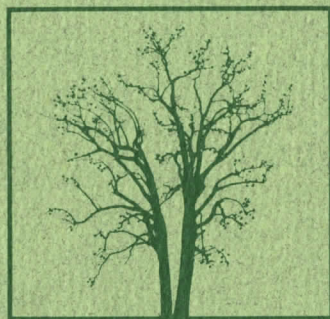


Spring
Collage





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They walked into the Blue Swan Hotel. The prostitute and the customer had arrived. The hotel night clerk handed the prostitute the key to room 303 and made an off-color remark about not screwing anybody he wouldn't...

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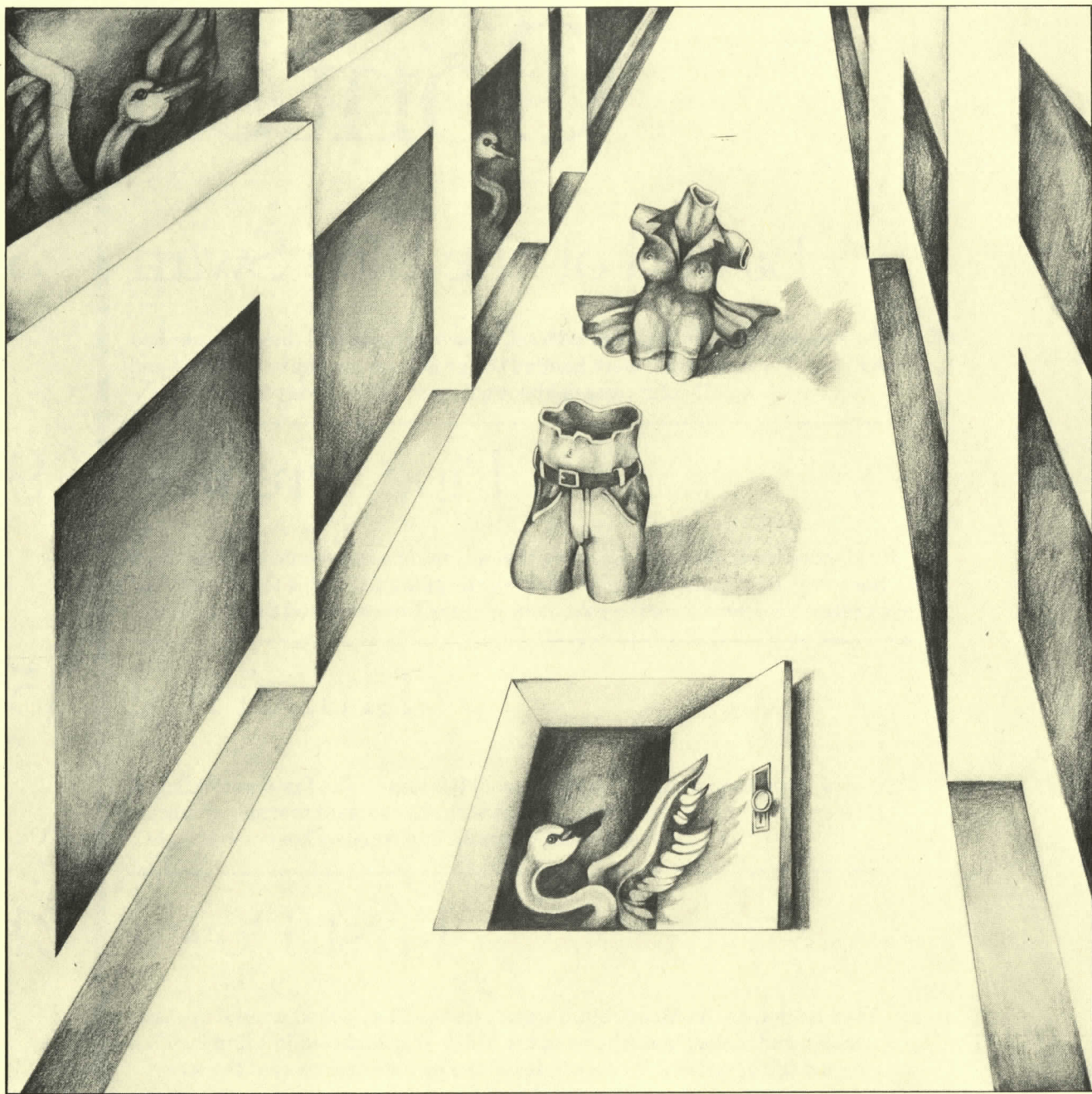
He glanced down the road, knowing that any minute she would be home from her newly found part-time job. How was he going to be able to tell her? His eyes sensed movement on the pavement and shadows escorted the small car...

Lingering 15

I speak of no particular night, for they are all the same. The familiar tinkling of glasses and playing of the piano blends with the constant murmur of voices. The same stale odor of smoke and whiskey hovers in the air...

First Down 21

They landed on the Moon, but it wasn't there. They poked around the Crab Nebula and looked in the heart of the Milky Way and couldn't find it. They catalogued the galaxies and cross-indexed the planets and x-rayed the stars....



Ballad of the Blue Swan

Jeff Ellis

The garish neon sign proclaimed rooms available at the Blue Swan Hotel. Once a center of social events and the favorite lodging of many celebrities, the Blue Swan showed signs of its age. Paint peeled from the doorways and cornices, the once-plush carpeting was threadbare, the ornate chandeliers were darkened in favor of more economical lighting, and the regal rooms, so badly in need of refurbishing, stood empty.

Outside a couple came out of the subway tunnel and walked toward the hotel. One was well-dressed and left an aura of respectability and prosperity. The other was rather shabbily dressed in faded jeans and sweater with unkempt hair and blue eyes that seemed to penetrate one's subconscious.

They walked into the Blue Swan Hotel. The

prostitute and the customer had arrived. The hotel night clerk handed the prostitute the key to room 303 and made an off-color remark about not screwing anybody he wouldn't, which caused the customer to turn crimson in embarrassment. Taking the key, the prostitute gestured for the customer to proceed up the stairs.

"The elevators in this place haven't worked since the day one," the prostitute explained.

Slowly the two ascended the stairs. The customer could not help noticing the drabness of the walls and carpets and more than anything wanted to escape the depressing surroundings. When they had reached room 303, the prostitute inserted the key into the lock and opened the door.

"Come on in," said the prostitute, flicking on the lights. "Welcome to my boudoir, or would 'my office' be a more appropriate title?"

The customer entered the room slowly. The

[continued on page 22]

Reconnaissance

Man killing man. The time of man
Left drifting in the distance of deserted
oceans,
With the land in sight, the sand— —
Controlled by currents of wind, and
waves— —
Of water that dominate movement, with
motions
As constant as the end, and graves.

Left right, march right,
Left right, march right,
In time, in time,
Left right, march right...

Man killing man. The hand of man
Ripping through flesh, the organs of life
Spilling fresh upon the floor, and he cleans
Left right, march right,
The bloody blade to sharpen the knife
Left right, march right,
And sweeps the broom across the floor
In time, in time,
Left right, march right...

Man killing man. The heart of man
Lay destitute and weary of circumstance,
In accordance with the plan
Of dead leaves and dormant trees
And the flowers of chance.
Blood curdling screams of the blind
Heard only by the deaf and the dead
Awaken no one to their plight;
Only the dense red drippings they find
On their fingertips, not eyes,
Make them aware of how dark is night.

Left right, march right,
Left right, march right,
In time, in time,
Left right, march right...

W. S. Devery



Charles Steed 5



6

Jan Cartier



Doyle Finch



PIPE DREAMS

D'Nice Lawson

A tender soft gray sky touched dark wooded mountains in the distance as he sat on the steps of a suburban brick apartment house and stared into the 1977 summer evening. Time lingered along side him as dusk clung on for hours, just like the afternoon had lasted for days.

He twisted his college senior ring in circles around his finger. The lessening light hid the many sparkles that would have been obvious under brighter circumstances. He glanced down the road, knowing that any minute she would be home from her newly found part-time job. How was he going to be able to tell her?

His eyes sensed movement on the pavement and shadows escorted a small car as it followed the road and halted in the drive. Weakly smiling, he motioned for her to come sit beside him. Fireflies mingled among the shrubbery and he thought of an old wives' tale that promised rain—again. With only a token greeting she was beside him, and they both watched as

the night was slowly, patiently falling.

"Did you see the paper today?" he asked.

"No," she replied solemnly. "But I heard it on the radio."

Oh, he thought. Then she knows. "Well... how do you feel about it?"

"Late," she answered. "Just too late."

"Yeah...."

Silently they sat, motionlessly counting fireflies. The night air was hot and still around them. "Looks like they could have put it off awhile," she finally said.

"Yeah. But they fumbled it for quite some time. Guess they did the best they could. They couldn't wait forever on us, you know."

"I suppose you're right. And besides something could have happened and prevented us from going at all."

"Yeah, how were they to know to stall?" he asked.

"We should have just gone on after we got

[continued on page 26]



Sea Song

Sing for me a song, she said, a song
Of love and land lost seas and
Broken hearts and aching memories.

Oh, I can sing no songs, I said, for dirges
Play in me and in the empty and forgotten
Places of my emotion numbed mind...
And my time is taken with the tinker-toys
Of life.

But in your eyes, girl, love shines
And your eyes window on the soul, they say.

So seas are far and distant and grief
Is black and deep. And your love
Can span them, when, with his love,
You meet.

Ivan Shewmake

Kid's Stuff

[a play for children in one act]

fireplace lover— —
give me the heat of your battle

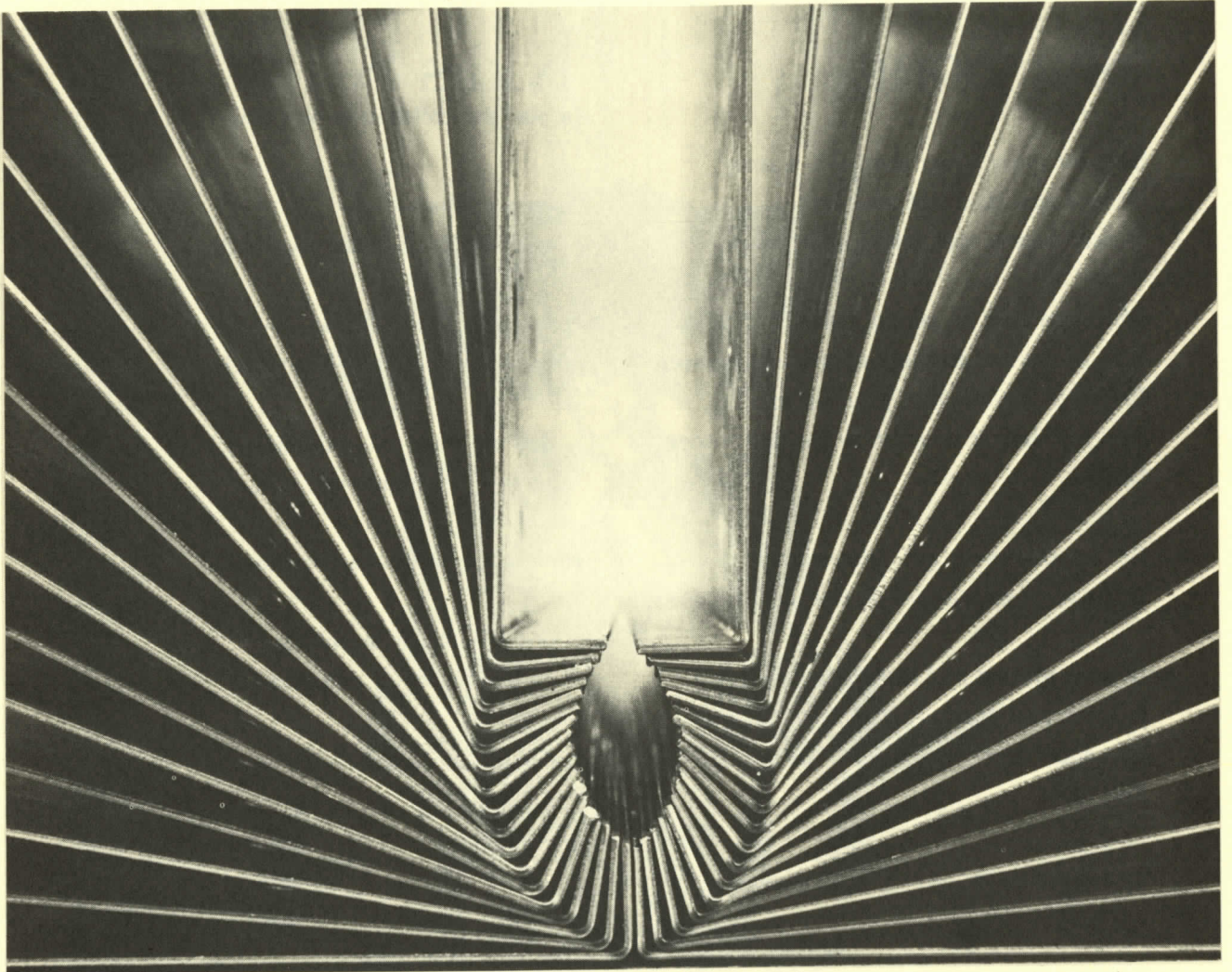
renegade schizophrenic— —
position your mid—life to mine

Sell me your true inhibitions;
scrawl your name out loud

come to my pulsating conclusion:

find your mind wandering
on the breath of delusion

David N. Solomon



L. Sisco

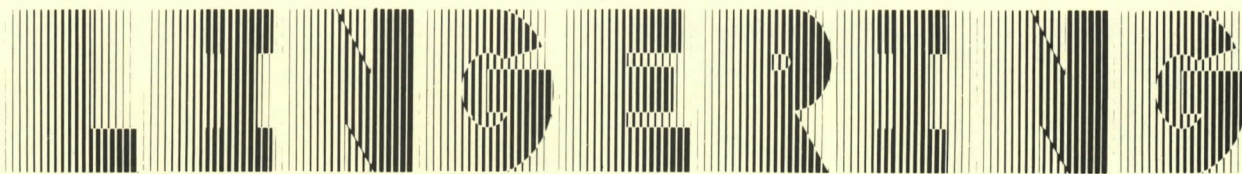


Roger Humphreys



14

Ollie Fancher



Jackie Gearhart

I speak of no particular night, for they are all the same. The familiar tinkling of glasses and playing of the piano blends with the constant murmur of voices. The same stale odor of smoke and whiskey hovers in the air like a constant ghost of reminding. Every night is a re-enactment of the night before.

Why they all come here night after dreary night baffles me. It's as if they're looking for a friend floating somewhere in the bottom of a glass, and when they don't find one, they simply fill another glass and stare into it, and sip, and stare, and sip.

"I started sketching last night," begins a dignified looking, silver bearded man, "but I couldn't bring myself to continue. An old man becomes tired easily." He stares at the bottom of his glass and takes a sip. With a reflective look in his glittering, sea blue eyes, he says, "Why, I remember when I would stay up half the night without tiring of creating a world of colors on my canvas. But now the colors do nothing but blur in front of my eyes. And it seems lately that I don't ever finish anything I begin." He stares into the smoke, not even noticing that it floats there.

Music blares from the piano. It's my cue to perform. I set my drink down, rise from the table, put on my most convincing smile, and

strut over to the spotlighted stool. I pick up the microphone from the stool, and sit down in its place.

"Welcome to 'Memory Lane'" the microphone says. The lights dim. "Now let's dip back into the past with a familiar song...." The music is soft, and the microphone begins to sing "Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away...."

As the music plays, the voices fade in and out. I pay no attention to the words that are flowing out of my own mouth, for by now they know how to sing themselves. I glance around from time to time, pretending that I really feel the words, but actually I'm just looking for something out of the ordinary, anything to change the eternal monotony of trying to entertain these depressed searching-for-a-friend faces.

A large man, with muscles bulging out from under his shirt is sitting at the bar, apparently upset. While the bartender listens and nods his head, the man's raging movements and harsh, loud words are creating a commotion not in tone or rhythm with my song. I hear the microphone screech a sour, off-beat note, and the faces seem vaguely disturbed. When the music finally stops, I sigh relief and walk over to the bar, trying to tell myself that I'm hearing applause, but it's only the echo of a few

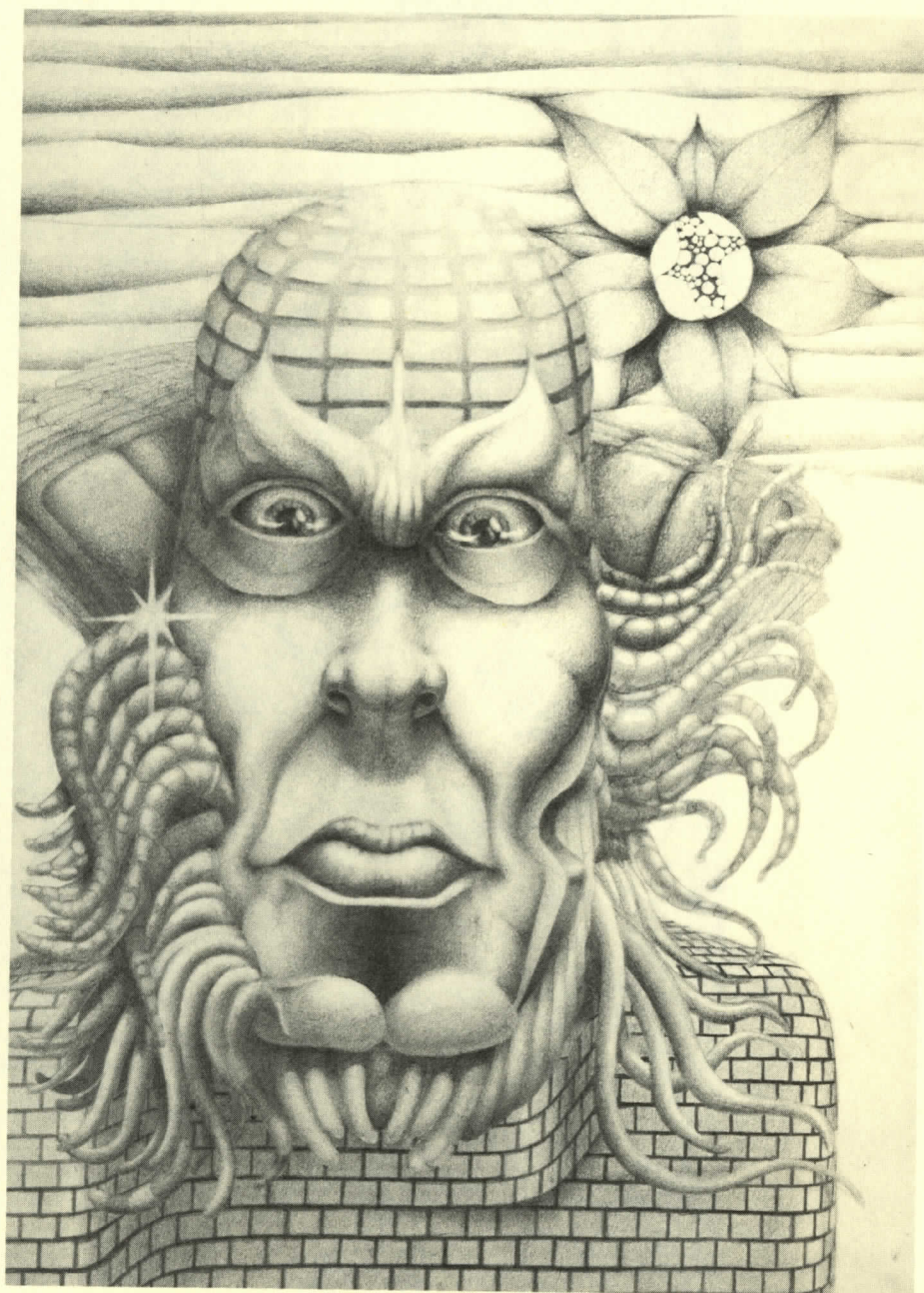
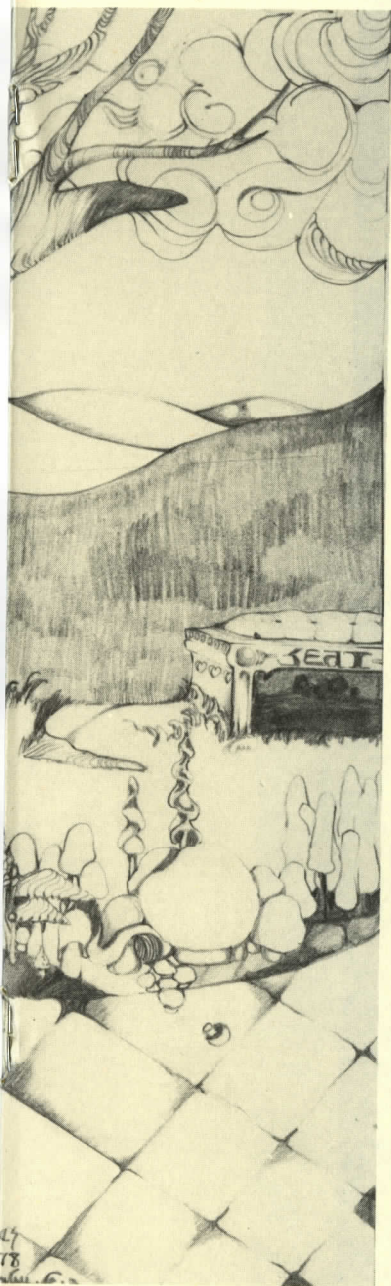
[continued on page 31]



16 Karen Jones



16 Karen Jones

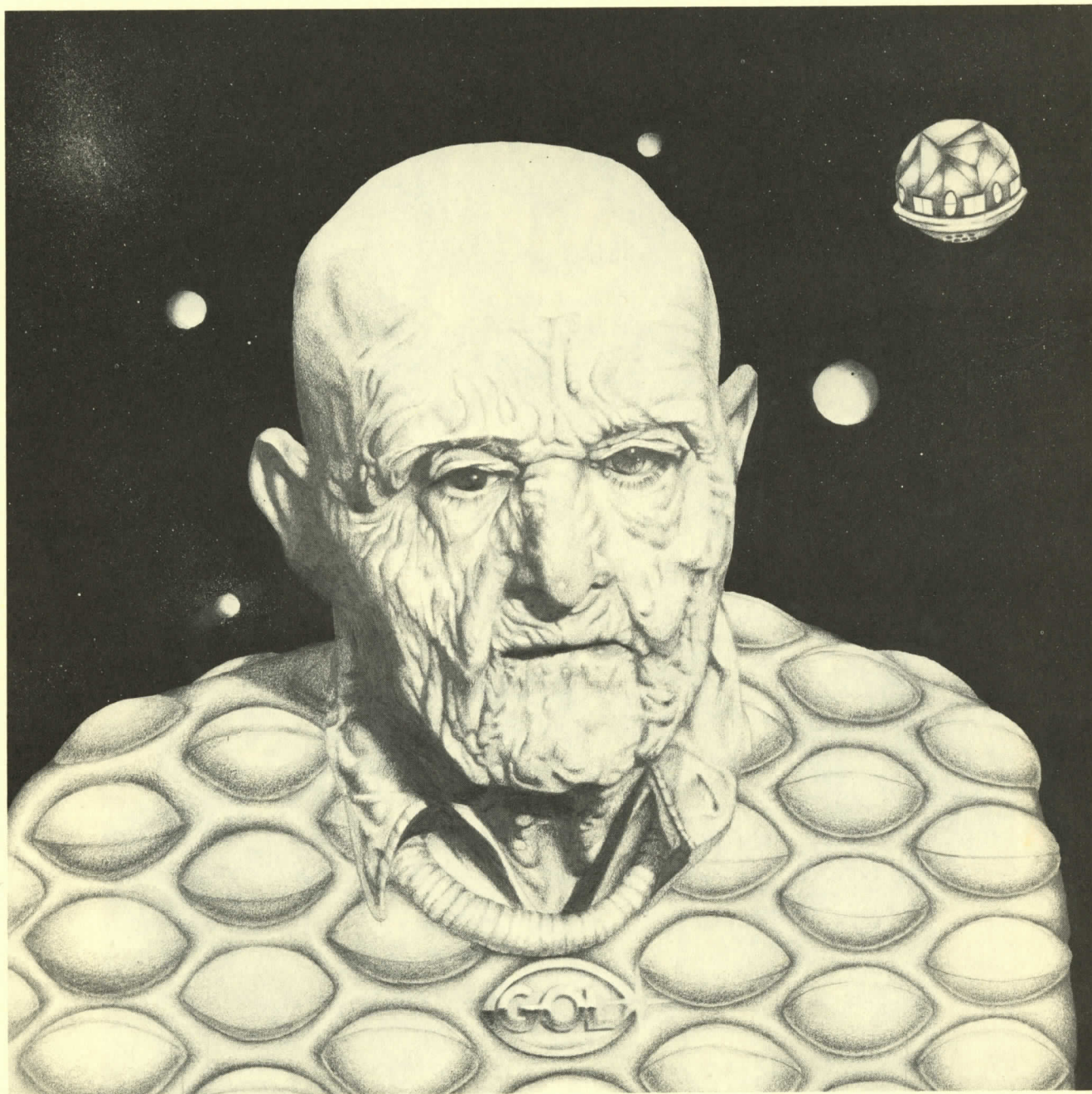


Bob Grayson 17





Charles Brindley



20

Bob Grayson

FIRST DOWN

Crouse Powell

They landed on the Moon, but it wasn't there.

They poked around the Crab Nebula and looked in the heart of the Milky Way and couldn't find it.

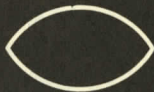
They catalogued the galaxies and cross-indexed the planets and x-rayed the stars. They looked as far as Zenophon and as close as Mars. They even landed on Ravular, which shows how desperate they were.

It wasn't there.

And when they had almost given up on finding it, they found it. At the edge of the Universe—only three miles from the Great Nothing—a lone varilium prospector blasted open a chubart cave on an unmarked asteroid and stumbled over the one thing the entire race of man had been searching for without success for over three thousand years.

Life.

This is what Life looked like:



Fourteen inches long. Eleven inches high. The exact shape and dimension of a Spalding regulation football. But with one rather disturbing difference.

When the old prospector picked up the football, it spoke to him.

The best minds in the universe got together and tried to decide what to do. They could

either send out a ship to pick up the old man and the creature and bring them to Unitron, which would cost close to nothing as energy was free. Or they could take Unitron—the giant universal computer which was as big as a planet—and move it all the way to the edge of the Universe, which would cost millions of megaballoon, not including handling and shipping charges.

The answer was obvious. Unitron would have to go.

During Unitron's voyage, the prospector was assigned the dubious title of "Guardian of Life" and appointed caretaker of the little creature. The old man wasn't particularly thrilled with the job, but every time he got more than three feet away from it, the creature made a noise like the sound of fingernails across a blackboard that drove everybody right up the wall. When the prospector picked him up, the creature would stop and say what had become the most mysterious word in history.

He would say "Wheedle." And that was all.

By the time Unitron arrived, the whole race of man was about to die of curiosity. There were wheedle t-shirts and wheedle derby hats and bumper stickers with "What is a Wheedle?" written on them in day-glo colors. The mayor of Manhattan, Kansas declared April 22 "Wheedle Day" in honor of man's first extra-

[continued on page 31]

[continued from page 3]

Blue Swan

room's furnishings, like everything else in the Blue Swan, were similar to the discards found in a Salvation Army thrift shop.

"Don't worry, they change the sheets every other day, so you won't be reminded of my other clients," the prostitute said. "Take off your coat, for God's sake! I don't have all night!"

The customer complied with the order and laid the coat on the back of a chair. The prostitute stared at the customer mockingly, then with a shrug of the shoulders began to pull the covers from the bed. The customer started to speak, but hesitated when the prostitute turned around.

"This is where we get down to business, sugar," the prostitute said sarcastically.

"Maybe this isn't such a good idea, after all," the customer stammered.

"Are you going to start that crap again? This was your idea. Remember, your friend called me up and made the appointment. Your friend said you needed a change of pace."

"I know, I suppose I'm just nervous. This is my first time," the customer said, sitting in the chair.

"You mean you've never—oh, this is the first time you've ever made it with a whore?" the prostitute asked.

The customer nodded.

"It's not so bad. I mean I don't screw just anybody I meet, if you know what I mean. That way I don't get so bored while I'm in bed. I guess you could say I have discriminating taste," the prostitute said laughingly. "I also try to show a little tenderness in the sack; it makes me feel not quite so common like all those hustlers over on 42nd street."

"Please, couldn't you wait just a little bit longer?" the customer said as the prostitute knelt to remove the customer's shoes.

"Hell! I was giving you the special treatment. I usually don't do shoes," the prostitute chided. "But since it's your money, I'll have to oblige."

"Let's just talk for a while," the customer suggested.

"Sure, okay. What do you want to talk about?"

The customer looked embarrassedly toward the floor and shrugged.

"You think the Yankees will win the penant this year?" the prostitute asked jokingly.

Looking up, the customer asked, "When did—how long have you been doing—I'm sorry, it's none of my business."

"How long have I been hustling? Since the day I was old enough to drop my drawers it seems. I guess it's just been a couple of years. I started at the ripe old age of eighteen," the prostitute said candidly.

"Why did you start?" the customer asked, gaining more self-assurance as the conversation grew.

"Why does anybody do anything now? I had to eat. I came here with real illusions of grandeur—I could see my name in lights on some Broadway marquee. But pretty soon the illusions were gone. I was only one of about a million poor souls with the same dream, so I turned to one of the world's oldest professions when I ran out of cash."

"But don't you have a family?" the customer asked with true concern.

"No, I'm an android from the planetoid Xerxes! Of course I have a family, you fool. But down in Camellia Springs, Mississippi, they're not exactly keen on people in the theater, much less whores, so my folks would have told me to go to hell, no

doubt. Of course, that's where I'll probably go, but I didn't need to hear it from Mom and Dad. Anyway, they would have erased my name from the family Bible and eventually dear old Daddy-man would have come up North to save me from the clutches of all these 'damn Yankees' and then proceed to have me committed," the prostitute said with all the vigor of a seasoned stage performer.

"Oh, I understand. You don't have to go on if you don't want to," the customer said in a small voice.

"Sugar, couldn't anything stop me now. One day I had a couple of dollars which I spent to see some old musical with Dick Powell and Joan Blondell at some run-down theater over in the forties. So while I was sitting there watching Dick and Joan tap-dance, this dude came and sat down beside me. I didn't think much of it till I saw that about three-fourths of the seats were empty. I looked at this guy out of the corner of my eye and I could tell that he was somewhat horny. Then he sort of touched my knee with his; well, I was sort of horny myself so I returned the pressure of my knee to his. Anyway, he put his arm around me and said, 'Hey, would you like to'—I won't tell you exactly what he said—it would just kill you. It was a very interesting proposition, you know. And I said 'It'll cost you'—the first time in my life I had ever even thought of such a thing—he asked how much, and I said \$25. I didn't see any harm in it, at least I wouldn't starve to death and he could get his rocks off, right? So in a way I suppose you could say I made a contribution to humanity," the prostitute said.

The customer sat quietly as the prostitute's story sank in. "I don't mean to be crude, but what's the most you've ever gotten?"

"Now get this straight, I don't always come so

cheap. Aw crap, why lie? I'm \$25 for a quickie or \$75 for an overnighter," the prostitute said, much like a real estate agent. "Of course, if you like to do kinky things, I'm more expensive. But you don't look like the kinky type. Hmm, I don't suppose you're ready yet are you? You got any kids?"

"How did you know I was married," the customer asked.

"That wedding ring is always a dead give-away, sugar," the prostitute answered.

"Oh yes, the ring," the customer said, presenting a wallet which when opened showed the bright faces of a little boy and girl. "That's Michael and this is Mary Leslie."

"Nice, as far as children are concerned. I've always considered children to be yard monsters. Not to be changing the subject, but we really should be getting to the business at hand. I did want to make it to the bars later," the prostitute explained.

"Please, just a few more minutes?" the customer pleaded.

"Okay, if you're willing to give me \$25 more. You like music?" asked the prostitute, walking to a radio. "How about some music to get you in the mood?" The prostitute turned up the volume and, taking the customer by the hand, began to dance.

First they danced a wild, frenzied version of the bump, then as the tempo of the music slowed, so did their dancing, until they were dancing very close together. Finally the two fell to the bed in an embrace. Abruptly, the customer sat up and said, "I can't go through with it!"

"For Christ's sake! I wish to hell you would make up your mind!" the prostitute said angrily, but seeing the customer's anguished look softened. "Hey, are you and the spouse having problems? The best thing to do is to go home

[continued on page 30]

My Unruly Children

We had two old tom cats,
My wife and I.

One was black with but a star of white.
He had been with us since his
Very first night;
Accustomed to our home you might say.
In fact, I think he felt a cat's
Concept of "own."

The other was white and black, in splotches
Evenly mixed.
He had been with us at his creation
But had gone away to live with
Someone else who hadn't had a cat;
Then after awhile came back:
Because they had had to move away,
And he had no where else to stay.

They were brothers at their birth,
At least brothers in the same litter sense,
And I thought they would remember,
Though that may have been but an excuse
Because I wanted both, and didn't
Really try think of what a cat might
Have thought.
From the very first they didn't hit it off,

But fought and fought at every chance
They got, which for awhile, I must
Admit, was quite a lot.
Then we tried to keep them penned,
And in that way stop the trouble
That they had between them, but that
Was unsatisfactory for both me and them.
They would try to find a way to get
back to their dispute, and I, well, I
Wanted them to be free and friends.

This went on for quite awhile,
Them getting out occasionally and cutting
Each other up,
And me reflecting a bit on the
Nature of cat and man.

I thought, Blackie, that's the one we'd
Always had, he's only trying to protect
What he believes to be his home.
And it is of course, but he forgets,
Or doesn't know perhaps, that this
Place, while his, to someone else
Actually belongs.

And Herky, that's the one that
Went away (though not of his own

Desire) and later came again; he's
Been put here and told to stay,
And since he has no where else to go,
He is determined to do just that.

So, what to do? One is defending what
Is his; the other is doing what he's
Told.

Though, for all my fine reasoning, I think
The trouble between the two may
Go much deeper than that.

Then one day both got out and immediately
Went to take up their feud.

I saw them as they started, before
The fight had really begun, and I
Was disgusted with everything and
everyone:

With brothers both wanting to be Cain,
With ownership versus need; (No, not quite
that)

With fighting where there was no reason
To fight, because there was enough for both;
With their bloody bodies which made me
even physically sick,

And with my own inability to reconcile,
And find **THE Truth**, and in justice
Choose between the two.

So, with my stomach a nervous pain, and
With my brain worn out with trying

To put an answer to such a little thing
(To me: or it should be, it seemed.) I took the
Only way I knew.

I got my rifle, and while they were
Both locked in their mortal fears, I
Made them both mortalities and got them
Recognized as peers.

Their bodies are still now, as are their minds.
They no longer fight.

So, I've answered one question at
Least, but it's a poor answer at best,
And it doesn't really matter that they're both
Dead because I loved them both,
And couldn't stand to choose.

(Though that may be hard to believe.)
And I wish still that there had been a
Better way, and that both could have been
Friends and brought the joy of their
Friendship to me.

And I wonder at what right I had,
That I should judge the least of these.
And I wonder at who judges the most.
And I wonder how
He will judge me.

Ivan Shewmake

PIPE DREAMS

[continued from page 9]

married.”

“But we promised our parents we would finish school, remember?”

“Oh, I know....”

“Don’t worry, there will be other chances, other adventures. There’s got to be something new ahead,” he spoke soothingly, convincingly.

“Sure, sure....”

“And you know how things go. They’ll probably be re-doing it in a year’s time. Some drunken caribou will trip over it and the whole works will have to be re-engineered.”

She smiled, almost giggled.

“Besides, don’t you think all this is a little bit ridiculous?” he continued. “Two perfectly adult individuals, sitting here sulking because a bunch of people got it together and finished an ice-caked pipeline.”

“But that’s not the point,” she responded sharply, “and you know it. Everybody else thought we were crazy for wanting to go somewhere new, to try something different, to take a chance. And there’s no need for you to go backing out on a dream, too.”

“Yeah, I know. I’m sorry. But maybe that’s all it was. A dream. An easy way out. Pack up all hardships and catch a fast moving transport to Alaska. Land of ice and adventure. Guaranteed to make a fast fortune—in no time.” He paused. “It was probably all a lie anyway.”

“Probably,” she sighed and agreed.

“So I guess I’ll just take my college degree and keep filling out those job applications. Just like before. And in the meantime we can look for excitement and adventure elsewhere. Something will turn up.”

“Yeah, sure.” A moment of silence passed and then she said, “Yeah, something will turn up. I guess I’m acting childish. I just need to grow up some.... Hey, I think I’ll go on inside, ok? The bugs are beginning to get to me.”

“Ok. I’ll be inside in a minute.”

Alone, he noticed the sky had clouded. A few scattered raindrops found him and he realized the fireflies would be right. Scooting a raindrop from his face, he stood to go inside.

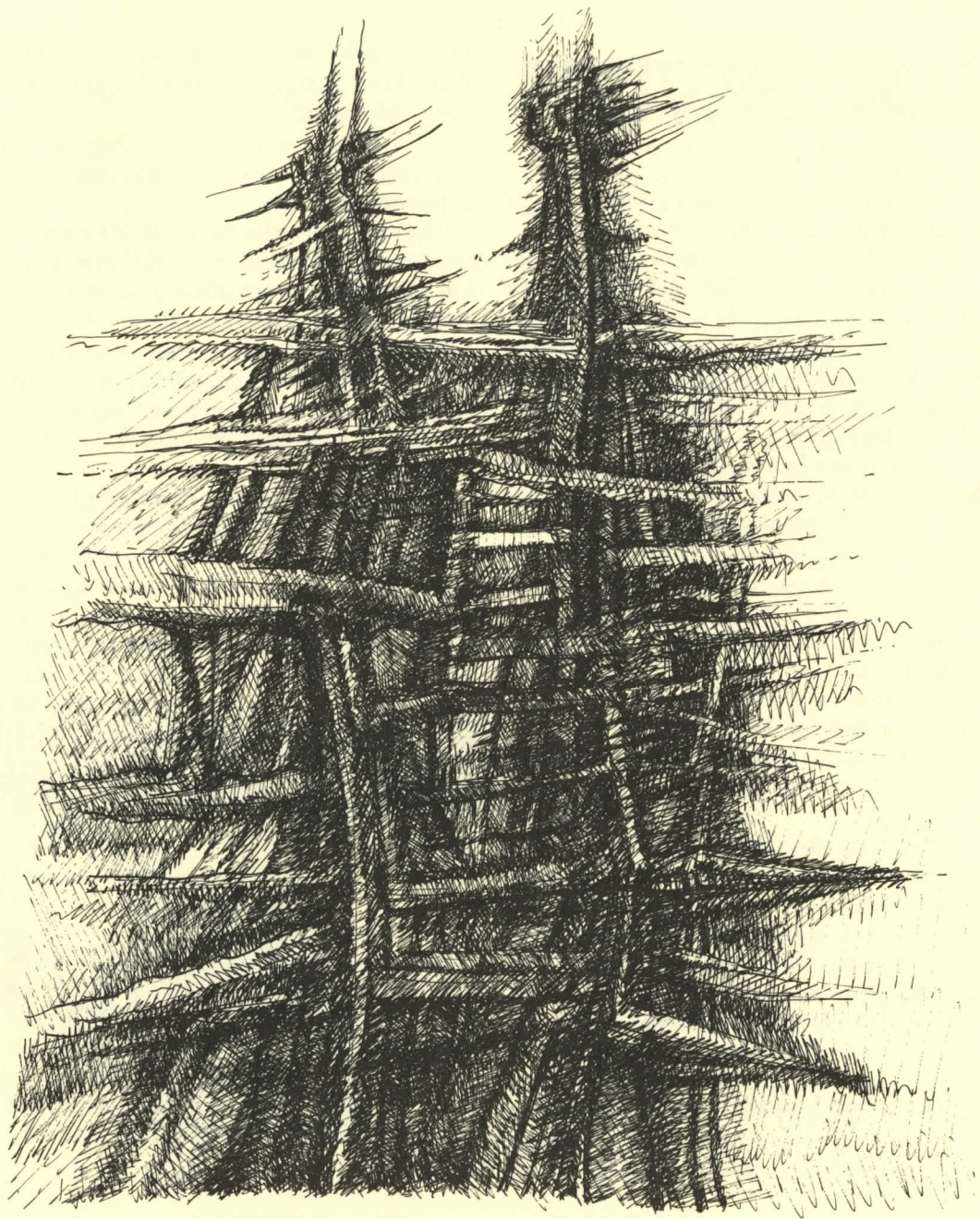
“Stupid ecologists,” he muttered looking at the night. “Why couldn’t they have held out for a few more years?” □





Anthony Sylvestro





Klaus Kallenberger

29

[continued from page 23]

Blue Swan

and work things out.”

“No! I’ve been hurt and I won’t go back until I get an explanation,” the customer exclaimed.

“How the hell do you expect to get an explanation if you’re here? I’m not listed in the yellow pages so how is the little honey gonna know where to find you? There’s a triangle, isn’t there? So the spouse has a love—man or woman?” the prostitute inquired, but seeing the fierce look on the customer’s face added, “Well, you never can tell who’s gay and who’s not. So you thought you would get even by sleeping with me at the old Blue Swan Hotel. Sugar, the best thing for you to do is to go home and talk things out. I’ve seen too many people like you and I know what’s best.”

“It’s too late to talk,” said the customer.

“It’s never too late. You know, you’ve got a warm and understanding face— and a good body for your age— and I could really go for you under other conditions, but the best thing for you is to talk things out with the person you love. And I’m sure as hell not the one you love,” the prostitute advised.

The customer stared at the prostitute, then said, “Don’t you understand, I’m sexually boring. That’s why—”

“That’s why you came to me. You thought I could teach you a few tricks. Honey, haven’t you ever heard the old saying that you can’t teach an old dog new tricks? Not that you’re old, but it still applies in your case. Go home. You’re a respectable human being and you don’t deserve to be brought down by someone like me who sold all my self-respect and dignity for \$25 in some dingy theater two years ago to some hard-up dude.

Please leave, for your own sake. God knows you don’t need to sit here and watch me wallow in my own self-pity any longer.”

“Perhaps you’re right,” the customer said, standing. “Here’s your money, although nothing happened.”

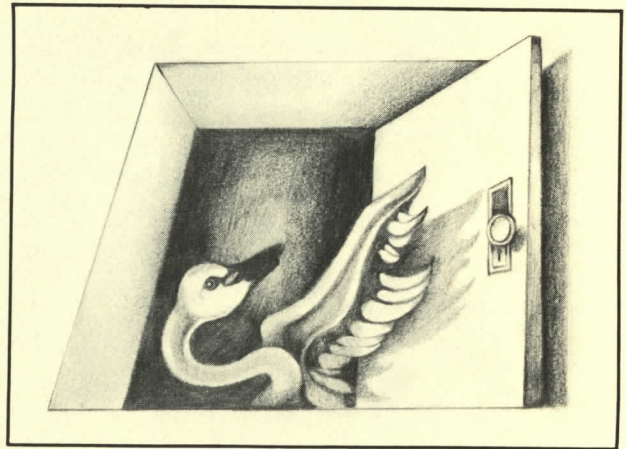
“Keep it. It’s still early and the fleet’s in, and you know those sailors—well, I guess you don’t—but I’ll make enough after you leave to keep the wolves from the door,” explained the prostitute.

The customer walked to the door and opened it, then smiling, turned and said, “It’s funny. I know your life story, but I don’t even know your name.”

“Tom,” answered the prostitute. “Good luck, Mrs. Parker.”

The customer left the room and the Blue Swan Hotel. Tom walked to the window and pushed aside the curtains to watch her cross the street and enter the subway. Then with a shrug of his shoulders, as if to shake his mood, he let the curtain fall. Checking his appearance in a cracked mirror, he flicked off the lights and left.

Outside, the neon sign proclaimed rooms available at the Blue Swan Hotel. □



LINGERING

clapping hands.

I sit down next to the stalwart man and order a drink. He's sitting calmly now, with his hands clasped around a glass. I take for granted that his outburst has subsided, and feel that it's safe to be around him. For some reason, though, I can understand his actions. Deep inside me, I have the need to yell also, as if some restless, gut feeling needs to be released.

The bottom of my glass disgustingly has nothing to offer, so I turn my attention to his. The ice, rattling in the confinement of the glass, is eager to escape, and it does escape when the man's hand suddenly forces itself into a fist and shatters the glass into pieces. He throws his money on the bar and stalks out.

"Everybody has their problems," mutters the bartender as he wipes off the counter.

FIRST DOWN

terrestrial encounter and the game of football was censured as bad public relations and replaced with stock car racing.

The great inspection began as Unitron's great metal sphere filled the sky of the tiny asteroid. Billions watched via live action cam as a shining silver ramp slid from the computer's open hatchway and the miner and the creature disappeared inside the ship.

Weeks passed with no word from the great computer. From over all the Universe, pilgrims and gawkers and talkers and kings gathered

[continued from page 15]

"What was his, anyway?" I ask.

"Professional weightlifter. It's his whole life, but he has to have a back operation. Never be able to lift again."

"Not at all?"

"Impossible."

"Pretty bad scene."

"Yeah. We'll probably be seeing him around here a lot now. I'll be listening to his problems, doing my job as bartender, but do ya think I ever cheer anybody up? Naw! I've got the same problems they do. Guess we're all in the same sinking boat, huh, kid?"

He's right. Even the odor of the whiskey reeks of remorse as it lingers here with the rest of the hopeless existences.

"Yeah, maybe we are," I ponder, "just maybe we are." I search the bottom of my glass, ask for a refill, sip, and stare. □

[continued from page 21]

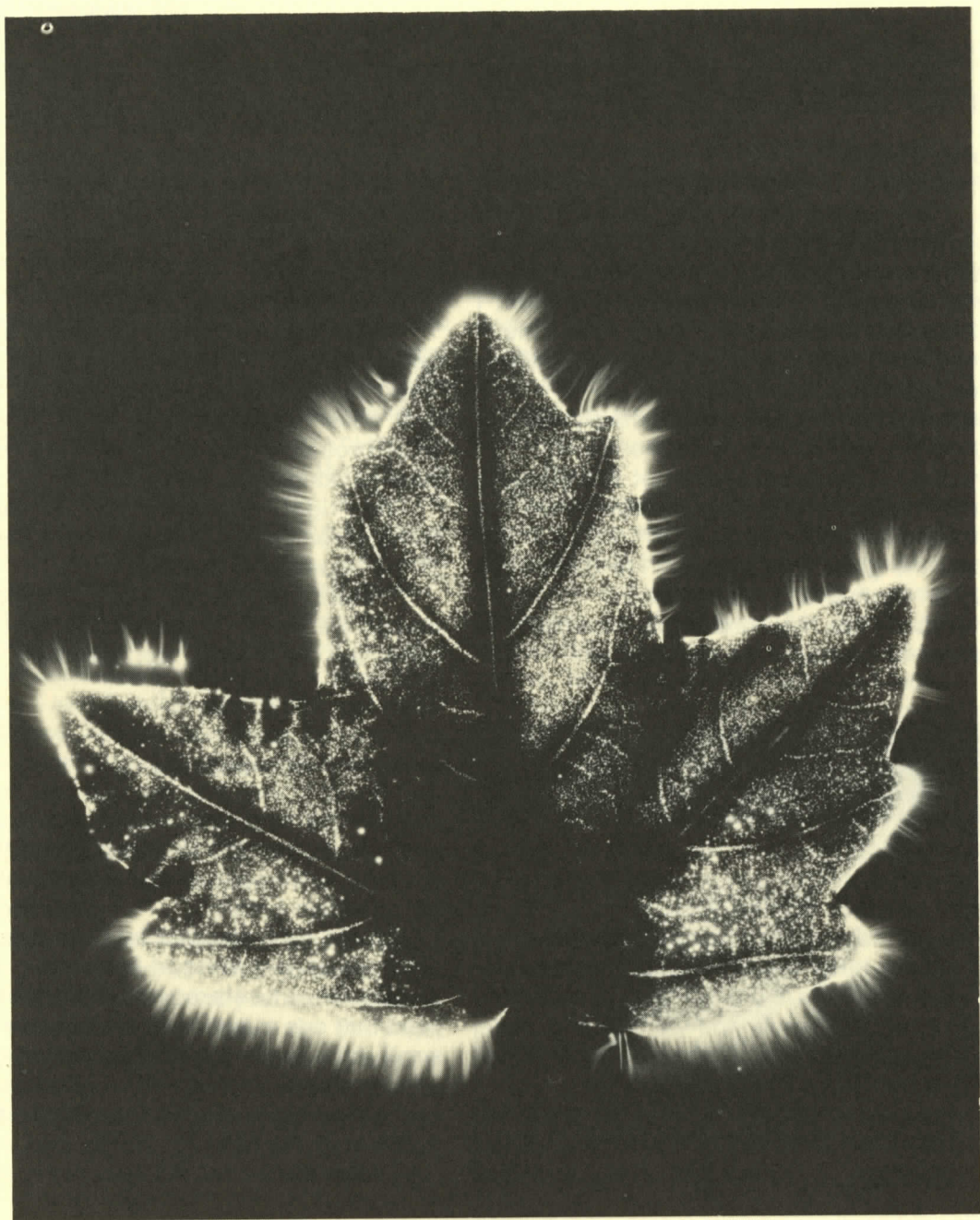
outside the ship and waited anxiously for the answer. And on the fortieth night of the fortieth day, the hatch opened and the race of man held its collective breath.

The old man stepped into the light with the little creature cradled in his arms. The crowd went quiet as he stared into the sea of faces and read that one question in their eyes. Then one small voice spoke the words.

"What does it mean?"

Unconsciously, the old man began to rock the creature in his arms.

"Mama," he said. □



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