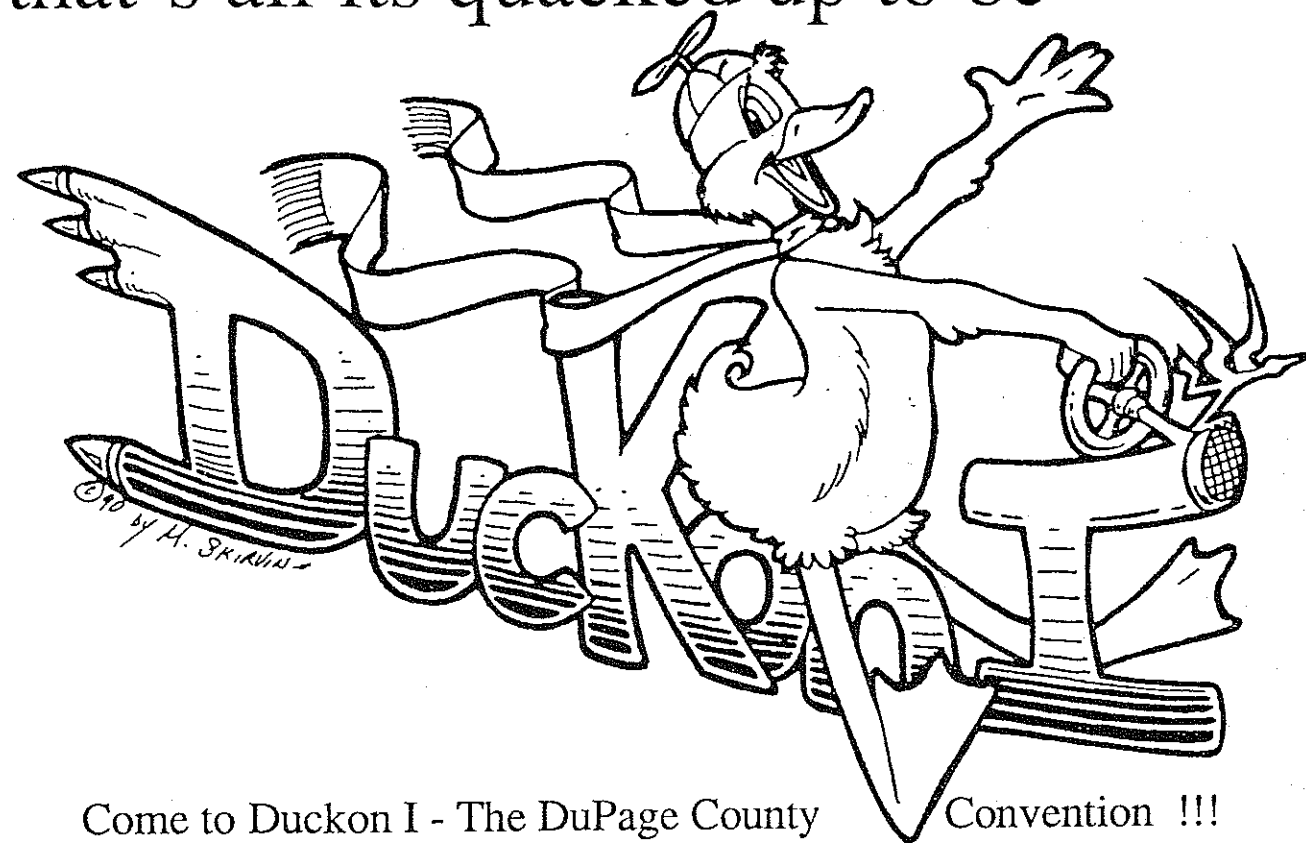
Join us immediately after the Masquerade in the Regency Ballroom A-D for the Dance. Jeff Sparrow is our DJ for the evening. Both organic and non-organic beings should drop by to shake their rivets.

Special thanks to Michelle Solomon for her decoration finesse, Jeff Sparrow for his famous DJ skills, Jeff Berry and The MDX Rainhill (again) for the light and sound systems and the Special Assistants and Gophers that "make it so".

Thanks to all who helped pull this together!

Robert King
Nancy Mildebrant

"Come to Chicagoland for a convention
that's all its quacked up to be -"



Come to Duckon I - The DuPage County Convention !!!
(DuPage County SF Convention: A proDUCKtion of SUPERCONDUCKTIVITY)
We have no shame

Author Guest of Honor: Lois Tilton

Artist Guest of Honor: Mary Lynn Skirvin Johnson

Mad Scientist Guests of Honor: Todd Johnson & the GT Crew

Fan Guest of Honor: YOU! (if your name is drawn from pre-reg)

Activities include: Mad Scientist program-
ming track, Art Show, Masquerade, Dance,
Mike Jittlov film festival, Gaming, Bad Pun
Contest, Bridge Vampire Gathering, DTV,
Filking, Video Room, Hall of Huxters,
Hospitality Suite, Dead Duck Party, and
Klingon Love Poetry(w/heavy objects).

General Technics Berserker!
Hotel: OAKBROOK MARIOTT
approx \$58 per night, has EXCELLENT
POOL/SAUNA/JACUZZI !!
MEMBERSHIPS \$25 TILL DEC. 1, 1991;
\$30 TILL APR. 1, 1992; \$35 At The Door
Children-in-tow (under 7) free
Child Care available (write)



Fan GOH selected by random drawing from pre-registered member list on April 15, 1991.
Masquerade prize for the most creative use of Duck Tape!!
Dead Author GOH: H.P. Lovecraft
Dead Mad Scientist GOH: Nikola Tesla
A Dance - With music you can DANCE to !!!
Mystery Science Theatre 3000 Fandom
Elvis and his flying saucers are coming
Do not eat. This is not a water toy.

DuPage Fandom
Purrry Fandom
Silly Flyer Fandom
Party Fandom
Fine Print Fandom

For memberships and information write: DucKon I
P.O.Box 4843
Wheaton, IL 60189

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MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND - MAY 22-24, 1992

WHAT IS ISFiC?

"What's an ISFiC?" may not be the most popular party question at Windycon, but it does make for an excellent trivia question. Most fans, even in Chicago, are only vaguely aware that ISFiC exists.

ISFiC is the Illinois Science Fiction in Chicago, and is best known in its role as the parent body of Windycon.

But there's more to ISFiC than that.

ISFiC was formed in the early 1970's a period of great change in convention-running in SF fandom. The number of regional conventions was exploding, and it seemed every couple of months a new city would announce that henceforth they would be hosting an annual regional convention. In the course of about five years, the number of SF cons more than tripled.

Windycon was one of the conventions that led this surge. In 1973, Chicago fans felt frustrated at being in the second largest city in the country, right in the center of the Heartland, and nothing resembling a regional con existed nearer than Minneapolis. Since the Chicon III Worldcon in the early sixties, Chicago fandom had splintered, and there wasn't really a strong local club to serve as a focal point for a con committee, as was the case in Boston, Los Angeles, and other cities.

The Chicago fans then hit upon an idea -- if a coalition of people from the various factions and clubs could work together on a local con, then a large single large local club wouldn't be needed. Thus was born Windycon. ISFiC was created as part of this process, to provide continuity in leadership and overall guidance.

But the vision for ISFiC and Chicago fandom went far beyond creating a regional con. Though the initial thoughts were vague, the idea was that ISFiC would act as a sort of clearing house organization for fan activities in Illinois, and do things to support fandom in general.

As with many fanish actions, there was also an ulterior motive. ISFiC's founders, notably Larry Propp, Mark and Lynn Aronson, and Ann Cass, very carefully crafted things as a staging ground to prepare for a Worldcon bid. Their idea was to have Windycon not only publicize Chicago's name, but also to act as a training ground for local fans in preparation for a Worldcon bid. Their idea was to have Windycon not only publicize Chicago's name, but also to act as a training ground for local fans in preparation for a Worldcon. The other ISFiC founders, including Jon and Joni Stopa and Mike and Carol Resnick, supported the idea. Chicon IV, the 1982 World Science Fiction Convention, came to fruition as a result of this (though Chicon IV and Chicon V, the 1991 Worldcon, are separately incorporated and are not directly affiliated with ISFiC).

The early Windycons grew rapidly under such chairmen as Mark and Lynn Aronson, Larry Propp, Doug Rice, and Midge Reitan. Most of the Windycon staff worked on Chicon IV, and learned even more from that.

After Chicon IV, there was a lot of re-assessment of both Windycon and ISFiC. Having attained the goal of building an ongoing committee that could run Windycon

from year to year (at least, as much as any local group can be said to do that), ISFiC thought about what could be done to make Windycon a better convention.

One factor in this was that Windycon's excess funds were starting to pile up. As a 501c(3) corporation, ISFiC is supposed to use excess funds for the benefit of fandom. So rather than let the money pile up or buy clubhouses, ISFiC decided to put the money back into Windycon in creative ways.

One way was in providing grants to Windycon to bring in special guests over and above the normal guests of honor. In this manner, Windycon was able to compensate for the fact that most SF authors and editors live on the East and West coasts. Once we started bringing in authors and editors, many liked Windycon so much that they have continued coming back of their own accord.

Another successful ISFiC project is the ISFiC Writer's Contest, which is to encourage new writers. It is unique in offering as first prize a one-ounce bar of gold, thanks to the brainstorm of former ISFiC board member Curt Clemmer.

Once each summer, ISFiC sponsors a picnic in a Chicago park as a gathering for Chicago fandom.

Windycon is not the only activity ISFiC is involved in. Support has been provided to other Illinois conventions that have an SF, fantasy, or space travel theme. In some cases, the Windycon art show hangings are rented for a nominal fee (to cover maintenance and upkeep costs). In other cases, grants are provided to bring in special guests. ISFiC is always interested in hearing from groups running Illinois conventions who have a specific project they would like some assistance with.

The ISFiC board of directors has nine members, with three directors coming up for re-election each year for a three year term. Any Illinois fan is eligible to be elected; come to the ISFiC board meeting at Windycon (held on Sunday afternoon) and nominate yourself.

Meetings of the ISFiC board are normally held at Windycon and Capricorn. The meetings are open to the public.

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SOUL TO TAKE

VANESSA CROUTHER

...My head is splitting...

"Damn this shit."

He dreamed again last night.

...What a little fool...

"It's a good thing no one can see you, crying like a baby."

...Remember, it's not real. Think clearly, boy, it's just a dream.

A roar exploded in his head.

"No! It's not real!" he screamed and covered his ears,

"No! Stop this now.. ya hear me?, it's not happening!"

Gino fumbled through his jacket for a cigarette. When he didn't find one he started rummaging through the pile of rags that he used for a bed. He found an old half crumbled menthol. He stuck the cigarette in his mouth and pulled out his gold-plated lighter from his right jeans pocket.

He then performed the ritual: tossing the lighter in the air twice he caught it in his left hand. He flicked his thumb up to open it and down to light it. A spectacular display that took less than 30 seconds, something he used to do all the time. But of late, he only performed his liturgy to nicotine when he knew he was alone and safe. His habits—at the very least—could get him killed these days. With a slow drag of nicotine Gino took a look around at his hovel and smiled. "There's no place like home."

He tucked his lighter back into the pocket of his jeans. He took two drags off his cigarette and extinguished it between his fingers. He put the butt in his jacket and headed into the Zone.

The Zone (once known as the Gold Coast) was just another marketplace. It was a place where things were bought and sold, stolen and then bought and sold again. Not just possessions changed hands, a lot of people could be procured in the circular emporium. For a price hookers, C.P.A.'s, drivers, pilots, couriers, babies, arsonists, killers, and politicians could be had. The motto on the streets was "if you don't see it, you haven't set the right price."

Four short months ago Gino had been like so many others, when he paraded down the street to sell whatever he could. He still looked young enough to have a few options, with his long black hair and full beard he was attractive enough to appeal to both sexes. The ladies loved his dangerous charm—they saw him as the kind of man who would probably break a collarbone at the moment of climax.

The emporium offered him quite a selection of opportunities: hired gun, driver, muscle, con artist, whore. If a valid figure was offered, Gino was willing to do almost anything; money was the key.

In the Zone and in the City, money was survival; it was god for many. Each creature worshipped it his own way. Those blessed with the "spirit" endured. Those without

sought salvation on the hard, stony path of the Zone that they might endure also. The cycle never ceased: in the City was the quiet, respectful exchange of resources; but on the Zone the fundamentalist approach (of cold, hard cash) flourished.

Flash to cash to trash: a proper package and sleek display brought out the bucks and bucks brought all levels of life out for the ride. Last spring, Gino was the king of this playground. He'd owned the Zone, and anytime day or night he could be found indulging his passion: to be seen. These days it was important to see—to be aware and protected.

Gino toured the Zone; he discreetly promoted his wares. Sporting a conservative haircut and a neatly trimmed mustache, his distant manner only hinted at the rest of the package. It was on his third trip around, Gino noticed a gentleman leaning against the entrance to the Good Moves Saloon. The man (somewhere in his late 40's) motioned for Gino to follow him into the bar. Gino shook his head and mouthed the word, here.

The man objected and Gino shrugged. The man gritted his teeth and walked over to Gino.

Gino smiled, "What can I do for you?"

"I really don't want to discuss this out on the street."

"Well, your loss," he turned away.

The man cut in front of him, "Please...sorry; I have money." He pulled a few bills from his pocket.

"Whatcha want?"

"It's kinda complicated. Can't we talk somewhere?...like there. I could use a drink."

"Well, if you're buying, how can I say no..."

The man smiled nervously and entered the bar. Gino followed. In the dark, crowded recess of the bar, the gentleman sat down at an empty table. He signaled to the bartender for two drinks. A waitress in a snug-fitting jumpsuit brought over two beers. The man paid her and asked for two more.

As the man drank the beer, he gave Gino a once over.

"Much better."

"Uh-huh."

"Well, uh, let's get down to business. Okay?"

Gino nodded.

The waitress returned with the beer; the man settled up. He gulped down his first draft and said "I've gotta proposition."

"Gotta cigarette?"

"Yeah," he pulled a new pack out of his shirt pocket. He handed them to Gino. Gino took one and started to give them back.

The man refused, "No, keep'em. This job...pays, uh, ya know it pays well—if you do well. Aren't afraid of a little work, are ya?"

"Uh-uh," Gino muttered as he toyed with his glass. "Light?"

"Sure," he tossed Gino some matches. "I could tell right off you're the man for the job."

Gino pocketed the matches after lighting up.

"What's your name, son?"

"Gino."

"Well, Gino, my name's Parks...Jim Parks. We could be

doing quite a bit of business together. I don't forget anyone who knows how to do a job right. We'll be good friends...I take care of my friends. Know what, I'm saying?"

"Uh-huh, but what do you want?"

"It's not really what I want—"

"Uh-huh."

"I work for some people. They need someone like you."

Gino took a sip from his beer.

"I get them things, ya know, sometimes I get them people. Right now, they could use you. This guy needs some protection. But not your run-o-the-mill slug off the street...something discreet...someone who knows his business. Someone who can take care of himself...and don't look like muscle...someone like you."

"How much?"

"A thousand a day...for three days max."

"A thousand?"

"Well, that's after my commission...these folks don't want to step down and dirty their hands, they pay me for that. And you, pay me for hooking ya up."

"How much do you get?"

"A small percentage. Do ya want the job?"

"Maybe. How much?"

"A couple hundred from them, a couple hundred off your fee."

"In dollars?" Gino leaned forward.

"Uh, all together...uh, about...3 g's"

"Hardly fair?"

The man paled, "Uh, maybe you're right...we could negotiate."

"Uh-huh."

The man swigged his last beer and signaled for another one.

They completed the preliminaries of their arrangement and left the bar around 8 p.m. Parks was feeling no pain. Gino watched his stagger into the night toward the cool, clean side of the city. He waited until the man disappeared before starting home.

Gino was very much sober; he rarely drank anymore. Drugs and drink were in the past. Once he would have found solace in the old feeling. He used to allow himself the openness that feeling created. He'd become wary of people: would-be friends, unwanted buddies, acquaintances, family, and enemies (seen and unseen.)

Four short months ago, he could've afforded such luxuries. Gino didn't risk such frivolous diversion. The price for pleasure was too much...it would've probably cost his mind (which he wasn't ready to forfeit yet).

His hands shook as he tried to light a cigarette. "Shit!" shouted Gino as the wind blew out another match. He crushed the empty matchbook in his fist then pulled his lighter out of his jeans pocket.

He pressed the cool metal lighter to his forehead and took two deep breaths. A sudden wave of pain engulfed him; he doubled over dropping the lighter and cigarette.

"No! God, no."

Gino felt a rumbling deep within—it was as if he was in the middle of an earthquake. The ground was shaking;

his stomach roared; his head pounded. He screamed, but the sound was lost as the world reverberated in his ears. His eyes rolled up in his head and he fell forward.

Even in this unconscious state the sound persisted and amplified. Gino no longer struggled. He was lost in a vision of someone else's making:

A brilliant light encircled him. He turned this way and that as he tried to find the sound's source. He could see nothing, but a whiteness on the horizon.

The roar lessened to a soft rumble. Suddenly, he knew what plagued him. It was the whirling blades of a helicopter. He turned toward the sound, and still could see nothing. But once he identified it in his mind, the noise reverted back to a thunderous din.

the intensity of that sound shook the ground beneath his feet. Gino fell to his knees. He couldn't see the copter, but he knew that if he couldn't escape its invisible blades he would die.

He ran.

The earth lurched beneath his feet. Gino tumbled once more. He tried to steady himself with outstretched hands. He got up quickly and raised his hands up to find them scraped and bloody. He couldn't feel them; or anything else. There was only the pounding of the copter at his back.

He had to get away or die.

As he ran, but found himself no further away from the sound and he knew then there was no escaping — no refuge to be found.

Thought eluded him. He was lost. The excruciating sound had killed some small part of him with deafening precision. But he still ran—until his legs and lungs failed him. He sank to the ground and curled up into a ball.

He waited an eternity for death to overtake him. He wanted to cry, but couldn't. He wanted to pray, but had long forgotten.

The roar was overhead.

He closed his eyes and sighed one last breath.

The blades erupted through his back. He felt each stroke slice flesh from his body.

Misery drowned what was left of his sanity. Finally, all that remained was a bloody pile of severed limbs and muscle. But he wasn't dead he could still hear—still feel. Sound and pain fused; the torment continued. He knew it was just beginning. He felt it creeping through his disjointed flesh like a rushing river.

Blood trickled down from a deep gash above his left eye. His lighter had broken his fall to the concrete floor.

He lifted his (undamaged) hands up to wipe the blood away. His breathing was ragged as he pulled out another smoke. Gino placed it in his mouth, but didn't light it. He picked the lighter up and put it in his pocket.

"Fuck you, Dryden right back to hell!"

Parks was waiting on the corner of Rush and Cedar. Gino was late; he couldn't shake the nightmare. He was tense, but not noticeably so.

"Glad to see ya made it."

"Uh-huh"

Parks coughed, "Deal's been set. Ya can start tomor-

row."

"The price?"

"Just what you asked for."

"Details?"

"All in good time. Let's have a drink and discuss it."

"Let's not."

"Ah, well..."

"Let's walk."

"Right, keep movin'...good idea."

They walked north for twenty minutes. "Where we headed?"

"Zoo?...why?" the man stopped.

Gino didn't slow his pace, "Why not?"

"Uh...I dunno...uh, why not?" he trotted to keep up.

They continued along with Parks muttering to himself. Gino took a cigarette out of his pocket and put it in his mouth. He lit it with the matches Parks had given him earlier.

At the Lincoln Park Zoo, Gino paid a fee and entered the gate. Parks fished up some money and followed him.

Parks muttered, "What I wouldn't give for a cold wet one."

"Details."

"Mind if I sit?" he pointed to an empty bench. Gino shook his head. Parks sat down quickly. "Too much exercise. Okay, from now on you're Mr. Smith. Got it...Smith. Tomorrow you go to the Byrne Building, 93rd floor... you ask for Mr. Taylor's secretary...right? She'll give you an envelope with your money. Then you go to that new hotel...the uh...the Excelsior...remember, get there before two, okay?...in the lobby...Mr. Taylor'll meetcha there...follow his instructions...that's all you've gotta do...three days...over and done. Real sweet.

"Do a good job...and I'll have another one real soon."

"How much?"

"My, my...you've gotta one track mind."

"Cut the crap" Gino towered over him.

"Sorry...didn't mean any—" Parks got up quickly. "A good price...a grand or two. Gotta run."

Gino watched Parks depart. He sat down and lit another cigarette. He stared ahead into a cage. In the tiny cage, a lone black leopard prowled rapidly back and forth. It growled deeply and continually rubbed its dark fur against the bars seemingly trying to force itself through them.

As he waited, he tried to will the cat to freedom. And the animal sensing his presence, stopped and stared back. All Gino heard was the cat's shallow breathing. His whole world was in that cage. Gino remained so absorbed, that sunset approached and settled without his notice. The security patrol roused him and sent him on his way.

At 5 a.m., he woke suddenly. He hadn't dreamed it again, but he felt it resting like a lead weight on his chest. It was waiting just ahead. If he wasn't careful, it'd seize him.

Downtown Chicago was bright and shiny, steel and plastic. The streets were clean (and plated with gold.) Citizens marched in the pecuniary procession; they strode

from banks and offices with their heads held high. They bore offerings to the financial gods and goddesses in ceremonial envelopes, briefcases and folders. They tread the paths of righteous in formal footwear of Gucci, Neopaulo, Louis V and Kikeo.

The mecca of money had but one true temple, the Byrne Building. At 178 stories, it dwarfed all competition. Those chosen to penetrate its sanctum were honored and feared.

Dressed in a fashionable dark suit, Gino noticed a few worshipers turn and nod. He nodded back. After entering the black and gray marble lobby, he asked for directions at the information center. A young lady clad in lavender ushered him to a security check point.

"Name."

"Mr. Smith," said Gino.

The uniformed guard checked his list and issued him a level 4 passcard. The passcard was a ByrneCorp patent for a micro-encoded access card. Anyone wearing a passcard could be tracked and monitored in any building, zone or city; if the location was properly outfitted with Y-sensors (another ByrneCorp patent).

Gino fastened the access card to his lapel as he listened to the guards instructions. He rode an elevator to the 50th floor. He was met by another guard in plainclothes, who escorted him to the corporate access elevators. Gino took a second elevator to the 93rd floor.

The 93rd floor was a scene of highly polished silver fixtures and black furnishings. Four receptionists sat at a large black desk, answering phones and welcoming new arrivals.

Gino was greeted by a young blonde girl, who smiled and said, "Mr. Smith, Ms. Mailing's expecting you. Down the corridor and third door on the right."

"Thank you."

When he reached the third door, Gino knocked, "Ms. Mailing?"

"Come in."

Ms. Mailing was finishing a phone conversation. She covered the mouthpiece and said, "Mr. Smith. Please be seated."

Gino sat in a gray leather chair.

"That's right...no later than Friday. By then Mr. Taylor'll have the feedback on this project." She paused, "Right, Friday. Thanks, bye," she hangs up. "Sorry, business—."

"No problem."

She took a manila envelope from the center drawer of her desk. "Mr. Taylor feels that this should be everything you need."

Gino took the sealed envelope and said, "This should do it. Thanks."

"You're welcome," she stood and offered him her hand. Gino rose and shook it. He retraced his steps to the first floor. At the security desk, he turned in the passcard and left.

Gino disappeared quickly into the flow of people. He found a quiet secluded spot to check the envelope: all the money was there. He glanced at this watch; noting that it was only 10:30 he left the downtown area. He headed to

the Zone to stash the money.

At 1:30 Gino arrived at the posh Excelsior Hotel. Dressed in black, he immediately headed for the bar just off the main lobby. Seated by the windows of Sir Raleigh Pub, he waited for Mr. Taylor.

Precisely at 2 p.m., a young man carrying a briefcase strolled in. Gino watched as the man glanced at this platinum watch and crossed the lobby. The man found a chair directly across from the entrance and sat down.

Gino paid for his untouched beer and left the bar. He approached the young man and asked, "Mr. Taylor?"

"Mr. Smith?" He stood up and offered his hand, "you're prompt."

"I try to be."

"Please, sit down. Just a few things..." as they both sat down, "I'll be brief."

"Fine."

"Was the payment satisfactory?"

Gino nods.

"We always want to be a fair."

"We?" his head was aching.

"Well yes, we. A certain anonymity must be maintained...for your protection as well as our own. Nothing to be worried about."

"Certainly."

"Good," he opened the briefcase. He took out a small leather pouch and small envelope. "It's pretty straight forward. First, deliver this package to the address you'll find in this envelope. There you will get another item and another set of instructions."

"This is gonna take three days?"

"Well...for three days you'll be our courier. All materials you receive are very important...very expensive. Handle them with the utmost care. You'll have a precise timetable to follow. Deliveries can't be late. All in all, three days—a number transfers—and give or take a few about a dozen locations.

"If we like your work...we might be able to swing a bonus. Something really substantial," he smiled.

"I'll do my best."

"That's all we can hope for."

Gino pocketed the items and nodded. They both stood up.

"Good luck, Mr. Smith. First dispatch at 9 a.m. tomorrow."

"Thanks and good bye."

Walking swiftly, Gino made it back to the safety of the Zone in thirty minutes. He massaged his temples and inhaled deeply the sweet scents of poverty. He felt a bit safer in these familiar surroundings. At least in the Zone, he knew which side of the bread was buttered with arsenic.

Early the next morning, Gino hauled himself out of bed and started the day with a nicotine breakfast. Since his trek was arranged to take many turns through the city, he outfitted himself in blue jeans, leather jacket and silk shirt.

He checked the instructions, "Cullerton and Indiana.

Soho District." He opened the package once more. It contained two ounces of the federal controlled substance, cocaine.

"Wouldn't ya know it?—running drugs."

As he placed a switchblade in his back pocket, "Remember, Mr. Taylor, in all things moderation...even your vices. Just careful enough...one ounce more and I'd go to jail for this."

He walked the twenty-one miles through Uptown, the zoo, the Zone and past the outskirts of Downtown. He arrived in the Soho district at 8:50 a.m. He wandered by the artist lofts and museums, killing time. At 9:00 Gino entered the appointed building. He was met in the foyer by a janitor. Gino exchanged parcel for envelope.

A quick trade that was typical of the most of his stint for Mr. Taylor. It was drugs to money; money to circuits; and money to drugs. Easy as long as he remained wary of the cops.

On the second day of traipsing over the city, Gino sat once more in front of the leopard's cage. Absorbing himself in the instinctive movements of the cat, he relaxed between trips. His mind drifted far from the last few days, away from his throbbing headache. The cat's pacing became his focus. He could see nothing beyond. Only pacing...

She was pacing still. When he left the night before, she'd been walking back in forth in their tiny studio apartment. Jeska hadn't changed her clothes. He knew from the dark circles under her eyes that she hadn't slept either.

"So I guess you didn't get caught," she sat down.

"Jes—"

"Don't start."

"Jes, please..."

"I don't believe this shit. You stay in the streets...hustlin' for that last buck."

"Jes, it's what I have to do. We need the money."

"Right, there's easier ways. You could go to Dryden—"

"That's just what he wants...just give him another chance to add a few refinements into his program—"

"But they can help us...we can go back to the center."

"The center...so they can shoot you full of dope...and carve you up..."

"You're fulla shit."

"And they're not? Get this straight, babe, no one is messin' with my head again. They're not sending me through their brass hoop in the name of science...in the name of whatever piece of crap they call it...not even you."

"Me!...you fuckin—" she threw a book at him.

Gino caught it easily, "That's right and proud of it."

Jeska stood up and started pacing again. Tears welled up in her eyes as she whispered, "You're so strange."

"What?..."

"I don't matter to you. You don't listen to me...you don't care about anybody."

"Jes, you're wrong. You're all I care about. I wanna make you happy."

"Make me happy...right, night after night you're out

there..." she started crying, "...lying...stealing...out there selling yourself. You think this makes me happy...not knowing where you are or who you're with...happy, are you that stupid?"

"Look, babe, this isn't paradise for me either, but as soon as we get enough cash, we'll walk away."

"Walk away now, please."

"Where to?? Dryden??"

"Why not?"

"Cause...what he wants cost too much...Look, Jes, when he gets finished with his little experiments...we'll be lucky if we can breathe."

"Gino, you're wrong. He wouldn't hurt us...he promised—"

"And you believe him..."

"Yes, I do...why shouldn't I?"

"He's lying...can't you see that..."

"If you really believe that...then let's just walk way."

"Not yet...we need money."

"Shit, I'm so sick of hearing that every damn thing boils down to cash."

"And it doesn't for you?" he said sarcastically. "Always wanting to run back to daddy for a new dress just cause the fashions have changed in the last twenty-four hours."

"No, don't be so stupid...you've no right to bring my father into this—"

"Right," Gino overemphasized the "t".

"I'm serious..."

"Daddy's poor little rich girl—slumming with the trash...I've got news for you babe, daddy is right here in middle of this mess...cause everyday you stand him up in the corner like some damn measuring stick. And every day...I fall short."

"And you're saying to yourself, 'Look at Gino, he's too stupid; Gino's trash; he's got no money and he never will.'"

"Money—"

"That's the problem in a nutshell, money!"

"Only because you've made it your personal god."

Gino laughed.

"I'm just wondering what you'd do if you had money?...not just enough to get you through next week, but all the money you'd ever need?"

Gino looked and then turned away.

"Stop! I want to know."

"Do you?"

"Yeah."

"I don't think you'd understand even if..."

"Even if what?"

"If I could...tell you. If I really understood it myself."

She shook her head and laughed, "Tell me."

"Money...money isn't God. It's a way...a way to get to out. And even if it was a god; it isn't mine."

"Then why do you do this? Why sell yourself to the highest bidder?"

"Why not? Someone's always buying."

"You little—" she tried to slap him, but he caught her hand and she jerked away.

"I'm whatever the doctor ordered."

"Whatever money can make of you."

"Jes, I learned something a long time ago. I don't know who taught me...I don't know if it was...my mother...a copy...it doesn't matter. But someplace way back inside I know just how important cash is. I know what it can do and I know what it can't. It's genuine. Without it...you know...without it you ain't gonna get shit. Without it you've got no one. Just look at you...look at what money does for your father...and what it does for you."

"Me...I don't care about it. I'm not obsessed—"

He cuts her off, "That's not what I'm saying. It's not an obsession...it's an exception. I don't have it so I have to do things. a lotta things to get it. You have it and because you've got it you don't see...you don't see its importance. It's become a part of you...it's an appendage...an extra arm...that you no longer have to see...you no longer have to think how about to use it...it's, uh, it's second nature. It's you. It's all of you...but for me...for most of us out there...we don't have that arm. We can't reach out and get anything we want. It's not there and we're all waiting to be fitted with the proper equipment so we can fit in...so we can be like you. But we can't be. You won't let us, cause you know what we had to go through to get that arm...and you question us, you chastise us for being different...for struggling...you make us dirty...and obscene. And you...all of you...make money a god! And you wanna know why you do it?"

"No!"

"Cause it makes you God. You want us to fall down on our knees and adore you."

As she started to turn away Gino reached out to stop her, but she rushed past him. She grabbed her shoulder bag and slammed the door behind her.

He muttered, "But it won't make you perfect. It won't even take away the pain."

A long time passed before he went after her, but he knew that she'd be waiting. He pulled his leather jacket out of the closet and left.

He spotted her kneeling in the middle of the sidewalk. She was rocking back and forth as she read aloud from a tiny, blue leather book. Her words were barely audible, but he knew that they held some kind of energy. She laid the book down in front of her and reached into her huge canvas bag. Still reciting, she withdrew a clear plastic lidded tumbler. She placed it next to the book. A deep brown liquid covered the bottom of the glass, and a rose-colored substance rested on the top. As her voice grew louder, the street seemed to fall back away from him. She removed the lid.

Gino watched in silence as a thick smoke escaped from the tumbler. The brown and pink fluids mixed and mingled into a twirling pattern. Slowly she raised her arms. Her hands seemed to draw the smoke up above her head. It floated up veiling her within its depths. She stood up and picked up the book.

She held it as thought it were a crying babe to be soothed and placated. And like a mother caring for a child, she kissed it and gently closed its pages with the words, "To the wind I send you, to the sky I let you fly."

Jeska shut her eyes and whispered, "It's in the hands of the wind. I set you free."

When he tried to wrap his arms around her, she pulled away. She opened her eyes, and whispered, "Go, while you can."

"Stop this nonsense."

"Go...run now...soon it'll be too late— we'll destroy you."

"Jes, stop this now." as he shook her.

"Please go...please."

"Hallelujah! after all this I'll be ready for the Olympics."

Gino read his latest instructions. He skirted the downtown area and headed to the 11th Street police station.

"Well, well...deliver a box to the chief of detectives...and pray like hell this ain't a trap."

His only thought was to stay cool as he walked into the lion's den.

He took a lunch break at 3:00 p.m. He walked back to the zoo and stood at the leopard's cage. Gino lit up his 15th cigarette of the day. He rubbed his temples and leaned against the cage. The cat stopped pacing, but didn't back away.

The cat roared loudly to warn him away, but Gino stood firm. He inhaled the smoke deeply. They stared at each other for a long time, neither giving ground. Finally, the cat sat down on its haunches and Gino sank down beside the cage.

For a time all was peaceful, he only heard the cat: the animal's rapid breathing and its occasional bellow.

He woke up to Jeska's screaming.

Her skin was on fire. He felt the heat radiating from her as he touched her arm. He tried to wake her up, but she couldn't hear him. She was lost in another world. She was still screaming when he turned on the light.

Her color wasn't good. She was turning red. It was as thought she'd been out in the sun too long. As her skin grew brighter, her fever elevated. Gino knew that if she didn't wake up soon she would die. He brushed her cheek.

"Don't touch me, please. It hurts."

"I'm sorry, but you need the alcohol it will bring your temperature down."

"NO!, I can't stand it. My skin's raw...it's bad enough...don't move. You're making it land on me."

"What?"

"Everything..." she looks up at him "See it...it's killing me." as she raised her hand to show him."

"I don't see anything."

"See...that," as she points to a little speck. "It's, drilling into my flesh. I can feel everything...it's all digging in...don't move...if I don't move...it'll stop...it's got to."

She shivered uncontrollably. The tears streamed down her face and she began to whimper. "Make them stop it. Make them stop."

"I don't know how."

"They're killing me!"

"Jeska...Jes—"

"Stop it!...no...not that—stop!"

"Jes, what's wrong?"

"No...no...! Stop it...don't burn me. No!"

Her whimpering turned into howling.

"Jeska!" he grabbed her shoulders. Her pupils were huge. Gino shook her. She no longer responded to his touch. "Look at me, look at me."

Suddenly, the sound stopped. Gino wrapped his arms around her and held her. She was cold to the touch. He knew she was gone, but he rocked her like a baby.

"Jes...Jes," he whispered over and over again.

When Gino woke up, the zoo was darker. His head felt as if it were splitting open. He got up slowly and walked over the cage. he placed his hand up to the bars. The leopard backed away and watched.

Gino held steady as the cat tired of the diversion went back to pacing. Gino, too, turned away.

Walking on to what was scheduled to be the last of his appointments, he kept thinking of Jeska. He remembered every detail of this dream. It was one of dreams he lived every night. But this wasn't just a dream; it was real...not some nightmare to be shooed away in the light of day. It'd happened and there was no going back to save her. He couldn't deny it even when he'd poured the kerosene and torched the center. He knew he could only try to save himself, but he still had attempted to appease his vengeful nature.

Though this episode held no happiness, as long as he remembered, he knew he was alive. If he held on to his own thoughts, he might have a chance...to survive.

Gino breathed deeply and closed his eyes.

407 Main was one of the last of its kind: a beautiful stone mansion isolated on the shore. He rang the doorbell and waited. Over the intercom, a mechanical voice droned, "Enter." The door opened.

In the entryway, every inch of wall, floor and ceiling were covered in a deep, rich mahogany. Even the massive staircase seemed to be carved out a single piece of wood. Gino moved quickly into the building.

The same cold voice droned, "On the table to your left you'll find a passcard, please put it on."

Gino did so.

"Mr. Smith, take the stairs to the 3rd floor. Once there, enter the door to the library. It'll be the only open door, you'll encounter. If you should veer off course, you'll be corrected."

The smell of rancid furniture polish only added to Gino's problems: his brain was pounding and his stomach started to churn.

When he reached the third floor he was ready to pass out. He pulled a pack of cigarettes from his jacket. he leaned back against the banister. His hands were shaking as he put a cigarette in his mouth. He started toward the open door as he searched his pockets for a match. Not finding one he cautiously took out his lighter, lit his cigarette, and slid the lighter back in his pocket.

He inhaled the smoke deeply as he strolled into the library. He was greeted by the sight of more wood. The huge library was lined on two sides with maple bookshelves; the shelves were overflowing with books, old and new. A lot of chairs and sofas were situated throughout the room. At the far wall were two ornately carved doors.

In front of this wall was a desk; and behind that desk was an ancient gentleman.

"Mr. Smith," he boomed, "nice of you to come. Please do sit down."

Gino came in and sat in an old chair.

"Do you have the envelope?"

"Yes, sir," he got up and placed the envelope on the desk.

"Thank you very much," he said as he opened it. "I'm pleased to know you do such good work...it's very rare these days to find...oh, do forgive me, I didn't introduce myself I'm Mr. Byrne."

"Mr. Byrne?"

"Right, as I was saying...someone who's willing to work and knows how to follow instructions. You have integrity. It's good to find someone with integrity, so few are blessed with such traits."

"Sir?"

"Never mind, my boy...you've done well," he mumbled. "You've come through with flying colors."

Mr. Byrne leaned forward and confided, "I'd like to offer you a job. You could work directly for me."

"Well...uh—"

"You don't have to answer right this minute," he chuckled. "I understand you'll need time to think. Nothing should be rushed into...nothing that counts. Take your time. Sleep on it."

"Thank you, sir" said Gino. He got up to leave. Mr. Byrne handed him a new envelope.

"And if you don't accept...I might still throw some business your way. You can call me anytime, my number's there with your bonus. Good night, son."

"Thank you," Gino hurried from the room. He wanted to sprint down the stairs, but he knocked a long ash from his cigarette and walked.

When he reached the first floor, the intercom crackled, "Remove the card and place it on the table."

Gino ripped the card from his lapel and tossed it on the table. The door swung open and he left.

"Jeska!...no!" he cried. He bolted up and his brain exploded with excruciating pain. His teeth were trying to wiggle free. Gino clamped his hand over his mouth. He struggled to remain conscious. He had dreamed again. This time his two dreams had fused. Jeska had become a part of the unreality. He thought maybe this was a sign: their dream was becoming his own.

"Money" he said out loud.

Well...I could always use the money, but...always a but. But what...but this could be too dangerous. And dangerous, ain't smart.

He went to the Zone to think. This had been his kingdom. He felt secure here among his own kind. He felt closer to Jes here.

He found a phone in a corner coffee shop. He dialed the number Mr. Byrne had given him. The old man answered on the second ring. "Yes."

"Mr. Byrne, it's Mr. Smith."

"Oh, Mr. Smith, been expecting your call. I was just discussing your situation with a few acquaintances. Everyone's pleased with your progress."

"I can't take the job..."

"That's to bad. We had high hopes for you, but I do understand your reluctance to tie yourself down. I only hope that we'll work together in the future. A few of my colleagues would be interested in meeting you."

"Well, I don't think that's possible..."

"Pity, but we do understand. Commitments can be so costly, but I'm sure we'll get together soon."

"Thanks, but—"

"Keep an open mind, Mr. Smith. Things have a way of changing before our eyes...overtaking you when you least expect it."

"I hope not."

"All we ask is that you're open-minded."

His head was pounding savagely. Gino slammed the phone down.

For close to an hour, Gino wandered through the streets. He finally knew that he needed to find Parks. After checking out a quite a few establishments, he headed for the Good Moves Saloon. Parks was slumped over the bar.

"Parks."

"Huh...leav' me...lone...ain't bothering nobody," he slurred.

"Parks," Gino tapped the man on the shoulder.

Peering up, Parks started laughing. "What ya know, Gino? How's my buddy? Can I...uh...buy you a drink?"

"No, thanks. But I need something."

"Don't we all."

"Some info."

"Uh, information...well, that'll cost ya...but seeing as you're such...ah...good pal, I'll give ya a rate."

"How much?"

"Not much I promise...not much...with the bundle you got—"

"How much!?"

"Well, still talkative." He turned to the bartender and shouted, "Hey, I need a refill."

"How much?"

"Uh, that depends."

On what?"

"Depends...on what ya wanna know...and more importantly, depends on who's...all affected."

"Which means?"

"Which means, you're drunk. Tomorrow when you sober up, I expect to see you."

"Right, pal," replied Parks. He laughed to himself.

"At 10 a.m."

"10 a.m."

"10 a.m.," he repeated. "Anything you say."

"At the zoo, at the lion house. And you won't be late."

"Right, Gino," he nodded.

Gino placed his hand on Parks' wrist and squeezed slightly. He looked him in the eye and said, "I know you won't disappoint me."

"Of course not...I...I'd never do that."

Parks was a little early; he seemed hungover. Gino sat on the lion house steps, tossing something shiny in the air.

"Have a seat."

"No, thanks. Don't think I could get up from there."

Gino leaned back and said, "Suit yourself."

"What...what do you need?" he said nervously.

"Some information on ByrneCorp."

"You're kidding?"

"No."

"ByrneCorp, no, I don't think so—"

"Parks, I'll pay—"

"Brother, you haven't got enough."

"I'm serious."

"You gotta death wish, but I don't." He turned away.

"You aren't going anywhere—". Gino leaped up to stop him. He dropped his lighter.

"Listen, ya don't mess with the big boys...cause if you do...you're gone, not even a memory. They'll make you disappear...not just now, but all the way back...you wouldn't have even been a gleam in your daddy's eye after they get through with you."

"Tell me what you know."

"I just did."

Gino held Parks by the collar and dragged him around the building to the leopard cage. The cat stalked back and forth. He whispered, "Tell me everything."

"You've got the wrong guy...I don't know nothing."

"Tell me," as he seized Parks' throat.

"Really...I don't know anything." Gino slammed him against the bars. The leopard backed away and roared.

"Shit, man...don't do this...I don't know nothing. I...I—"

The cat roared again and moved forward. Parks felt the animal's breath on his back.

"Tell me."

"Oh, God...uh, oh no...oh God...uh, they...paid me. They paid me to find you."

"For the job?"

"No!...they wanted you...so, I, uh...uh found you. I've been following you...since uh, before...before the fire."

"You can't have—"

"Yes...uh, it's been easy—for the most part. They gave me this." He pulled a little brown metal box from his coat.

Gino snatched it. The box contained a miniature screen where a light pulsed on and off. "This?"

"Yeah, a tracking device...it works on chip and, uh, uh those Y-sensors."

Gino released him. "Go call your boss."

"What?"

"Call him."

"You're crazy. I don't wanna die."

"Either way, you're dead. Tell him I want to meet him."

"I ain't doing it."

A switchblade was shoved against his throat. "Well, then you've got a choice. Die now or die later."

Three hours later, Gino sat with his back against the cage. Occasionally, the cat brushed against the bars. The feel of its warm fur was reassuring to him. The security

patrols had been paid off for the night.

He waited in silence; he waited for the dream.

The earth trembled and he stood bathed in a white light. He heard the rumbling grow closer and louder, but he turned to face it.

Pain shot through his skull like a runaway locomotive. But he stood firm.

The invisible blades roared overhead.

And silence fell.

He strained to see.

Nothing, but white light all around.

Alone, but Jes was there. He couldn't see her, but her voice echoed, "to the wind...to the sky."

He awoke from his daydream with a dull headache. Gino stood up and took Parks' tracker and smashed the lock off the cage. He opened the door and sat back down.

The leopard leapt from the cage. It marked off its new territory around Gino and laid down beside him. It was dark before Parks' boss arrived. Dressed in gray, Mr. Taylor strolled up.

"Mr. Taylor, good of you to come."

"Mr. Smith."

"Cut the crap. You know who I am, you've always known. I think it's about time to tidy up."

Taylor squat down. "Maybe, it is. This project didn't turn out the way we planned. But the whole, pretty good research."

"You're different, Gino. Extraordinary...Mr. Byrne's special case."

"How so?"

"One of the few long-term projects. You might say he raised you," he smiled, "...and in a sense—he has. He's always had a power over you...he instilled a sense of what's really important."

"Not directly, of course. But he's not without influence."

"What the hell for?"

"Because he owns you. You're his creation. He's given you things since you were five. Not money...but people. People...your mother, clients in your sordid career; the women you've loved. Everything for a purpose."

"You're full of shit."

"Only you developed a little off the mark and he had to correct it. So up pops Doc Dryden and his bag of tricks. He tried his best, but still you fought back. A little surgery, an implant here and there and you were susceptible to a little dream therapy. It might have worked to, but Jeska's screwed that up."

"I don't believe this."

"You should, it's all true. He was so proud of you. Pity, you could have been a great triumph."

Gino stroked the leopard's head. "I sort of thought you'd feel a little less than charitable." The cat went to sleep.

"Sorry," as he pulled out a gun.

Closing his eyes, Gino whispered, "Wind and sky."

A sharp blast of air pushed past and the helicopter began its requiem again.

Power. He envisioned thousands of blades piercing a body: spine was chopped in two, skin mutilated, bones split, fingers severed. Legs amputated at the ankle, at the knee, then at the hip.

Flesh pulled away from muscle; muscle torn from tendons; teeth smashed, eyes and ears gone.

Nothing intact.

Raw, mangled nerve endings dangled like live wires downed by a massive storm.

Nothing but pain.

When he opened his eyes, what was left of Mr. Taylor lay at his feet. The cat still slept at his side.

Power. The vision was real: creation outshines creator.

He rocked back and forth with the cat's head nestled in his arms and thought he could be a god.

And he walked away...



ISFiC WRITERS CONTEST

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THE THIRD BITE

TERRY SCHALK

2ND HONORABLE MENTION

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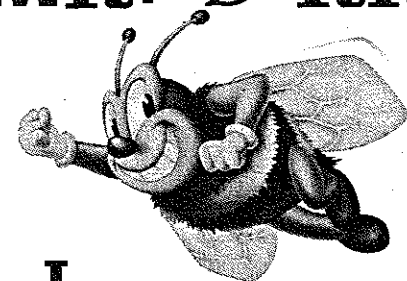
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