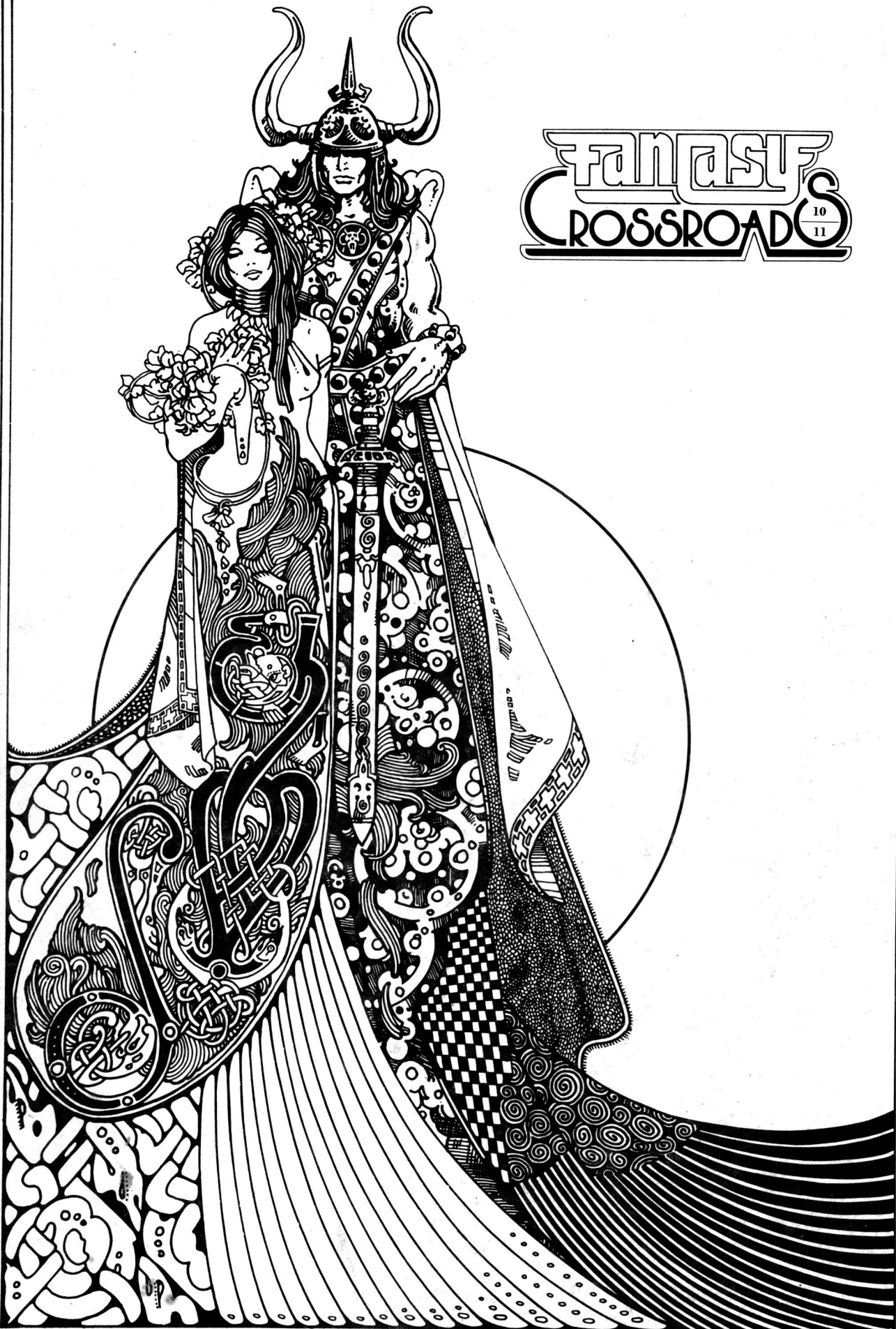


# FANTASY CROSSROADS

10  
11



# HOMAGE



Fairies under toadstool tables,  
Unicorns in forest stables,  
Wait for me,  
Child-believer in a fable's  
Fantasy

Down along the haunted river  
Waving willows sway and quiver  
As I pass,  
And the Sprite-Queen makes me give her  
Wreaths of grass.

— John Bredon



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All back issues are out of print (OP). Unsolicited manuscripts are not being accepted until after July 1, 1977. Sorry but we're backlogged. When writing, be sure to include an SASE if a personal response is desired. Editor assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts or artwork.

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I would like to especially thank Charles Melvin for allowing us to print the Frank Frazetta Sketch from his collection of artwork. Thank you, Charles.



Last issue I brought up the possibility of a series of awards in the areas of fantasy (including S & S, possibly horror lit, etc.) Some of the responses to that suggestion are included in this issue's Epistle Express. Response was, to be sure, minimal. I'm not sure how to interpret that. Either fans don't care, or they assume that silence is affirmation that planning should continue towards the establishment of an award. The final possibility is that fans are opposed to the idea and figure that if they ignore it. . .it'll go away. As a rule people seem to sound off long and hard if they're opposed to something, but then again, is that the case here?

It would be nice to garner further response to the awards from our readership. But there's now another factor entering the picture. C. C. Clingan, editor of **THE DIVERSIFIER** has proposed a new award and he already has support from two other fantasy journals: **ASTRAL DIMENSIONS** and **BLACK LITE**. He's asking for support from other publications in the field, but that's explained in his letter below. Read on and then I'll make some more comments.

For the past several months I've been kicking around an idea which I feel would be of benefit to all writers, artists and editors in the semi-pro field.

As a way of explanation (for those new to sf and fandom) I'll give an example of the professional version of what I have planned.

The Hugos, as they are known were named after Hugo Gernsback, who was the original editor of one of the first sf magazines. The Hugos are awarded by votes from the fans (a small majority and by popularity in a lot of cases). In fact, it's mentioned in one of the top fanzines that no more than five hundred people ever vote for these awards; that's out of all the thousands of fans reading and participating in sf and fandom. To vote you must be a member of the **WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION** for the current year. In 1976 it was Mid-AmeriCon in Kansas City. Attending memberships for World-Cons vary from \$15.00 to \$50.00; as was the case for **at the door attendance** at Mid-AmeriCon last year. You can obtain a supporting membership (non-attending) for \$6.00, as I did. This gives you voting rights and all the progress reports and the final program book.

Then there are the **NEBULA** awards, which are given at annual dinners, held at different sites each year. To vote on these awards you must be a member of the **SFWA (SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS OF AMERICA)**. Requirements for membership are: You must have had published (in the U.S.) original material as follows:

1 - Science fiction novel, within the current year or any of the previous five years.

2 - Science fiction novelette or short story published by an American trade publisher within the current year or any of the previous three years.

Continued to page 71

# Genseric's Fifth-Born Son

a james allison tale by:  
**ROBERT E. HOWARD**

The following three chapters compose only about 9600 words of a round-robin novel based upon a previously unpublished fragmentary tale by Robert E. Howard. The novel will eventually run close to 75,000 words and none of it has seen print before. Furthermore no part of the story will be reprinted anywhere until the entire story has appeared in FANTASY CROSSROADS. We'll be printing approximately 9-10,000 words per issue until the entire novel is in print. By the time this novel is complete, you'll see chapters by Michael Moorcock, Richard Tierney, Andrew J. Offutt, Manly Wade Wellman, Ramsey Campbell, Frank Belknap Long, Charles Saunders, Brian Lumley, Darrell Schweitzer and others in addition to the authors presented in this issue. Future illustrators (one per chapter) will include Stephen Fabian, Gene Day, Cliff Bird, Jim FitzPatrick and a host of others. If this isn't an all time coup supreme for Howard fandom...then I don't know what is. Read on dear friends.-  
Editor

## **GENSERIC'S SON**

By Robert E. Howard

Long, long ago an infant son was born to Gudrun of the Shining Locks, the wife of Genseric the Swordsman, in their horse-hide lodge on the frozen snows of Vanaheim. When the man-child's first wail of life broke upon the icy waste, Genseric lifted him in his mighty hand and searched him for any blemish, as was the custom of the Vanir and their brothers the AEsir. And he frowned, for the infant's left leg was crooked.

Immemorial custom had decreed that only the perfect should live; but Genseric turned to Gudrun questioningly, for hers was the last word in the matter. But Gudrun, with the rack of her throes still upon her, threw back fiercely and proudly her thick shining tresses, and said harshly: "I have four sons of fair, straight limbs; shall I give them a crippled frog for a brother?"

So Genseric went from the tent into the chill grey dawn, carrying the man-child naked. The smoke of his breath clotted his beard, and his shod feet crunched in the frozen crust. There was frost upon his sword hilt, and the icy air bit through his furs and the mail beneath.

Far out on the misty waste he laid the infant, its body turning blue in the wind that wailed out of the murky depths that veiled



•STEPHEN RUEL•

2 MARCH 1976

the horizons. He laid his hand on his sword, then blown to his ears from afar came the long howling of the great grey wolves. So he turned and strode back across the waste, like a dark phantom of the indefinite dawn, and behind him the cry of the pack rose to a crescendo of exultation and died away.

But even before the sun had thrust its way through the icy mists and low-lying clouds to turn the snow fields to a floating plain of blinding fire, old Bragi came to Genseric's tent, with his grey beard and his haunted eyes and the strangeness in his soul that an ancient sword-cut upon his head had made his.

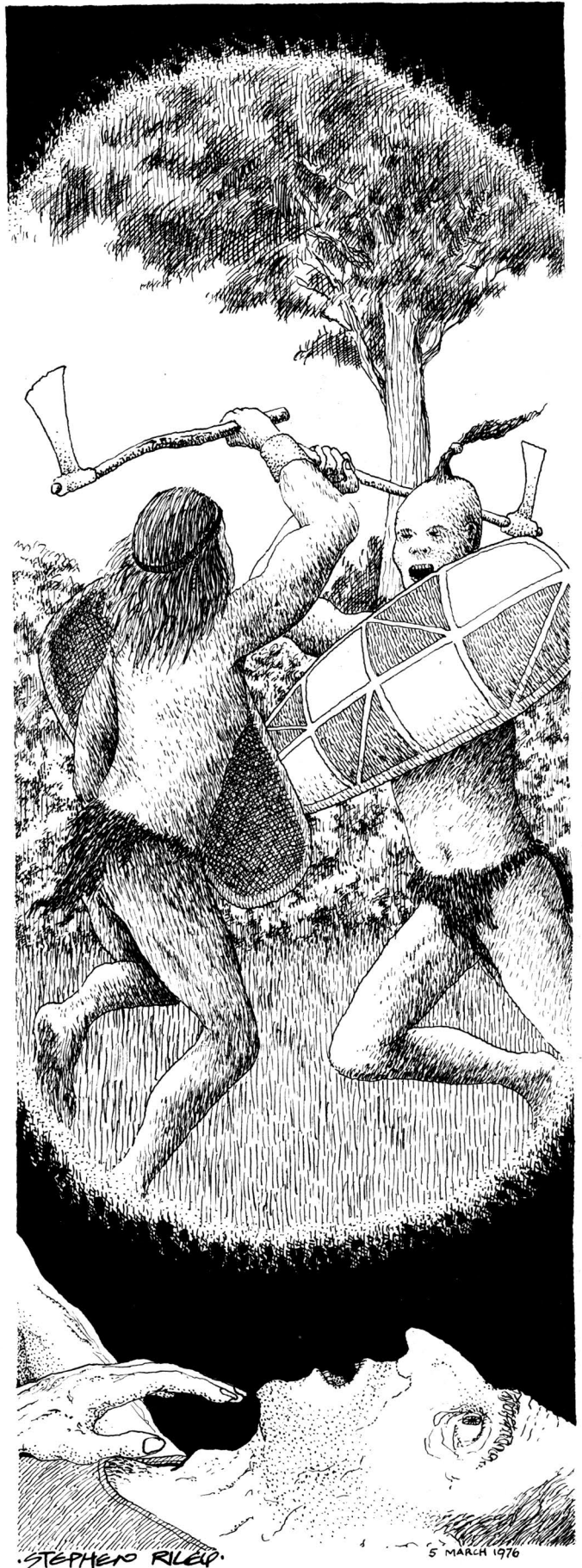
"I saw you lay the child upon the snow," quoth old Bragi. "I saw as I returned across the chill wastes in the grey birth of dawn. I heard the howling of the wolves as you turned away, and soon the swift patter of their feet over the crust. Their eyes were green in the murk, and their tongues lolled red as hunger between their white fangs. They came about the infant where it lay upon the snow, and stirred its limbs with their muzzles, yet harmed it not. By the icy blood of Ymir, they howled like the fiends of the wastes about it, and a great grey she-wolf lay down beside it and gave it her teats. Its fingers clutched at her stiff grey ice-clotted hair, and it sucked at her dugs as a wolf cub suckles. Then fear fell upon me, and I fled swiftly. Yet it is the truth I speak."

So Genseric and his brothers went forth into the waste, until they came to the spot where the babe was left. But the infant was gone, and all about the spot where it had lain were the tracks of wolves. There was no blood on the snow, but the tracks of many wolves led westward into the plains of eternal ice and snow. And afterwards, in the horsehide tents of Vanaheim and of Asgard, over the flickering fires was told the tale of Genseric's fifth born, the man-child who was taken by the wolves.

I was the man-child. I, whom men now call James Allison, in another, weaker, softer age and clime. I can not tell you how I possess this knowledge, any more than you can tell me how it is that the events of yesterday, and the days before, and the years before remain indelibly impressed upon that part of your consciousness we call memory, so that you can call them into life again by speech and writing. You know, that is all; aye, and I know. As you remember your days, I remember my lives. Your memory of your days is unbroken by the nights of sleep which separate them, nor is the memory of my lives broken by the alternating nights of deeper sleep we call death. In that night I have gone ten thousand times, and out of that night ten thousand times have I wakened, as I shall awake again and again throughout the long ages until the destruction of the planet that spawned it shall at last and ultimately break the chain of flesh and blood and bone figments which have successively cloaked the undying spirit that is I.

Even the destruction of the planet can not kill that spirit, whether its end be blackening frost under a dead, icy sun, or the melting wrath of cosmic fires. Let the earth burst like an iridescent bubble floating in the gulf of infinity, yet life is not destroyed. I have seen visions, vast and terrible and wonderful, of the cataclysm that shall not destroy the spirit that is me, but hurl it into unguessed infinities, into undreamed oceans of suns and stars beyond the ken of man, to take up the endless succession anew in gorgeous, weird worlds beyond the echoing voids.

But I have no lust to plumb those dreaming deeps. I am of the earth earthly. Out of the dust I have sprung, and into the dust I have returned, not once, but a million times, to rise in eternal resurrection, clothed in a new flesh and burning youth, like fresh and shining raiment. I look not beyond the horizons of the planet that gave me birth. My feet are deep in the mysteries of her grasses and her pools; her dew is in my hair, and her sun is hot gold on my naked shoulders; under my hands the warm earth pulses with life that gave the races of man being, and my arms embrace the living trunks of her trees; they are no less her children than am I; the speech of their leaves no less articulate than mine.





Oh, I have been many men in many lands! As I lay here waiting for death to free me from this broken, unsound body, I do not see the dingy walls, the cobwebbed ceiling, the cheap prints that pass for pictures; they do not limit my vision, nor the houses and the oak groves and the hills beyond; not the horizons themselves are my boundaries. I see the flaming dawns I have known of old, the far lands, the broad, foaming seas - white cliffs against the clear cold blue, with a smother of sparkling froth about their foot, and the cry of gulls. I see pageantry, and pride, and glory, the shine of the sun on golden corselets, the breaking of spears, the spreading of purple sails, and the dark eyes of women who have loved me.

Oh, I see all the men that have been I! The brave, the fearful, the strong, the weak, the kind, the cruel, the living, loving, hating, lusting, swilling, gorging, fighting, betraying, swaggering figures that have borne equally with one another the transient, restless spirit that now animates the frail and sickly frame that men call James Allison.

What have I not been? King, warrior, slave. I died at Marathon, at Arbela, at Cannae, at Chalons, at Clontarf, at Hastings, at Agincourt, at Austerlitz, at San Jacinto, and at Gettysburg. I was a nameless, yellow-haired chieftain riding a half-wild stallion when we brought bronze into western Europe; I bore spear and shield in the Macedonian phalanx when the plains of India shook to the tread of Alexander; I pulled a strong bow at Poitiers, when our whistling clouds of arrows broke the chivalry of France; and I heard the creak of leather, the tinkling of spurs and the singing of the night-riders when we drove the lowing herds of longhorns up the dim trail men call the Chisholm to build a new young empire of leather and beef and steel.

What could I not tell you of this planet, and the life that teems upon it; how could I not refute the chroniclers and the sages, and laugh to scorn the historians and the philosophers!

But I will rather go back beyond their ken, into an age of which they have no cognizance. I will tell you of the man-child of Genseric and of Gudrun of the Shining Locks, who was suckled by wolves.

Oh, the tale is no new one. Every race has its legends of a babe who tugged at the breasts of a she-wolf. It is the heritage of all Aryan peoples, and from them other races have borrowed.

But it was from the actuality of the son of Genseric and Gudrun that all these tales sprang. Romulus was sucked by a harlot, and his sons called her a wolf through courtesy and evasion. But the milk of the grey she-wolf was the only sustenance the son of Genseric knew.

I never had a name, as men are named, though in the years of my life I was called many things by many tribes. I was the Strong One. That was what my many names signified, in whatever tongue they were framed. I remember that a tribe of the AEsir called me Ghor, and since that is as good a name as another I will call the son of Genseric and of Gudrun by that name.

## THE COMING OF GHOR

By Karl Edward Wagner

### Chapter II

Of the first years of my life, only the most nebulous impressions remain etched into my memory. Most vividly penetrates the image of endless ice and snow, the memory of the cold-the relentless cold winds and crystalline nights when the chill stars shimmered through the frozen haze of my breath.

Even among the savage races of that age, I think no other infant could have survived a single night of that frozen wasteland. I survived.

I remember the sour warmth of the she-wolf's fur, the panting caress of her tongue, the sharp sting of her fangs. Dimly comes

the remembrance of the acrid milk that I suckled from her dugs. Sharper comes the memory of the hotter sustenance I drank as it gushed from the torn veins of some fallen prey, of sweet raw flesh stripped from yet thrashing flanks--before the cold transformed our kill into a broken statue of crimson marble and tattered fur. Nor were all our prey clad in their natural furs.

I say there was not another man-child who could have lived through my savage childhood. In the light of another age, I realize there was something about me that made me different from the tribe of Vanir from which I sprang. The pack sensed this, else they would have devoured me in that first instant: Some atavistic heritage in my soul, that called back to a lost age when man's apish forebears coupled with certain creatures who only mimicked the shape of man.

At times I think my father did well to cast my naked body onto the icy drifts, that his fault was rather to stay his hand from swordhilt as I squawled an answering cry to the oncoming wolfpack.

From the first dawning of conscious thought, I was aware that I was different from the she-wolf whose dugs nourished me, from my swift grey-furred brothers and sisters. The white fur that lay upon my childish limbs was no more than the down of a newborn cub, so that instinctively I wrapped about myself the half-rotted pelts of old kills. In the space of a few seasons, the cubs amongst whom I gambolled chased across the ice fields on powerful limbs--as bold and savage killers as their sires--while I scrambled clumsily about our den, too slow to join with the others.

I cannot say how many frozen seasons drifted past before I began to pull myself painfully erect, began to understand that I could stand unaided on my hind legs, realized that I could dash about in this strange upright posture. The crooked left leg that had condemned me to the icy waste had slowly straightened in the interim--whether from the rigors of my existence, or because it bore no weight while my infant bones elongated and hardened, I cannot guess. In time I ran across the tundra as swiftly and relentlessly as my brothers of the pack, with only a slight twist at my ankle to evidence my old deformity.

It was now that I began to sense a certain kinship to the strange two-legged prey we sometimes stalked. Before, seeing only a torn and mangled kill, I gave no more thought to what meat I shared than I did to the carcass of an elk or reindeer.

But now, running with the pack, for the first time I beheld another living man--a lone hunter, half-dead from the sudden blizzard that had separated him from his fellows. I held back, fascinated, as he made a desperate stand. He had neither fangs and claws, nor hooves and antlers--no more than did I. But as the pack ringed him in, he bent back the curved stick he carried, released its taut cord with an angry thrumm. A howl of agony, and the nearest wolf of the circle bounded high with a wooden shaft through his heart. The hunter drew a second shaft from the sling at his back, fitted it to his bow, sped it full into the throat of a second grey brother--all in the space of a heartbeat. Then the pack closed over him.

For a moment his limbs thrashed beneath the press of snarling slayers, and I saw that my first impression was mistaken, for one paw was armed with a single long, sharp talon. One ripping stroke of that silver-grey talon disembowelled one of those who tore at his throat. Then his struggles ceased.

Despite my own hunger, I watched in thought while my brothers fought over the steaming carcass. The curved stick and the shafts it hurled were beyond my understanding. The silver-grey talon had been torn from the man's forepaw. I examined it curiously, saw that the sharp grey sliver was fitted with a haft of bone that my own smaller forepaw could grip in the same manner as had the hunter. It felt good in my grip.

Standing there, the knife in my hand, looking down as the pack snarled over the flesh that so resembled my own--I recognized that I was not, as I had assumed when I thought about it at all,



Co

some ludicrously misshapen freak of nature, tolerated by my swifter and stronger brothers. I knew then that I was a man. At least in form.

With that understanding, a strange unrest claimed my soul. If I were a man, why did I not dwell among men--why was I brother to those whose enemy was man?

The mystery became an obsession with me. In fascination I couched in the shadows beyond the campfires of men, studying their inconceivable actions and incoherent barks and cries. On moonless nights when the frost hung invisibly upon my stealthy breaths, I slunk down almost within confines of their camps and villages. While my grey brothers kept a safe distance, I crept along unnoticed behind roving packs of hunters--mused upon their strange weapons, the pelts they wrapped their hairless flesh in, and the flashing devil of heat and light they shared their meat with.

As season followed bleak season, with but a fleeting thaw between the deadly chill of winter's return, I spent less time with the pack and ever more hours in contemplation of man and his ways. I recognized that his yelps and grunts were a pattern of speech far more complex than that of my wolf brothers. By long study I found I could form some of their cries in my own throat; that the bright devil-thing was called "fire", that the curved stick that hurled sharp-fanged shafts was called "bow". The silver-grey talon was "knife", and knife had an older, deadlier brother called "sword"--longer and sharper far than any tusk or talon. I coveted sword as I had desired no other thing in all my grim youth.

There came a day when the sun was a cold red disc lost beneath the lowering clouds of a gathering ice storm. My grey brothers had slunk into the shelter of their dens, while I, a wild thing of little more than ten winters, crouched along beneath the leaden skies to watch a scene beyond all marvels.

Two packs of men had come together in the storm-fraught waste. Their encounter was a bloody clash--a battle fought without quarter. The reason of their conflict was beyond my understanding, but the savage ferocity of that battle made my heart leap within my young chest. My blood throbbed in my veins, and I gnashed my teeth and trembled with a lust to throw myself into the slaughter. Some final instinct held me back, and the snarls and howls that escaped my frothing lips were drowned in the shouts and death cries of the combatants.

There were perhaps twenty men in one group and little more than half as many in the other. Despite the odds, the smaller pack held their ground gamely--because of the deadly prowess of one warrior. That one man, a mighty figure whose blond mane towered over the others, held my attention despite the moan of the approaching storm. Gripped in his huge hands, a sword as long as my own thin body wove a murderous pattern of red-streaked death. All about him men struggled together--locked in death embraces, battering steel against steel--until death brought a gory close to their separate battles.

The battle was too savagely fought to long endure. One by one those of the tall swordsman's pack died beneath the blades of the others. Then for a space he stood alone, ringed by four of his enemies--all that still lived of their band. One he clove from shoulder to belly--but before he could recover from that furious stroke, the others surged upon him. What followed was too fast for my eye. Blades clashed against blades--flesh tore apart with gouts of scarlet spray--bodies reeled brokenly as fierce shouts died in sudden groans. Then only the tall swordsman was standing.

As I watched, entranced by the tableau, he slowly sank to his knees, surveying the silent field of carnage. The snow was trampled and streaked with crimson, and the stream of blood that flowed from a dozen wounds in his flesh added its steaming portion to the spreading stain. His head sagged onto his chest.

The first crystals of ice were spitting down upon the broken bodies of the slain, when at last I dared leave my place of concealment. In silent awe I crept among the slaughtered corpses,

drawn to the motionless figure who slumped amidst the dead. The storm would soon bury slayers and slain, I knew from its deepening moan. But more urgently I knew that I must have that great sword for my own.

I had thought the man dead. As I reached for the sword, his eyes snapped open. I recoiled. The huge blade rose menacingly in the blood-caked fist.

"AEsir dog..." his voice snarled, then fell. Dying eyes beheld me in wonder.

Stinging needles of ice rattled against the still bodies. A rising wind tore away our cloudy breaths. I stood before him--a tall thin youth, seeming older than my years for my rearing in the wild--even as my sinewy frame was ice-hard with the tempered muscles of the wild. Gusts of icy wind tossed my snow-white mane, rippled the beard I had already grown and the wiry hairs that matted limbs and trunk. Ill-fitting tatters of hide and fur were bound to my body, in crude mimicry of the hunters I had seen.

I snarled low in my throat, advanced when I saw he did not rise. "Sword!" I grated awkwardly, and growled as does one wolf who demands a joint of meat from a weaker brother.

As I started forward, his eyes fell upon my twisted left ankle. I snarled again, and his face showed stark wonder.

"By Ymir!" he swore. "You!"

But now on the howling wind I heard voices of other men. I must have the sword now.

With a sudden lunge I avoided his clumsy guard and wrenched at the swordhilt. He bellowed in rage, staggered upright with me clinging to his arm. My strength and my quickness surprised him, and I set my fangs into his arm before he quite realized I was upon him. Mortally wounded, he was still stronger than I, and knew the ways in which man fights man. A blow of his fist on my head all but cracked my skull. I hung on grimly, biting and evading his clumsy efforts to grip with me.

His swordarm pinioned, he then released his sword, caught its hilt in his free hand. Dazed from his pummeling, I remembered the knife I kept thrust in my furs. As he held me with his gashed swordarm and raised his sword on high with his other arm, I reached swiftly with my knife and drew it across his throat.

Blood choked his sudden cry of agony. Even a heart's beat from death, he had strength left to slash downward with his upraised sword. Slippery with gore, I already was tearing away from his weakened grasp. I spun under his arm, and the sword's massive hilt smashed against my skull, its blade grazing across my shoulder.

Then the dead giant had slumped over me. Waves of pain blurred my vision, but I triumphantly wrenched the sword from his dead fist, started away with my prize. I staggered only a few strides.

Now there were new figures to bar my way. Through the clawing ice-storm, another band of warriors had rushed upon the scarlet-streaked patch of snow. They gazed at me in astonishment as I drew away from the toppled corpse. Snarling, I reeled toward them, thinking to break past them and disappear into the storm.

My legs would not hold my weight. Blackness swallowed my brain, and I never felt my body strike the trampled snow.

I lay in a stupor for some days. The warrior's dying blow would have shattered any other youth's skull. As it was, I must have sustained a severe concussion, for my scalp was laid open to the bone, and it was days before my vision focused and I could stand without the roaring of black winds spinning through my brain.

Any other would have died. I was not like any other.

I awoke in a camp of the AEsir, where they cared for my wounds and gave me food. The AEsir treated me with a mingling of respect and of fear. I was the slayer of Genseric the Swordsman.

Over the ensuing months I was made to understand. The Vanir



and the AEsir were at war--not that there were ever extended intervals of peace. The tribe I had fallen in with was part of a new drift of the AEsir into Vanaheim. Many and bloody were their savage conflicts, for upon the loss or gaining of hunting grounds in that frozen waste balanced death or survival. Chief among the Vanir warriors was Genseric the Sworder. A band of AEsir warriors had overtaken Genseric, as he and the other Vanir returned from an earlier battle. Before the presence of these AEsir, I had slain their fiercest enemy.

At first they wondered at my strange ways, at my ignorance of their speech and customs. But the wound to my head was one that should have slain, and the AEsir quickly assumed that the blow had driven all my wits from me. Beyond that, their speculation was simply that I was a youth of some other Aesir clan, whose kinsmen had all perished in that battle with Genseric. Later they would know different. For now they cared for my needs, according me the same consideration they would to any hero of their race, blinded or crippled in battle.

Despite the death of Genseric, the tide of war ran against the AEsir, so that for a space the tribal drift was driven back into the snowfields of Asgard. I went with them, although at any moment I might have clipped away and returned to the pack. But with the years I had slowly drawn away from my grey brothers, increasingly caught up in my obsession with man. At last, so it seemed to me, fate had given me a chance to live among men, to learn the ways of man. I would learn now whether I was indeed man, or some freak of the wild who only mimicked the shape of man.

I had no name, so the AEsir called me Ghor, meaning the Strong. And strong I was--strong with muscle and sinew honed by the merciless wild--and quick with the instant reflexes of a hungry wolf. A stripling in years, unskilled in the use of weapons--yet not even the boldest of their warriors cared to test my ready temper. They were all savage warriors, the least of them more than a match for any dozen men of James Allison's day. But they were reared in horse-hide tents and suckled at their mothers' breasts, while I had crawled naked in the snow to wrest a portion of the kill from my yellow-eyed brothers.

For all the strangeness of man's ways, I learned quickly. At times I frightened those about me, for I was a thing of the wild, and even their rude existence seemed to me soft, and contrary to the law of kill or be killed, that was my only law. But I wished to become as men, so I made myself learn their speech and their pointless customs. Had I fallen in with a tribe of the Vanir, I am certain I would have been recognized for what I was. But this tribe had migrated from far within Asgard, where no AEsir had yet heard the tale of Genseric's fifth son who ran with the wolves and haunted the darkness beyond the firelight.

Four years and more crept past, while I dwelt with the AEsir and learned the ways of men. By the time the scars of Genseric's blows had faded, I could speak their tongue fluently, could eat their burned meat, wear their stifling garments, and sleep within a tent without fear of smothering. My fear of fire was slow in leaving me, and not a few brows were darkly furrowed at this.

No man disputed my possession of Genseric's great sword. In their eyes the sword was mine by law of combat. Indeed, I should have killed any who sought to contest my prize. The blade was huge, and while I had the strength to wield it, my movements were clumsy and untutored. Again my awkwardness with weaponry was laid to the wound I had suffered. Patiently the AEsir trained me in the use of sword and knife, axe and shield, bow and arrow. My natural strength and feral quickness made me learn such arts in a fraction of the time another youth would have required. Not many seasons had passed before my skill with the sword excelled that of my tutors, and I could speed an arrow through the eye of a reindeer as it fled in vain.

And yet, for all the respect my strength and skill in arms gained for me, I knew I was still as much an outsider among the

AEsir as I had been among my brothers of the pack. There was a strangeness about me that no veneer could conceal. Most shrugged and said my wound had left me with a streak of madness. Some, who remembered my savagery in those first months, might scowl at my crooked ankle and the white hair that matted my body more thickly than seemed good, but out of fear of my anger they held their suspicions to themselves.

At length the AEsir again looked hungrily upon the lands of the Vanir. Once more the war horns bellowed, and the tribe with whom I dwelt heeded its summons. With a high heart I marched with them, for lately existence within their village had grown stale, and I was eager to turn to other things.

As before, the borders of Asgard and Vanaheim resounded with countless deadly battles and individual duels. Our wars were not a great massing of army against army, but rather a long series of chance encounters between raiding parties, of ambushes and pillaged camps. We had no cities to burn, no kings or generals to command great armies--only the savage ferocity of desperate men who followed their clans to seize or to defend the frozen expanses whose bounty meant life or starvation. We fought not for princes nor for ideals, but for our bellies and our lives.

This time the scales of war favored the AEsir. Some said it was because of Ghor, the white-maned berserker whose reckless strength and mighty blade tore a gory swath through the Vanir ranks. Be that as it may, I found my prowess in battle and zeal for slaughter did little to overcome the indefinable barrier that separated me from my AEsir comrades.

The sun was falling beneath the ice-locked horizon, when we overtook a handful of stragglers from the Vanir retreat. A dismal lot, they were, aged and infirm, and scarcely worth the dulling of our blades. I raised my sword over a fallen man, grey-bearded and too ancient to fight. Briefly I noticed the scars on his thinning scalp from an old wound, saw the haunted look in his eyes as he awaited death. I knew then that he was fey, and held my blade to hear his words.

"That sword," the greybeard rasped. "How did you get it?"

"I took it from the Vanir chief who carried it not five years past," I laughed. "And paid him for it with a knife for his throat."

"Who are you?" he queried, staring at me strangely.

"I am called Ghor."

"But you are not AEsir!" the old man swore, his eyes looking beyond me. "I saw you as a babe, laid out on the ice. You were suckled by wolves, and you are a child of evil--but I know you for Genseric's fifth son, and your father's blood is on your hands!"

"Better than for mine to be on his hands," I sneered. "Say on, old one. How do you know of such matters?"

"I am Bragi," he whispered. "Of the Vanir clan to which you were born. Your mother is Gudrun of the Shining Locks, and your father was Genseric the Sworder. You are the fifth of their sons, but because your leg was crooked, Gudrun bade Genseric to leave you upon the ice, saying she had already four strong sons with fine straight limbs. Ymir curse that day, for you have proven Genseric's bane, and now you turn upon your own people!"

"I have no people!" I growled. "And of Gudrun's four strong sons? How fared they?"

"They are their mother's pride. Raki the Swift, Sigismund the Bear, Obri the Cunning, and Alwin the Silent. Hear their names and tremble, for they shall avenge their father and sweeten the snows of Vanaheim with AEsir blood!"

I laughed and placed the point of my sword to his throat. "It is Ghor the Strong who craves vengeance, Bragi! Vengeance on my brothers who usurped my place at the fire! Vengeance on my mother who condemned her own babe to death! The gods favor my vengeance, else they would not have given my father into my hands for the killing. Let Gudrun and her sons beware the vengeance of Ghor! I am what I am because of their crime against me!"

"You are a child of evil!" Bragi swore fiercely. "There is evil in your blood and in your soul--I see it! I saw it then, as I fled from the vision of the wolves who suckled a human babe!"

"And what else do you now see, old one?"

"I see death," Bragi whispered.

"You see truly," I told him, and drove home the blade.

## GHOR'S REVENGE

By Joseph Payne Brennan

### Chapter III

The AEsir tribe I fought among had had a successful sword reaping that icy day. In the evening they squatted around their fires and roasted succulent bits of hoarded meat to celebrate, but I brooded alone in my horse-hide tent.

The dying words of Bragi echoed in my ears: "Hear their names and tremble!" I did tremble, but not with fear--with rage. Fury swept through me like a fiery fever. I repeated the names of my hated brothers over and over again: "Raki the Swift", "Sigismund the Bear", "Obri the Cunning", "Alwin the Silent". And then there was Gudrun, at whose bidding I had been left on the frozen snows to await the fangs of the wolf pack. "Gudrun of the Shining Locks"! The day was not far off, I vowed, when those locks would lie entangled in a welter of blood and brain fragments!

More than once that night the killing madness overcame me to such an extent that I gripped Genseric's great sword and started to leave the tent. Ice stung my face and the wind howled like a hundred demons as I stared into the outside blackness. Each time I turned back, shaking with the savagery of my own blood hunger. The fierce desire for revenge was like an inward fire burning away at my very bone marrow.

But the white heat of hatred did not completely blot out my common sense. There was work to be done before I wreaked my vengeance. I would have to learn which tribe of the Vanir my kinsmen led. And I would have to find out where in Vanaheim their chief camp was located.

If I rushed out blindly, thirsting for blood, I might indeed kill dozens of Vanir clansmen--but I myself might be cut down before I found my hated brothers and mother.

As I sat alone in the darkness of my tent, I decided that I would adopt the tactics of the great grey wasteland wolves. I would prowl the perimeters of the Vanir outposts; I would lie in the shadows just beyond the light of their campfires. Sooner or later I would learn all I needed to know.

Shortly before a frigid dawn threw scattered light about the AEsir camp, I slipped away. Guards had been posted, but I had no trouble evading them. Belly-down, I crept through the brittle-cold brush and not even the snap of a single twig betrayed my presence.

By the time a fog-shrouded disc of sun arose above the bleak barrens, I was miles from the AEsir camp. Stopping briefly where a fringe of tundra grass provided cover, I ate a piece of dried venison which I carried in an improvised pouch.

I was confident that the AEsir would shrug off my absence. Most of them believed I was half-mad anyway. If and when I needed their help, I felt sure they would welcome me back. In their deadly war with the Vanir, the great sword of Genseric would be sorely missed!

From that morning on, for over a fortnight, I lived like a wolf. If hunger became unbearable, I took time out to hunt. I could run a deer to earth. Not for nothing had I been raised with those tireless roving wraiths of the northern wilderness!

I headed north and slightly east, where I judged the main Vanir encampments lay. On several occasions I spotted heavily-armed Vanir war parties, but I avoided them, even though my hand tightened on the hilt of Genseric's mighty sword. Wholesale tribal killing would have to wait; first, I had personal

blood debts to pay!

In my mind, I repeated the names of my brothers and mother over and over. Raki the Swift, Sigismund the Bear, Obri the Cunning, Alwin the Silent--and Gudrun of the Shining Locks.

Their names became a refrain, rushing through my head even while I slept. Sometimes I sat bolt upright, roused from sleep, my hand convulsively tightening on Genseric's sword. Momentarily, I was sure they were nearby, awaiting my vengeance. Then I would settle back and sleep again, but the names, like some sort of evil insistent chant, went on ringing in my head.

I slept under the shelter of rocks, or stunted trees, or even on bare unyielding ice with snow falling heavily from starless skies. A plain shoulder tunic, consisting of scraped animal skins, covered my back and belly. Deerskin covered my feet. I wore nothing else save a hide belt to which were attached scabbards for my huge sword and a bone-handled knife, plus a small but powerful bow and a few arrows. I sometimes awoke buried in snow, but, like a wolf, I simply shook it off and roved on, none the worse.

One morning, the third week after I left the AEsir camp, I noticed a feather of smoke float out above a small stand of larch trees a mile away.

There was little cover, but I made the most of it. Squirring over the frozen ground, scarcely more than a layer of gravel-laced ice, I inched toward the larches, taking advantage of every contour of the terrain which gave concealment.

It took me nearly a half hour to reach the larch grove but I was not too late. A small band of Vanir -- stragglers from a much larger group, I gathered -- were picking the bones of some burnt animal as they hunkered over a tiny fire.

"Hell's traces!" one of them exclaimed. "Raki may have our heads for this!"

I shivered as I heard the name, but I dared not make a sound. Instinctively my hand squeezed the hilt of Genseric's thirsty sword.

Another Vanir tossed a bone over his shoulder. He shrugged and growled. "Let him rave. We got cut off. What could we do? Don't worry. Raki and his brothers need every fighting man they can muster."

He leaned forward over the fire. "With Ghor leading them, the AEsir may drive us into the Death Lands. Eternal night and not even moss to chew on!"

Skulking only yards away, I started at the sound of my own name. In the mouth of this Vanir, it sounded strange.

Another arose from the fire with an oath. "Ghor is blood and bone like the rest of us! We'll drive the AEsir back to Asgard -- and glad to get there they'll be!"

Presently they all stood up, kicked snow over the campfire and headed northeast. Like a gaunt, ravenous wolf, I followed. Once one of them turned around, scowling, but I was already flat on the ice by the time his eyes swung in my direction. He looked right over me. Shrugging, he turned and went on.

There were five of them but I felt confident that I could have killed the whole lot, if I attacked while they were off guard. I had other plans.

They would lead me to Raki -- Raki the Swift, Sigismund the Bear, Obri the Cunning, Alwin the Silent -- and Gudrun of the Shining Locks.

The five Vanir traveled with deliberation. It was obvious that they were in no great rush to rejoin their comrades. I raged with impatience but there was no way that I could hurry them along. Above all, I wanted them to remain ignorant of my presence.

It took them nearly three days to reach their main camp. Meanwhile I followed in their footsteps, famished, savage, implacable. I crouched outside the circle of the firelight while they ate, my own belly grinding with hunger, my eyes burning. They became uneasy and subdued, as if they sensed they were being followed, but not once did they catch a glimpse of me. I crept over the ice fields and through the sparse thickets like a

wolf -- like the shadow of a wolf. Occasionally I ran across small game but I ignored it in spite of my ravenous hunger. I could not take the time, I felt, to run down game and eat it. I had only one driving purpose and nothing short of death itself would deter me.

At last the Vanir reached the outposts of the main camp. After a brief confab, the sentries let them pass and they disappeared from my sight.

For an hour or more I watched from a nearby point of trees. At length I decided to circle the entire camp. It was no easy task. Guards had been doubled; they were wary and alert. But my long years with the wolf pack paid off; I prowled the entire perimeter of the camp and not a sentry the wiser.

It was a large clan assemblage, gathered and geared for war. There seemed to be an incessant whetting of sword blades, a notching of arrows, a repair and reinforcement of the heavy hide shields.

Time after time I had the opportunity to slit the throat of some isolated Vanir guard, but I desisted, even though the fingers of my knife hand itched. The killing of a sentry would arouse the entire camp. That was the last thing I wanted.

Early on the morning of the second day I found what I sought: a large skin tent set somewhat apart from the others and closely guarded by two powerful Vanir. They kept constant patrol, hands on sword hilts, eyes searching. From time to time single Vanir, whom I judged to be sub-chieftains, strode toward the tent and were admitted after a close scrutiny by the guards. One of these visitors was let in only after he had lain his sword, knife and arrows outside the tent. He cursed the guards but complied.

War strategy was being planned within the tent and that could mean only one thing: inside were my hated brothers. My heart hammered against my ribs but I managed to restrain myself.

Just to the rear of the large tent was another, smaller one. I could not be sure but I felt convinced that this was the tent of Gudrun of the Shining Locks.

It was late morning before one of the brothers emerged. There was no doubt in my mind that it was Raki the Swift. I had heard that he bore a striking resemblance to Genseric, whose prowess had become a legend. Raki was a huge man, far over six feet in height, muscular yet rangy, with gleaming blue eyes and long yellow hair. He carried an oversize sword and I noticed that his shield was not made of animal hides but hammered metal -- rare in these parts.

The sweat burst out on me as I gripped the hilt of Genseric's faded sword. I felt no fear of this swaggering giant -- only a hatred so intense I seemed to be on fire.

I needed every ounce of self-control I possessed to keep to my place of concealment in the fringe of woods and brush. But I forced myself to remain silent and motionless. I was confident that I could kill Raki in open combat, but I was sure there were three more of Genseric's sons in the tent behind him. And Gudrun, probably, in the small tent to the rear.

I wanted to make a clean sweep. It would be necessary for me to pick my own place and time, if I hoped to succeed.

After striding about a bit, and exchanging some words with the guards, Raki reentered the tent.

All day, at intervals, sub-chiefs and leading fighters visited the tent. I surmised that a massive attack was being prepared against the AEsir. Genseric's sons were planning carefully. I sensed that the old days -- small war parties, hit-and-run tactics -- were drawing to a close. Soon there would be all-out war, with extermination the goal.

During the course of the day, as they ventured out at intervals, I got a good look at my other three brothers: Sigismund the Bear, shorter and broader than Raki, a veritable barrel of a body, with a thick neck and rather small head; Obri the Cunning, thin and lean, with crafty eyes and an expression of open contempt permanently etched on his unpleasant features; Alwin the Silent, another giant of a man, with hooded, enigmatic eyes and compressed lips which seldom opened for speech.

Towards late afternoon a tall amazon strode around the side of the tent and spoke to the guards. I knew at once it was Gudrun of the Shining Locks. She had become somewhat heavy-bodied, but her thick plaited hair still gleamed yellow in the afternoon sun and, had I been able to retain any sense of objectivity, I would have been forced to admit that she remained an attractive woman.

But I glared at her with a loathing which no words could encompass. I think she actually felt the withering blast of my hatred. She turned, frowning, and stared toward the brush where I lay concealed. One of the guards made some comment and started toward the woods but she shook her head and called him back.

I looked away, afraid that if I stared at her longer, she would indeed order the guards to beat through the scrub where I crouched.

Presently she returned to the small tent at the rear of the larger one.

As shadows fell over the camp, I made my plans. I would wait until the middle of the night before I struck. Disposing of the two guards should present no great problem. When they were safely out of the way, I would glide into the large tent with Genseric's great sword held at the ready....

I reasoned that it would be easier to fight inside the tent, than out. I would have the advantage of surprise for one thing, and in the relatively small confines of the tent there would be less room for four fighting men to maneuver. Outside the tent, on the other hand, I would be surrounded at once and attacked from all sides. If I could kill the guards and steal into the tent while my brothers still slept, the odds would be more in my favor.

In addition, I foresaw, the ring of sword blades and the clamor of raised voices would be at least partially muffled inside the tent. Outside, the racket might rouse the entire camp.

Although I felt no fear, I was well aware that the sons of Genseric the Sworder would fight savagely and to the death. My only fear, however -- if fear it might be called -- was that I could be wounded or driven off before my revenge was complete. The thought gnawed at me. My own attack, I therefore determined, must be swift, merciless and efficient. The guards must make no outcry and the camp must under no conditions be aroused. I would have to strike with the speed and silence of Death itself.

The hours dragged. At first half a moon hung in the sky, but soon heavy cloud banks covered it completely. As full darkness closed in, the guards paced restlessly. Once a snow owl hooted somewhere in the nearby thickets.

Inch by inch, foot by foot, I squirmed out of the woods. I made no more sound than a shadow makes as it falls on frozen ground. No creeping tundra wolf could have advanced more silently than I.

At last I slid within sword range of the nearest guard. I bided my time. Leaving Genseric's gleaming sword in its scabbard, I drew my short bone-handled knife and waited.

The unsuspecting guard came within two feet, paused, turned and started to retrace his footsteps. I left the ground like an arrow sped from the bow. While one arm circled the guard's mouth to stifle any cries, the other whipped the knife blade across his throat, severing the jugular. Even with his life-blood spurting out, he tried to fight back. It was useless. Only death could have broken my grip. When his body grew limp, I eased it to the icy ground and wriggled along through the darkness toward the second guard like a deadly night adder.

He was standing still, staring off into the blackness, when my knife slashed across his throat. He twisted about and attempted to draw his sword but never managed to lift it more than an inch or two out of the scabbard. When his struggles ended, I drew my arm away from his face and very carefully tipped him backwards to the ground.

Then I started for the tent of Genseric's sons.

I paused at the flap and listened. Heavy snoring came from within. I forced myself to wait a full five minutes, hand on sword





hilt, but no other sound save that of snoring reached my ears.

Drawing Genseric's heavy sword, I stepped just inside the tent, letting my eyes adjust to the interior. In spite of the unrelieved darkness, I could presently make out the shadowy forms of four sleeping figures.

Lifting the massive sword high over my head, I crept toward the skin bed of the nearest. In spite of my stealth, something -- some obscure unspoken warning, some mental image of danger -- must have reached the brain of the sleeping man. He sat up suddenly, with a soft grunt. I judged it was Sigismund the Bear.

Waiting no longer, I lunged toward the pile of skins. The legendary sword of Genseric swung downward in a mighty sweeping arc, cleaving through skull, rib-cage, and spine. The Bear toppled backwards, split apart like a pine riven by a lightning bolt.

I had scarcely drawn the word clear when someone bounded from an adjacent bed of skins. It was Raki and I knew now why he was known as the Swift. He must have slept sword in hand, because the blade of his slashing weapon whistled within a half inch of my face as I leaped backwards toward the side of the tent.

Confident, he came on, but luck was with me. As he was about to slash again, he slipped on one of the skin blankets. Momentarily, he was thrown slightly off balance. It was all the opening I needed. Genseric's sword licked out, thrust forward with all my strength, and buried itself halfway to the hilt in Raki's chest. To my amazement, he held onto his own sword and slashed at me again. But it was the last instinctive movement of a dying man.

Two more figures were coming at me now and I saw there was no time to be lost. With a tremendous heave, I tore Genseric's sword out of Raki's breast and turned to meet Obri the Cunning and Alwin the Silent.

As Raki crashed to the ground, Alwin, the other giant, jumped forward, hacking at my head. I felt the tip of his blade cut through my scalp and scrape against bone and I laughed.

The fabled sword of Genseric became like a live thing in my hand. It leaped and slashed and parried and although Alwin fought with great skill, his efforts seemed clumsy and ponderous compared with my own.

As we fought, Obri the Cunning circled about, dagger in hand, striking at me like a coiled snake as I came within range. Once I felt his knife slice through my left forearm but I paid no attention.

Muttering with rage and exasperation, Alwin made a ferocious lunge with his oversize sword. It was his last. He was just a fraction of a second too slow in recovering. The great sword of Genseric, his father, sang through the air and Alwin's head spun off.

Grinning, I turned toward Obri. Quickly sheathing his knife, he backed off and drew, not his sword as I had expected, but a bow. An arrow smashed into my right shoulder and I knew more would be streaking toward me before I could reach him. Lifting Genseric's sword in both hands, by hilt and tip, I hurled it straight at him.

The impact of the heavy blade knocked him off his feet as another arrow hissed past my head. With a great bound, I sprang across the tent. My hands found Obri's throat before he could draw his knife. As I squeezed, I could see his bulging eyes shine wildly in the darkness. Bones cracked; his tongue protruded. Blood poured out his mouth and he went limp.

Flinging his body aside, I recovered Genseric's sword, strode to the tent flap and listened. I heard nothing. I surmised, correctly, that the brief sound of clashing sword blades had been effectively muffled by the horse-hide tent.

Blood was flowing out of my scalp, forearm and shoulder, but I paid no attention.

Pausing only momentarily as I slipped outside, I hurried through the darkness to the small tent at the back.

The sound of heavy, regular breathing reached me as I ap-

proached the tent flap. Without stopping, I stepped inside. Like a wolf, I could now see well in the darkness and I had no trouble making out a bulky form lying on skins toward the rear of the tent.

Slipping out my bone-handled knife, I held it by the blade, judged the blow carefully and swung the handle of the knife against Gudrun's temple. She jerked once but made no sound. Her breathing became harsh and irregular.

Hoping I had not struck too hard, I threw her over my shoulder like the carcass of a deer and hurried out of the tent.

Twenty minutes later I was well away from the camp and deep in scrub woods which covered much of the area. I walked swiftly, in spite of my burden, stopping only long enough to ram a crumpled piece of rabbit skin inside the woman's mouth. If she revived and tried to scream, the gage would turn her cries into little more than whimpers.

I estimated that I still had several hours before the bodies were discovered and the alarm sounded. But I could not be positive. I could not be sure that the two guards had been put on station for the entire night. They might be relieved. In that case, I would have only a few more minutes.

The night remained quiet. I heard no sounds save the occasional hoot of a snow owl, or the scutter of tiny feet as some small animal scurried away.

In spite of my wounds and the weight I carried, I was not even winded when I finally stopped.

Dumping Gudrun on the icy-covered ground, I wiped the blood from my face. Then I bent, ripped the gag from her mouth and stripped off every last shred of her clothes -- skin garments made doubly soft by the patient gums of elderly Vanir women.

At length she stirred, groaned and opened her eyes. I grinned down at her. She recognized me at once, in spite of my blood-smeared face, and sat up, snarling.

I prodded her with my foot. "Well, old hag, your crippled frog has hopped back to play a little game!"

Swaying, she stood up and beat at me with both fists. Dodging, I stuck out my foot and she crashed to the ground again.

"Frogs never forget," I told her, "nor does Ghor the Strong whom you had set out for the wolves to devour!"

She sat up again, glaring at me. "A pity they didn't! I should have strangled you myself! Give me a knife and we shall see who is left for the wolves!"

"I don't fight females," I said. "Besides, I have other plans for you!"

She sneered. "You are afraid to fight me with cold steel!"

I shrugged and laughed. "Ask your four sons if Ghor the Strong is afraid to fight. They lie back in their tent, still as in sleep -- but no longer do they snore!"

I saw her face whiten. She remained silent.

"Enough of this," I growled. "Get up, hag, and walk."

She got up without another word and started off, barefooted, across the ice. She staggered and I saw that already she was starting to turn blue with the cold.

When we reached the middle of a wide expanse, open to the frigid winds, I reached out and sent her crashing to earth again.

Shivering, half-dead with the cold, she continued to glare up at me.

I stared down without pity. "You will be warm soon enough, Gudrun of the Shining Locks," I assured her. "Warm in the hungry bellies of the wolf pack!"

She made no reply and I walked away. When I reached the edge of a ragged fringe of fir trees, I stopped, turned and lifted my head. From my throat issued the long-drawn, eerie howl of the hunting wolf. I repeated the call three times. Then I squatted on my haunches and waited.

Answering howls rose in the night air. I could tell by the sounds that the pack was famished. They came on swiftly.

Gudrun had struggled to her knees. She knelt motionless, like an image carved out of blue stone.

Soon enough the pack swung into view, long, lean hunters of

the night with lolling tongues and glinting green-yellow eyes. Their grey coats looked mangy and thin. The hunting had not been good.

Paying no attention to me, they headed straight for Gudrun, who remained kneeling motionless.

I thought she was already frozen to death, but as the lead wolf leaped for her throat, she dodged aside, gripped it by the hind legs and swung it like a scythe.

In spite of my passionate hatred, I felt a brief flash of grudging admiration for the doomed woman.

Her maneuver held off death only for minutes however. The lead wolf finally wrenched itself from her freezing hands and the pack closed in for the kill.

Even then she fought on. As she went down under the ravenous, threshing grey shapes, I saw her sink her teeth into one of the wolves' throats.

That was her final act. Seconds later she was being torn to pieces.

I sat and watched as the pack fed, snarling and fighting among themselves. A few minutes later there was nothing left on the ice except smears of blood and a few of the larger bones.

The pack gathered together, swung in my direction, stopped, sat back on their haunches, howled in unison and trotted off into the night.

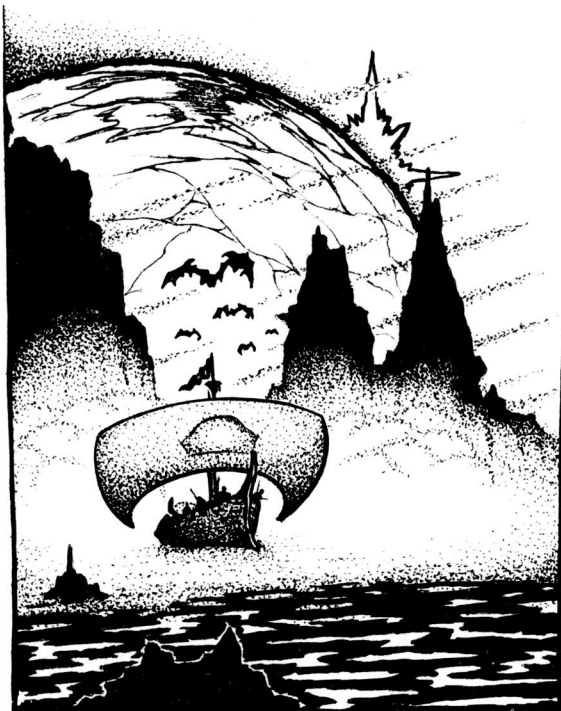
I walked out where the wolves had fed. The shining locks of Gudrun lay gleaming on the ice, tangled together with stiffening blood and bits of brain stuff. The great jaws of the starving beasts had even cracked open Gudrun's skull.

My blood debt was finally paid.

I strode off, across the expanse of ice, into the fir trees. From far away, over the freezing plains, I heard the subdued but growing murmur of many voices.

My night's earlier handiwork, I assumed, had been discovered.

(To be continued next issue by Richard Tierney, Michael Moorcock and Charles Saunders.)



## GALILEO SAW THE TRUTH

By Gregory Nicoll

The Tuscan artist, at his bench, invents a thing quite new,  
An optic orb of shining stone, ringed in white and blue;  
And through this whirling piece of glass, a wondrous thing he sees:

Great rows of troops, with capes and banners -- flapping in the breeze.

Advancing through the eons, through time's spectral gloom,  
One hundred thousand ancient soldiers, marching to their doom.

The orb he turns and then he finds, a stirring sight to see,  
The swords of Conan and King Kull, within a bloody spree.  
The shields they break and axes flash, through blood and bones and brains,

Horses scream as riders die, and Chaos, supreme, reigns.  
Advancing through the eons, through time's spectral gloom,  
One hundred thousand ancient soldiers, marching to their doom.

And through the piece of oddly glass, looms a conflict large,  
Hal and Hotspur meet with blades, and Worcester leads the charge.

With wood and steel the foes they slay, and shirts of mail they tore;

Many a good tall fellow served up to the smoky war.  
Advancing through the eons, through time's spectral gloom,  
One hundred thousand ancient soldiers, marching to their doom.

The scenes they shift and the artist sees, many more views of death,

The sounds of cannons choking flame, and conquerors' hard breath.

In lobster robes, and with Brown Bess, they march in legions wide;

Shots rake through well-ordered ranks and widow many a bride.  
Advancing through the eons, through time's spectral gloom,  
One hundred thousand ancient soldiers, marching to their doom.

The artist finds another clash, this one horrid to behold,  
Armies charging, Blue and Gray, each quite strong and bold.  
The skies are graced with flying craft, ships sail beneath the waves,

Repeaters crack with rapid fire and send men to early graves.  
Advancing through the eons, through time's spectral gloom,  
One hundred thousand ancient soldiers, marching to their doom.

A tyrant then comes centerstage, and thousands hear his song,  
A flag of red with four-armed cross; and Panzer barrels long.  
Then surprises come at Harbor Red (what madmen call it Pearl?)

A mushroom cloud picks up the Earth, and dancing atoms swirl.  
Advancing through the eons, through time's spectral gloom,  
One hundred thousand ancient soldiers, marching to their doom.

Unceasing shows the optic orb, on goes the grisly show,  
The air now rings with howl of rays, and rockets set aglow;  
Men take their plaything -- war, that is -- no warnings do they mind,

and carry it to distant stars, and worlds they've yet to find.  
Advancing through the eons, through time's spectral gloom,  
One hundred thousand ancient soldiers, marching to their doom.

The Tuscan takes the tiny thing, and hefts it in his hand,  
And smashes it to pieces -- what it shows he cannot stand;  
But though he tries to break the truth, he finds its texture hard;

Fear of truth destroyed the glass, so too it killed the artist.  
Advancing through the eons, through time's spectral gloom,  
One hundred thousand ancient soldiers, marching to their doom.



# REH Editors/Publishers ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

## Part II

*Last issue we began the REH Editors-Publishers Round Table discussion which includes responses by all the current editors and-or publishers of fanzines with a Robert E. Howard emphasis. Because of space considerations we were forced to split the feature into two parts. Here is the second and concluding portion of the round table discussion. Thanks for your patience. I should perhaps mention that the answers were provided early last summer so some of the responses may be dated. Hope you enjoy this insight into the people behind the zines.-Editor.*

**Question: What do you see as the future of Howard fandom?**

**BACON:** Fandom in any area follows a cycle. Obviously REH Fandom is on the upward curve of interest. It'll diminish after a while. Some die-hard fans will remain, publishers will still publish Howardana and a few of the current fanzines will continue to exist. The REH "freak" will lose interest but the individual who enjoyed the exploits of Howard characters and is not on the bandwagon because "everyone reads Conan" will remain. It'll probably be a healthier time for the true enthusiast.

**FENNER:** I can't say for sure. If the field can shake off some of the exploiters, REH may continue to gain in popularity, perhaps reaching, eventually, the same plane attained by Burroughs. Maybe. A good movie based on one of his characters wouldn't hurt. Who knows? You can't tell what the public will buy or support next.

**HAMILTON:** I see a great future for Howard fandom. Previously unpublished REH stories are still in the process of being published. **THE LAST CELT** is another asset to Howard fandom. We have seen the rise of, in my opinion, the greatest Howard artist, Steve Fabian. Hopefully there might still be some Howard manuscripts located. The Howard boom is here to stay for a while. My greatest regret is that REH isn't here to share it with us.

**McHANEY:** Believe it or not, I expect this thing to go on another five years. By then, though, people will start getting sick of the last dregs of Howard material, and support will dwindle down to the same relegation that Burroughs fandom has now. It has gotten too out of hand to have any lesser status than that, though, and the REH fans who only know him through the comics will be satiating their idiocy on some new form of zap pow.

**ROARK:** Howard fandom is due to taper off a bit, I should think. However, there'll always be a demand for his work. . . much as there has been for HPL's. Eventually I hope that REH fandom grows a bit with the times and sees that there is more to heroic fantasy than Robert E. Howard. One of my main gripes with any specialized fandom has always been their insane "tunnel vision"; they can only see one thing at a time, and miss a lot of other good material for this reason. Just as there is more to English literature than Dickens, there is more to heroic fantasy than just REH'S WORKS. Several young writers are

doing superb things in the genre: Karl Wagner, Dick Tierney, Dave Smith and others are excellent, but have had a helluva time attracting readers, simply because both readers and publishers are afraid to test their feet in unknown waters. And it's a damned shame.

**SASSER:** Howard fandom has a bright and lengthy future if interest continues. As many know, a large number of REH's stories will be appearing in paperback -- both here and in England. Of course, there are the Marvel Comics, hardbacks, booklets, etc. ; all of which are going strong and selling well.

**SCITHERS:** Decline when people realize it's being overexploited.

**WARFIELD:** I think there will always be a REH fandom, but expect it to diminish considerably in coming years. It will most likely leave the phenomena stage, and return to the smaller cult it enjoyed in years past.

**Question: Is it important for fan publishers to work together as much as possible? If so, how might we better relations?**

**BACON:** I feel that fan-eds should work together, and I think that most do (more or less). I know I'm constantly trading pubs with other fan-eds and trying to give them publicity in the News Notes section of FC. I think that mutual plugging of products help. If a fan-ed doesn't support a given zine or feels it's a rip off, then of course he shouldn't plug it. But barring that type of situation, I feel that one editor should assist another as much as possible. I've called on other fan-eds for advice and criticism and sometimes (as much as I hate to admit it) the criticisms have been most helpful. . . even the beligerently put forth ones. Constructive comments, support thru cooperative sales blurbs and assistance in locating authors, artists, etc. are the main areas I think need to exist. No one is just born knowing how to contact Fabian, Krenkel, Jacobi, Conrad, de Camp or even Glenn Lord. This kind of assistance helped get FC going and is just what it needed.

**FENNER:** Other than keeping each other informed about possible products and features so we won't be stepping on everyone's toes, I really don't think that it's imperative to "work together" per se. I can't help but feel that if you work on your own, your publication will be more original, fresher, and ultimately more prone to be personally satisfying. It also guarantees variety in the genre, which is important. Competition's the life blood, they say, and I agree. Which isn't to say that you shouldn't be friends with your fellow publishers/editors: hell, they're the only ones likely to give you a sincere, constructive loc. Usually.

**HAMILTON:** Yes, it is my belief that fan publishers should work together as much as possible. They should check the different zines and tell the publishers where improvements should be made based on their own experience. They might know less expensive printers or artists whose work should be published which might prove beneficial to fans and zines involved.

**McHANEY:** Yeh, there's nothing that takes the fun out of all

this like a feud will. I think we should keep apart as much as possible, to be able to better present our own ideas, though we all learn from mistakes. We should pass along any advice, etc. we learn from our screw-ups. I'd like all the REH zines to combine forces just once in an effort similar to **TOADSTOOL WINE**, to see what everyone could come up with in the face of such a collaboration. I've "collaborated" about half a dozen times, and though the outcome wasn't always satisfactory, the result was usually fun, at least. I'd love to spend a week with all the other fanzine editors (at different times) and see what we could come up with. That might not be possible with all of them, since some of us are quite headstrong and domineering, and I don't think I could play second fiddle.

**ROARK:** I think that we ought to keep each other informed as to what we're doing, so we don't step on each other's toes, or projects. But I don't feel that it is important to spill your guts to everyone -- gotta have some secrets, ya know. I correspond more or less regularly with most of my fellow fan editors and despite some differences in opinion, I find a lot of fun in it. I wish we could all get together sometime and share a wee dram of spirits; **THAT** would help us communicate better! When we sobered up, that is. . . I've always found that nothing brings people closer than mutual hangovers.

**SASSER:** Definitely. It might be a good idea for each publisher to do a page or two of news about his latest publishing efforts and mail copies of this to the other publishers.

**SCITHERS:** Pretentiously worded question; better relations can be had by writing letters to each other more frequently.

**WARFIELD:** It is not a necessity, but a luxury we can all afford. Most of us already correspond, exchange pubs and viewpoints. We could better relations by avoiding ego conflicts, and having more patience with conflicting opinions.

**Question:** What do you think of your own publication, and how would you better your product?

**BACON:** I've tried for diversity in the range of fantasy topics which were covered in FC. At the same time I've tried to put together kind of a package concept where we may run an article on a given author plus some of his verse and fiction plus maybe an art portfolio based upon the works of that given author (such as the Algernon Blackwood section in FC No. 4-5 or the Cthulhu Mythos emphasis in FC No. 7). These have not always worked. It's hard to emphasize diversity and still show unity. Layout in FC has improved but continues to need work. I feel the quality of both artwork and written word has improved but the standard still needs to be raised higher. The one continuing criticism of FC has been the use of multi-colored papers (which we use more sparingly now) and the lack of a wrap around binding. Beginning with FC No. 8 (May 1976) FC will be professionally typeset, with justified margins, wrap around binding, two color covers and printed on a coated stock. That will change the appearance from a rough "fannish" look to a more professional look. I think the change is needed. Other areas that I intend to try improvements include the use of more professional artists and authors and a continued search for the best fan talent available. It has always been one of FC's goals to utilize and publish work by fans. There's a lot of raw talent that ought to be utilized.

In the currently running debate in FC (letters pages) one positive benefit has been the realization (Warfield was the catalyst for this) that FC ought to not only reprint those little gems from the old pulp magazines that haven't seen print elsewhere but more importantly to try to provide a place for work by the current "names" in the industry. That's why you'll find names like de Camp, Carter, Tierney, Jacobi, Brennan, Wagner, and others appearing under the Stygian Isle Press

imprint. My hope is that other names such as Leiber, Moorcock, C. L. Moore and others will also appear. Many of these individuals have been contacted and more will be. Fan-eds need to (within their financial limits) bring more NEW fiction and verse to their readers.

**FENNER:** It's got its faults and it needs quite a bit of work, but I'm proud of the booger. It may not be great, but I likes 'er! Improvements? I'd like to get some unpublished REH poetry, add some color to the insides, get more photos of Howard, go 3 column reduced type, lower the price, and anything else that I or one of our readers might think of. It's been suggested that we branch out . . . cover other fantasy authors' achievements. But then we wouldn't be an REH 'zine anymore, would we?

**HAMILTON:** Since I don't publish a zine anymore I don't feel the need to answer.

**McHANEY:** I won't dwell on my pre-Howard zines. As far as the Howard stuff goes, most of what I did in my first year was real crap. I'd never done any experimentation away from the standard formats until last year. It's too bad I didn't get that out of my system earlier. I also used an incredible amount of bad judgement for art, etc. I decided the only way to improve my material and my circulation was to stop clowning around and get rid of my fannish attitudes; after all, I spent years of college in English and Journalism, learning to edit, write, do layouts, etc., so why waste that knowledge on just a fanzine? The new **HOWARD REVIEW** (No. 5) is where I show my stuff. From now on, if it isn't something I can be proud of, I'm wasting my time, and I am not proud of my first year of Howard publishing, with the possible exception of my "second edition" of the first issue.

**ROARK:** I like it, with reservations. Time is always a killer -- I truly wish that we had twice as long to commission artwork and do the layouts, but I've always felt that putting out a zine on a regular schedule was very important if you plan to hold fan interest. More color, more pages, more actual wordage -- I think all this would help. My dream is to do the ultimate fanzine -- with over half the pages in color, **LIFE MAGAZINE** size. Somehow, I doubt if it'll ever come off! Nevertheless, we plan to keep our collective noses to the grindstone -- God willing!

**SASSER:** I am really proud of it and happy that it is being received by REH fandom. I am planning on improving TGR with each successive issue. Typeset and color are in my plans for the future, and I still hold some faint hope for Howard fiction.

**SCITHERS:** Impossible to answer that question without seeming either a wittold or a braggart.

**WARFIELD:** No one can view his own work completely unbiased. Also, no one short of a conceited snob could not wish for improvement. I am never completely satisfied with any of my products.

At this writing, I'm unhappy with the printing end of my pubs. Type is not "crisp" enough, and detail in art is being lost. I'm working on that, and exploring ways to keep prices down and quality up. . . . which is quite difficult. Printers are unsympathetic, to say the least, to our problems.

**Question:** What do you think were Howard's merits as a writer, as opposed to his being a fan phenomena?

**BACON:** Howard was strong on action and in some cases managed some pretty good character development. His imagination was monumental. . . . it had to be for him to create whole cities, continents and situations that he never encountered in the first person. As many pulp writers, he wrote for a per word fee, and that tended to make him wordy at time but

it's never diminished my enjoyment of his fiction. Some of his verse is (in format and style) unsurpassed. Some is pretty rank stuff. Surprisingly even some of the verse published in recent months ranks high among the "canon" of verse he left behind (that's to say the unpublished verse may be reject material from the pulps of the day, but they didn't always print Howard's best). I enjoy reading Howardana and have re-read many of his tales (something no other author except maybe Asimov has induced me to do). Long after the Howard craze is dead, I imagine I'll still be sitting with Lancer paperback in hand.

**FENNER:** I think that Howard had a wonderful imagination which enabled him to capture that certain mood and flair that makes adventure fiction -- particularly his -- so much fun to experience. He wasn't another Dickens or Steinbeck as some narrow-minded folk might think. Still his finished work is quite entertaining and most times well written. I'm just curious as to what he would have evolved into if he hadn't committed suicide.

**HAMILTON:** I consider Howard's greatest merit to be the fact that he put himself in every story; it wasn't Conan in battle it was Bob himself! His knowledge of ancient history was another asset. Since S & S is very popular nowadays it's easy to see why REH is so popular. Plus his Conan and Solomon Kane stories had a supernatural element to them.

**McHANEY:** When Howard is no longer considered a "fan phenomenon" he'll be remembered as a powerful and occasionally remarkable writer. That's the way it was before -- it will be that way again. It's just a matter of time.

**ROARK:** Colorful action, narrative drive and pacing, mood and expert handling of the "heroic" figure are Howard's major pluses as a writer. At times, I feel his merits are over-rated by well-meaning fans of his works, but I would place several of his stories in the category of "classics within their genre"; "Beyond the Black River," "Pigeons from Hell," "The Dark Man," "Worms of the Earth," "Meet Cap'n Kidd," and "The Lion of Tiberias" stand out quite vividly in my memory. Most of all, REH was lucky -- fate is a high-roller at the table of literary resurrection and Howard came up a seven. If not for the upsurge of interest in nostalgia--pulp fiction, I have a spooky feeling that REH would've been a "lost" author.

**SASSER:** Howard was a natural storyteller who happened to be born in Texas, which, along with his distinct personality, made him the great writer that he was. Most Texans are born romantics -- imagine if REH had been born in Saginaw, Michigan! He'd probably written for farm journals! This may sound hokey, but REH's writings and general outlooks on life have had a profound effect on me, personally. Not that I consider him a messiah, but he did show me the way in many things. As a fan phenomena, Howard appeals to different people for different reasons. A theme popular today, especially in the movies (e.g., "Serpico," "One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest," "All the President's Men," etc.) if the hero or heroes alone against the system. The bulk of Howard's yarns feature this theme. Of course, REH's stories feature a chance for one to escape to the worlds of fantasy and such and not many can pass up a bit of escapism.

**SCITHERS:** Howard's strength as a writer are precisely why he is popular now.

**WARFIELD:** Howard was a superb storyteller, with a rich reservoir of knowledge and imagination. He is a fan phenomena because of his ability to entertain.

**Question:** Does producing a magazine infringe on your "real life" activities? Do you think it is worth the trouble?

**BACON:** Anyone who publishes a fanzine and claims it doesn't infringe upon his personal life either is lying or doesn't have a personal life. You can't have a wife, two daughters, be in the process of buying a house and re-modeling it, take active part in church and job activities and not let something ride. My biggest concern is that I do not fail in my role as a husband and father. If I saw those relationships being damaged, then I'd quickly give up FC. I hope that never happens though. Right now to make things fit, I do FC work on breaks from work in the morning and afternoon, sit with sandwich in hand at the typewriter over lunch hour plus I work on FC usually between 7:15 a.m. and when I start work at 8 a.m. and then work on it from 5 p.m. until 5:15 or 5:30 p.m. If I get too far behind, I stay at work an evening and try to catch up. If things are slow during the day, I'll try to hammer out an editorial or answer a letter. Generally, I cram so as not to let FC cut into evenings with my wife and two young 'uns. This has got to be worth the hassle. . . . I'm doing it aren't I?

**FENNER:** Conceivably it could, but it doesn't. I don't let it and I feel sorry for those people whose lives are ruled by their fan activities. Rather sad, to my way of thinking. **REH:LSF** is a hobby; one that can be continued or dropped. + Sometimes I'll get disgusted and say such and such an issue'll be the last one. But when the thing's completed I usually forget most of the hassles -- it's an accomplishment of sorts. Worth it? I'd say so.

+ I've never broken a date, missed a flick or postponed anything just to work on the 'zine.

**HAMILTON:** My life has truly become a rat race since I started publishing. Lots of times I would type **CROSS PLAINS** till 5 o'clock in the morning. I have very little if any time left for myself. Yes, I do think it's worth the trouble. I enjoy my correspondence with Glenn Lord, E. Hoffman Price, Joseph Payne Brennan, Stuart Schiff, Fred Blosser, Steve Fabian, etc.

**McHANEY:** I don't have a "real life" -- only a surreal one. It's worth "doing", but I do wish that once I "did it" I could be through with it.

**ROARK:** It infringes on my time, naturally. . . .but only as much as I allow it to. If one's interest takes up too much of one's life, it can get to be ridiculous. You just have to adjust your thinking to the fact. If I didn't feel it was all worthwhile. . . . the way to the top is thorny, oh my brothers. . . . I'd chuck it all! I enjoy the feeling of accomplishment, so I make room in my schedule for working on it.

**SASSER:** I am afraid it does, but I get a great deal of enjoyment out of **TGR**. Right now I do everything (layout, lettering, typing, etc.), which gets to be a bore at times. Overall, I do like working on it, but sometimes I have to get away from it for a few days. If I didn't think it was worth the trouble, I wouldn't be doing it. I don't care if I'm reaching just one fan with **TGR**, that's one more than I was reaching without it.

**SCITHERS:** Yes. Probably not.

**WARFIELD:** I'm not sure I like the word "interfere." My hobby is part of my life. It takes time, money, etc. If it really caused serious problems ("interfered"), I'd quit. If I didn't find it to be worthwhile, I wouldn't do it.

**Question:** How much of what you do is governed by reader response? Do you care what your readers want?

**BACON:** I do care what readers want and ask for. Some of it is pretty hard to come by. But by and large readers have helped FC a great deal. Former subscribers are now contributing verse, fiction, columns and artwork. Readers have helped me



located copies of long out of print works for us to reprint. Readers have helped almost as much as fellow fan-ed's in providing contacts for professional art and fiction.

**FENNER:** You know, I wish I could stand up and say, "Why, gol-durn, ever'thing in our mag was suggested by our readers," but that'd be a bunch of crap. Of what little reader response we get only a very tiny fraction ever suggests **anything**; I guess the majority don't realize just how much we want their help. We're pretty much on our own and can only judge our mistakes or successes afterward by the letters we **do** receive. We care what the readers want and try to gauge our features to what we **think** they would like to see. Without **them** we couldn't continue the magazine and we do our best to make them feel like they're coming out the winner in this transaction. I feel very strongly on this point.

**HAMILTON:** To some extent CP was governed by reader response. I care what readers want if it is **within** reason.

**McHANEY:** I care about what my readers want, but I do what I want to do. Many people want a letter column, but I don't give a damn about printing praise or criticism, and no one has written anything controversial or even interesting, aside from what I mentioned above. If readers want to know what others think of the magazine, let them find out for themselves. I don't ignore suggestion, frequently consider them, and occasionally use them, if they are in line with my way of thinking. I do my magazine because I enjoy it, and being selfish, I can enjoy the contents only if they are right for me.

**ROARK:** Frankly, I wish more people would write and let us know what they want in our publications! We try to gauge content on fan interest, but we need more opinions to base our work on. I didn't believe the old whine about "the silent majority" until LSF came along -- I do now. We have a few staunch supporters who always give us sound criticisms and opinions (John, Bob, Marty -- you know who you are!) and we appreciate it. But dammit, we need more to go on! We read, analyze and try to answer all of our mail, so you're not talking to an unappreciative audience.

**SASSER:** I listen closely to what my readers say, as the FANS make the fanzine. I do try to please the bulk of them -- it's impossible to please them all. I know I like other people to listen to what I have to say about their publications and I care what others want from me.

**SCITHERS:** Apparently this question wasn't proof-read before being sent out."

+Ed. Note: Mr. Scithers is referring to a typographical error in the original question.

**WARFIELD:** I do not see how anyone can hope to sell a products that no one wants, so readers are, in essence, a magazine! I do find the majority of readers to be silent; so a minority have more of a say. An unfortunate circumstance.

**Question:** What attitude do you think your zine should have -- scholarly, lighthearted or wailing dirge?

**BACON:** FC should in some instances be scholarly. In other cases, it should be a rapping place for comments on current happenings in Fandom. Even the lighthearted has a place. I hope that the tone of FC is set by Epistle Express (our letters pages). I view it as communicative, inquiring, sometimes prone to debate and criticism; but always open to new ideas and opinions.

**FENNER:** Unless a magazine runs the gamut of all the attitudes -- those that are mentioned and others -- I think that it's fallen short of its potential. A well rounded approach seems to be the most appealing.

**HAMILTON:** Since I don't publish a zine anymore I don't feel the need to answer.

**McHANEY:** A combination of the first two - never a dirge. The sight of some poor fool crying all over himself makes me puke.

**ROARK:** I think all the attitudes have their place, but all of them can go too far. Humor is quite important, in my opinion; when you get above laughing at yourself, you deserve a pie in the kisser! Giving the readers the truth is important, too... as is keeping up a respectable image. As long as you don't start acting like an ass, you'll come out OK with few scars.

**SASSER:** Oh, I suppose TGR is a bit scholarly, but overall is light hearted. People read fanzines for entertainment, not to be depressed by pages and pages of silly analytical and obituary stuff about Robert E. Howard. Hell, Two-Gun loved to laugh and so do we all.

**SCITHERS:** Yes, yes and no, respectively.

**WARFIELD:** I don't really approve of such limited tags. I believe in an intellectual balance of scholarly and lightheadedness.

**Question:** Do you think that artwork plays an important role in your publication--both as a selling point and for graphic appeal?

**BACON:** As I stated back in question 6, I have always wanted FC to be a "graphic" type of product. Despite about 6-7 years of art school courses at the Flint Institute of Arts, I find myself a very poor artist. I have, however, a great deal of appreciation for the artist and his multitude of mediums. I hope that shows thru in the type of zine I produce. To be frank, most artwork is NOT a selling point unless it's "big name" stuff. Adams, Barry Smith, Conrad, Fabian, Eisner and many others help sell a zine. But some of the best work (I feel) on an even basis with the pros comes from the fan artist.

**FENNER:** Definitely, on all counts. Art work is part of our personality and one of our strongest selling points. We try to keep things balanced; something for everyone has been our goal. I'm a big art fan -- doesn't matter who does it or what the subject matter is, as long as it's done with style. It should be noted that LSF No. 2 was our quickest selling issue, mainly because of the Barry Smith interview and illustrations. I'm disappointed, though, when we get locs from customers who admit to not reading the mag, but would like us to get Neal Adams to illustrate next issue's Howard story.

**HAMILTON:** Yes, artwork plays a very important part in my publications; I should say **good** artwork. It is an excellent selling point, plus the graphic appeal it adds.

**McHANEY:** Yes.

**ROARK:** Hell, yes! I like art and enjoy having it around -- graphic design is quite important. As a selling point, it is nearly as important as everything else in the zine -- art & comics fans far outnumber weird--S&S--SF fans, so you're able to reach a completely different audience with artwork. I do tire of the letters that sing the praises of a certain artist while simultaneously informing us that they haven't read anything. Is reading a lost art? I doubt if we'll ever know.

**SASSER:** Artwork is what the fans want -- as I learned very quickly. The art can make or break a 'zine. It is definitely very important to have art to go with the text, and of course, a number of well known artists help a great deal in the way of sales.

**SCITHERS:** Very, very much so.

**WARFIELD:** Art is a definite plus factor. However, fans differ greatly in what they consider good art.

**Question:** What has proven to be your most popular feature, outside of any Howard fiction you might print?

**BACON:** Epistle Express is the most popular feature next to REH material. Readers enjoy measuring their observations of an issue against those of other readers. Professionals enjoy the comments of fans and fans enjoy the behind-the-scenes view offered via LOCs by pros. Debate and controversy help. I try not to run letters of the "I loved your swell fanzine" variety unless they go further with specific comments on FC or a debate currently in progress or make statements relative to the Fantasy genre which other readers might enjoy comment upon disagree with. We've had a very active readership and I hope it continues.

**FENNER:** It's pretty evenly divided among the art work, the interviews, and strangely, the photographic folios based on REH's female characters -- here all this time I've been told fans didn't like women and that I was a bit of a "freak" because I do. Another fality blown all to hell.....

**HAMILTON:** Probably the Howard biblio.

**McHANEY:** I don't have more than two features that I've continued for several issues. One of those has simply been continued by fan writers who liked the idea, and that's fine with me. The more help I get with the chores of reviewing and articles, the less sweating I do at the last minute. I hope in the future my most popular feature will be my approach and sense of priorities.

**ROARK:** Our Barry Smith interview in No. 2 was well-received, as was the Glenn Lord interview in No. 3. "Vultures Over Cross Plains" garnered a helluva lot of fan comment, as was its intent. In our current issue, Ben Indick's "Incident at Cross Plains" was lauded by most readers.

**SASSER:** I've only got one issue out, but the most popular pieces so far have been Wayne Warfield's "Robert E. Howard: Retrospectively" and Bill Wallace's "The Sense of Hideous Antiquity."

**SCITHERS:** Artwork.

**WARFIELD:** Editorials, art and letter columns. Any controversial feature, of course, always draws attention.

**Question:** REH was the main fan interest in the '70's, following the mass appeal of Burroughs in the '60's. If interest in REH was to fade out, do you see any other author who could dominate future fan interest?

**BACON:** There are several authors whose work I feel may dominate or at least be grabbed up for future fan interest. Howard Phillips Lovecraft is one whose work already pretty much parallels Howard's in interest. Another would be Michael Moorcock or Karl Edward Wagner. I hope that fandom continues to push these gentlemen into further endeavors in the areas of fiction and verse. They will probably be the natural

inheritors of the current REH craze. I think that Howard and his Conan are opening the door to many fans and exposing them to Heroic Fantasy. One other author whose work comes to mind (and contains elements of REH and HPL in his fiction) is Richard Tierney. I personally feel (and hope) that this gentleman's work enjoys a great popularity in the future. Any one who hasn't read **THE WINDS OF ZARR** by Tierney ought to. It shows his strength as a story teller and setter of moods. My hope is that these four gentlemen (and especially the living three) will become fan favorites.

**FENNER:** First I'd like to say that I don't think **ERB** has lost its public appeal; there're new movies being made based on his characters, new editors of his books continue to come out, and kids still play "Tarzan" in their backyards. Burroughs is still top dog and I doubt if anyone in the foreseeable future will replace him. But to answer your question, if REH's popularity fades (which it won't, if handled properly) fans would probably begin to notice another of the old **WEIRD TALES** writers -- perhaps C.L. Moore or Manly Wellman. There might also be a resurgence of interest in HPL. Who can say? Karl Wagner is my personal favorite among those authors presently working in the field: if he'd learn to type with more than one finger and turn out a greater volume of stories he could, realistically, become the most respected and sought after writer yet to contribute to the genre. He's got my support, anyway. + But back to REH for a final moment; his popularity will only diminish if fans allow it to -- which would be a shame because his properties hold a great deal of promise for a variety of projects. I was amused recently to read that some consider Howard to be the "Star Trek" of fantasy fandom. Perhaps that's so; yet, no one's organized a bus tour of REH's Cross Plains with special notations as to which streets he shadow-boxed down on hot Texas afternoons. At least to my knowledge, that is.

+I think the Epic Fantasy Field needs an Ellison figure - someone whose personality, drive and audacity draws new people in. Many don't like him, but you must admit that Harlan has breathed new life into S-F.

**HAMILTON:** C. A. Smith and H. P. Lovecraft might be some candidates.

**McHANEY:** I doubt that any writer will become what Howard, Lovecraft and Burroughs have been, but that may be because I've never looked far into the future with any amount of thought. They might drag up some other poor slob from the grave and adore him, but I think that is about tapped out. Maybe someone like Phil Farmer will be treated with the same awe as a Burroughs or Howard. He has the same popularity the others had when they were still living, and perhaps a bit more than some. The problem though, is that fewer people are reading books every day. It's easier to look at comics or some other simple minded drivel, and unless you throw tons of artwork in a book these days, you might as well forget it. The "new generation" of fans must have frequent breaks for their feeble brains. I see books of the future as a page of art, maybe a whole page of text, and so on -- sort of a **FARENHEIT 451** society, though it won't be government forced -- it will be by choice. By then, though, I hope to be so old and blind that I won't mind the vanishing written word.

**ROARK:** I feel that several writers are due more fan interest - Karl Wagner, for instance, though he probably won't get really big until he dies. Clark Ashton Smith has a fair chance of a big revival, if readers can adjust their own tastes enough to accept his slightly bizarre (and **unique**) writing style. I do feel it will depend on how much publicity the various genre writers get -- that and the undeniable finger of fate. Some will get the gold, others the shaft.

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# THE WRATH OF TUPAN

By Richard L. Tierney

At the headwaters of the Zungaro, near the foothills of the Andes Mountains, lies a strange land seldom visited by man. Even when I first saw the place, it somehow struck me as sinister. The waters of the Zungaro were black as death, and the dank jungle on either side was unnaturally silent. In the distance great cone-shaped mountains rose abruptly and loomed like titan gods brooding over bygone eras. Mightiest of all rose one great snow-capped volcano, overshadowing the others as a god overshadows men. In spite of the discomfort I felt from the swarms of biting insects, I gazed at this peak in awe and wonder.

"That, señores, is the mountain which the natives call **Tupani-kam-kisiteri** -- the Place of Tupan," said Ramon Valesquez, our Colombian guide. "The mission is not far now, and that is good. The Indians fear the mountain as the abode of evil gods, and I do not think they will go with us much farther."

The mountain itself did not frighten me half so much as the thought of trying to pronounce its name; but I had noticed that the Indians were indeed becoming restive. For the past two hours they had been paddling with constantly decreasing vigor, and now they were beginning to talk excitedly among themselves.

"What are they saying?" demanded Rayburn, our aging but wiry archaeologist, from his canoe. I listened as closely as possible to Ramon's reply while swatting at the cloud of singing mosquitoes hovering about me.

"They are afraid. They say that Tupan, the thunder-demon, will be angry and deal us death if we go on. I fear we must make camp soon."

"But we could reach the mission in a few hours," protested Rayburn.

"The sun sets quickly in these latitudes, my friends, and it is almost down now. It is best not to travel at night. We can still reach the mission tomorrow."

Rayburn shrugged. "Do as you think best, then."

Valesquez shouted some orders to the Indians, and immediately they seemed greatly relieved. I, too, was glad we were stopping, for I could hardly bear those swarms of insects much longer. We beached our three canoes on a sandy bank and pitched camp in record time. The red sun was just sinking behind the shining peak of the volcano as we prepared our supper.

At dusk, as we dined on fried palm-worms and the rubbery flesh of macaws I questioned Ramon about the native superstitions concerning the volcano. His voice grew hushed as he answered me.

"Do not let them see that you speak of the thunder-demon, Meester Hobson," he cautioned. "To speak of Tupan is to incur his wrath, or so the Indians believe."

The fire crackled sharply in the stillness. Overhead, the vampire bats flitted softly by on velvet wings. The stillness was eerie.

"But what is this Tupan?" queried Rayburn, his voice involuntarily low.

"He is the god of thunder, earthquakes and destruction, señor. To the Indians of this region, no other god is half so powerful as he. Perhaps their ancestors of long ago knew the mountain in its fury of eruption, and handed down their frightening legends of it to the present day. Who can tell?"

We did not try to answer, and for the rest of the evening we sat in silence around the fire. The stillness of the jungle had the effect of discouraging conversation, and the trees seemed to press closer in from all sides. The murmuring waters sang a monotonous dirge, and even the insects soon ceased to hum. The Indians, too, sat silent about their small fires, as though feeling that a spoken word in this place would be blasphemous. At

length, we turned in; but tired as I was, I could not sleep. There seemed to be a vague air of creeping tenseness about this place, as though something were about to happen. For some time, therefore, I lay awake and thought of many things.

They had told me in Manaos that the hills along the upper Zungaro were rich in gold, and that one could pick diamonds out of the mountain stream beds. They also told me that few had ever returned from the region, but that did not stop me from wanting to go there. I had lost everything the year before, when the rubber firm I owned had closed down, and I was anxious to regain my wealth. Only one who has been wealthy, and has lost his wealth, can fully appreciate the value of riches; and I was willing to undergo any hardships rather than remain in ignoble poverty.

My chance had come in the person of Professor Philip Rayburn, of the Midwestern Society of Historical Research. He, too, was anxious to visit the region, for he had heard of the ancient stone ruins to be found there. However, he could find no one willing to take him up the Zungaro. Having had some training as a geologist, I offered to accompany him on his expedition at no cost, and he gladly accepted my offer. He was especially delighted when I acquired Ramon Valesquez as a guide. Though Ramon was at first reluctant, he finally consented to come; for he, too, had heard tales of the fabulous wealth to be found in the jungles along the Zungaro.

Soon afterwards, we began our tortuous journey up the dark rivers of the Amazon Basin, and for many hellish weeks we traveled steadily. Besides the Indian bearers and myself, there were three others in the party--Rayburn, the archaeologist; Ramon, the guide; and a young photographer named Moran. It was a small group to be traversing so much country, but I doubt that a large party would have fared better. In fact, I was somewhat glad about the small size of our group. There would be fewer to share whatever riches we might find.

Of the many adventures and hardships we underwent, I shall say little. Let it suffice when I say that traveling through the hideous jungles of the Amazon is the furthest thing from so-called "romantic adventure" that one could imagine! The heat and the insects, combined with the eternal dampness, made the rain-forest a place of constant torment, second only to hell itself. Added to this was the imminent threat of a thousand painful deaths, against which we had always to be on guard. Venomous reptiles and insects hid under every leaf, and our lives hung always on the whims of the savage Indian tribes through whose territories we had to pass. Only the thought of gold drove me on, as it had the Conquistadores of old; and I often marveled at the persistence of Rayburn and Moran, whose sole incentive for enduring all this was scientific curiosity!

Despite the sticky dampness and the occasional bites of the parasol ants, I must have finally dozed off; for the next thing I remember is being awakened by pistol shots, and hearing Ramon shouting threats in Quechua dialect. Awake in an instant, I grabbed my rifle and dashed out of the tent, Moran at my heels. The sky was already grey with approaching dawn, and we saw Ramon standing on the riverbank, pistol in hand. He was shouting imprecations after our three canoes, which were rapidly vanishing downstream into the morning mists.

"The Indians have deserted!" Ramon informed us, swearing in Portuguese.

Moran looked after the receding canoes, incredulous. Then he began to dance crazily, for in his haste he had neglected to put on his pants, and the insects were always ready to take advantage of any such carelessness.

"Why did they run off?" he asked, scratching.

"I do not know, señores, but I think something in the jungle made them afraid. Some of them were out hunting this morning while I made the fire. They came back soon, and began to talk excitedly to the others. I heard them say something about

Tupan. Then, when my back was turned for a moment, they made off with the canoes. Carramba!—they were gone before I could stop them."

"What do you suggest we do now?" I asked.

"We must set up a more permanent camp here, *amigo*. It is fortunate that we did not leave many supplies in the canoes."

"But we can't stay here indefinitely!"

"Of course not, my friend; and that is why you and I must go to the mission today, on foot. From there, we can bring back canoes in which to carry our supplies.

## II

That day will remain forever in my mind as one of the worst in my life. Directly after breakfast Ramon and I struck into the jungle, following the riverbank. Ordinarily, it would have taken us two or three hours of paddling to reach the mission. As it was, however, it took us most of the day to hack our way through that incredible tangle with machetes. Thorns tore at our bodies, and the blood attracted buzzing hordes of mosquitoes to us. Small white ticks, which no insect repellent would discourage, threatened to drive us mad with their infernal stinging. Yet we dared not bathe in the river, for the dreaded *panas* would quickly tear us to pieces.

Coming upon an open mud bank, we smeared ourselves liberally with mud, which kept off most of the insects. It did not keep them away, however, and we continually had to keep them from flying into our eyes and ears. Moreover we had to watch constantly for venomous snakes, which were dangerously numerous. Several times we narrowly missed being bitten by rattlesnakes as big around as a man's leg. Once we had to stop and let a great swarm of army ants pass by in front of us. We were safe, Ramon assured me, as long as we stayed out of their line of advance; but if we had blundered into their path, they would have swarmed over us and picked our bones clean in minutes.

It was midafternoon when we finally staggered into the clearing around the mission. A few decrepit huts stood in a semi-circle about the church, which was itself a rather large structure considering its remoteness from civilization. We were greeted enthusiastically by Father Carlos de Sarmiento, a man of intense vitality despite his nearly seventy years of age.

"*Madre de Dios!*" he exclaimed impiously, seeing our tattered and filthy clothes. "You must rest and refresh yourselves, *señores*. Come with me..."

"Later, *Padre*," replied Ramon. "Right now, we desire to get back to our friends before nightfall." He explained our situation to Father Sarmiento, and added that we wished to hire Indians to help us bring our supplies to the mission.

"I fear that is impossible, my friends," replied Father Carlos. "The Indians have all left the mission, and have gone into the jungle to worship their savage gods. The witch-doctors say they must make magic to appease the thunder-devil."

"What made them suddenly do that?" I asked.

Father Carlos answered sadly. "Here in the jungle, man worships older deities than our God, and the powers of evil are held to be stronger than the forces of good. The Indian's religion is not a way of praising God; it is primarily a method of staving off His wrath." He gestured toward the great volcano looming in the distance. "That mountain," he continued, "is said to be inhabited by a thunder-devil, a titanic monster who comes forth every generation to lay waste the land and destroy the people. Tupan is his name, and no god or demon in this region is more feared than he."

"And the natives believe this monster is about ready to come forth again?"

"Si, *amigo!* Yesterday morning the mountain rumbled slightly, and by nightfall every last Indian had left the mission. It is most discouraging, *señores*; no matter how we try to convert them, the old superstitions still remain uppermost in

their minds."

Ramon looked at me somewhat apprehensively. "Do you think the volcano might erupt, Meester Hobson?"

"I doubt it. It looks like it's been extinct for a long time, perhaps thousands of years."

Father Carlos looked up at the sun. "Perhaps you had better start back, if you wish to reach your friends by nightfall. Choose any one of the canoes down by the river; the Indians will not be using them."

Two hours of paddling downstream brought us once more to our camp. As we beached the dugout, our friends greeted us excitedly.

"We found out what frightened away the natives this morning," said Moran. "It's back in the jungle."

"Come along! we'll show you," exclaimed Rayburn, his eyes gleaming with excitement. "It's incredible! You've got to see it." He began to lead us along a newly cut path through the brush. About a hundred feet from camp, we came upon the object of Rayburn's fascination.

"What do you think of it?" demanded the archaeologist, a trace of pride in his voice.

What I saw was an extremely hideous idol about five feet tall and carved of dark basalt. Rayburn had hacked away the surrounding brush and vines, and we could see the thing in complete detail. Its general shape can best be described as that of a very squat milk bottle surmounted by a round, flat head. Twelve stumpy legs supported it upon its stone pedestal, and twelve arms or tentacles were shown in bas-relief, sprouting just below the head. So fine was the detail that we could see that each "arm" branched off into six smaller tentacles, giving the thing a total of seventy-two "fingers". The horizontally flattened head was surmounted by six short, spiky horns arranged in a circle. The most interesting feature to me, however, was the twelve eyes set into the head around the perimeter of its greatest circumference; for I saw that each one was a large, glittering crystal.

"This is what frightened our bearers," Rayburn commented; "They must have thought of it as a symbol of some god. I would say that it is pre-Incan in origin."

Stepping up to the idol, I quickly dislodged one of its eyes with my knife and examined it closely. Ramon looked on with interest, but Rayburn seemed almost as horrified as one of the Indians might have been at my apparent sacrilege.

"What are you doing?" gasped Rayburn.

It was Quartz! Disgusted, I handed the stone to Rayburn. "I thought they might be diamonds," I said.

Ramon, too, was plainly disappointed, but he still seemed hopeful. "We have not reached the mountains yet," he said. "It is there that the jewels grow, eh, *señores?*"

"Sometimes, Ramon," I replied. "The tremendous pressures in volcanos often cause carbon to crystalize into diamonds. We may find many of them in the weathered vents, or in the stream deposits, if we're lucky."

We worked our way back to the camp, for it was quickly growing dark. Directly after supper I turned in, and neither the insects nor the eerie silence of the jungle kept me from quickly falling asleep. It had been a rough day.

The next day it rained; not the usual tropical thundershower, but an all-day downpour that turned dirt into mud and mud into a gooey slush. It took us five hours of paddling to reach the mission with what supplies we could take. When we arrived, Father Carlos saw to our comfort most graciously and let us stay in the church itself. He explained that the Indians would probably not be attending again for some time, and that we were welcome to stay. And as our quarters were reasonably warm and dry, we were well satisfied.

Father Carlos' own room in the back of the church was comfortable and well furnished, considering how far he lived from any civilization. We spent much of that day talking with

him in his room, and he was delighted at our company; for, aside from a nondescript Frenchman named Raoul, who helped Father Carlos keep up the mission, there was no other white man for perhaps several hundred miles around.

It was during one of these conversations that Rayburn happened to mention the stone idol we had found.

"Yes, there are many of them in the jungle, señor," said the priest, "and the natives hold them in great respect and fear. In fact, not far from here there are many ancient ruins left by a vanished race, and among them an idol such as you describe. I have been there often, for the natives sometimes go there to worship their gods."

At this Rayburn grew quite excited and began to ask the Padre many questions about the place. Father Carlos was delighted at his interest and promised he would take the archaeologist there "manana".

Late in the afternoon the clouds rolled away, and we could see the snow-capped peak of Tupanikamciseiteri gleaming in the sun. Soon after, we were surprised to hear a soft, throbbing beat in the air, like the pulsing of a giant heart.

"Native drums!" Ramon whispered. "The Indians are worshipping the mountain."

"This is the third night I have heard them," said the priest. "According to the native beliefs, Tupan will come forth on the eighth night of worship, to wreak his judgment on the tribes."

"Has this happened before?" I asked.

"Not within my memory, señor. The mission has only been here for four years, and they say this happens but once in a generation."

"What an opportunity this could be!" exclaimed Moran. "Do you suppose we could photograph them?"

"I would not try it, my friend," said the priest. "Your life would be in great danger. Even I, who know the Indians so well, would not attempt to interfere with their savage rituals."

### III

All night long the drums kept up their insistent beat, and once we heard slight rumblings from the mountain. Early the next morning Father Carlos led Rayburn and Moran into the jungle to visit the ancient ruins he had spoken of. Ramon and I spent most of the day bringing the rest of our supplies from the camp to the mission. A koati had torn open one of the food packs during our absence, but otherwise our equipment was still in good condition.

When our work was done, Ramon went off into the forest to hunt, and I was left alone at the mission. Thus, with little else to do, I had plenty of opportunity to look over the church. One thing that surprised me was the large number of books the Padre had brought with him to this place. There were over a dozen of them in his room, many with covers designed to protect them from the damp. Among them I noticed Prescott's **CONQUEST OF PERU** and other historical works concerning South America. A large black volume, whose pages were yellow and brittle with age, caught my attention, and I glanced through it. The title was **MISTERIOS DE LA JUNGLA**, and I found that it had been written by Sancho de Verada, an early Conquistador.

My interest aroused, I began to pour over this fascinating first-hand account of the journeys of those first explorers to the Amazon. Scarcely had I read a dozen pages, however, when I was electrified by what I came across in a certain paragraph. Translated from the Spanish, it read:

"Having gained information from the natives concerning the great treasures to be found upon the mountain called Tupani-kamciseiteri, we journeyed there; and, after many hazardous days of travel, our hopes were confirmed. Such a wealth as we found there--of gold and silver and all manner of precious stones--has not been known since the days of Solomon. And the golden temple we found in the cauldron

itself was splendid beyond all imagination. Yet, though our hopes were confirmed, they were not rewarded; and though our luck seemed due to divine Providence, it was but a curse in disguise. For all that great wealth of gold, silver and precious stones, is guarded over by SATANUS Himself, who dwells in the fires of the mountain, and who waits to come forth and slay all who would take His accursed treasure hence. Indeed, of the three score men who journeyed with me to that abhorred mountain, only five of us returned, not a soul the richer and with our souls shaken by the sights of Hell. So take heed, all you who would seek the treasure of the mountain, lest the wrath of Tupan fall upon you! For no man can stand against Him, whose stature is like unto that of the Titans of old, and whose form..."

I could read no further, for the rest of the page had been torn away, as though deliberately. Yet I had read enough. Here was almost positive proof of the existence of vast riches in the western mountains; for the account had told not only of the treasure itself, but had given its exact location also. The "cauldron" of the mountain was evidently the crater at its summit, where some ancient race--if the writer had spoken truly--had built a "golden temple". As for the account of the guardian demon, I gave it little consideration. Perhaps the volcano had been slightly active at the time, and the Conquistadores had very likely been caught in a landslide that had taken most of their lives. At any rate, the allusion to "Satanus" was no doubt figurative...

That evening, when Ramon returned, I told him of the new plan I had conceived.

"Can you be ready to leave for the mountain at dawn?" I asked.

"Yes--but señor Rayburn will want to stay and study the ruins..."

"Bother Rayburn -- All he cares about is old ruins! We're going by ourselves."

"But why...?"

"Because there's gold on that mountain, Ramon! That's what you came along with us for, wasn't it?"

"On that mountain?" he gasped. "How do you know of this?"

I told him of the things I had read in the ancient volume.

"But that is the Place of Tupan!" he exclaimed.

"Don't tell me you're superstitious, Ramon!"

He looked at me intently. "I have studied the ways of science," he said, "and I am not 'superstitious'. But I have studied the ways of the Indians also, and I have learned many things about their strange beliefs. Some of their ideas are ridiculous to the white man's way of thinking, and some may seem beyond the bounds of sanity. But this I have found: that behind their legends and beliefs, there always lies a reason!"

### IV

In spite of his apparent reluctance, Ramon eventually agreed to accompany me, for the lust of gold was strong in him also. That night we loaded a dugout with a few supplies; and the next morning, before the sun was up, we crept silently from the mission and started out on our journey.

A few miles up the Zungaro we were halted by a stretch of rapids several hundred yards long, and we had to portage around it. Fortunately there were no Indians to ambush us in the jungle, as they were all attending the ritualistic ceremonies to Tupan. After much labor and many insect bites, we at last managed to get the canoe and our supplies to a point above the rapids.

As we continued on, the banks of the Zungaro became farther apart, and the ground on either side began to assume a marshy aspect. By noon, we found ourselves at the edge of a great swamp which stretched away to the foot of the mountain itself. Taking careful bearings so that we could find our way back, we



set out across the great expanse.

The vegetation here was, for the most part, semi-aquatic, being bunched together in floating "islands" or clumps. Great horsetails forty feet tall rose out of the water near the shores of occasional solid islands. These bits of land were covered thickly with tangled forest, in the shade of which grew twenty-foot ferns, and mushrooms four feet in diameter. Anacondas and caymans basked on every log and floating clump, while poisonous snakes were superabundant. Once we saw a grotesque, seven-foot reptile with a high fin on its back. It ambled out of a canebrake and hissed at us, showing a huge mouth full of vicious-looking teeth. But in spite of its belligerent manner it would not come into the water after us, and we were glad to leave it behind.

Dusk found us nearly at the far side of the swamp, the mountain looming high over us. The mosquitoes grew so bad that we had to wrap our hands in cloth and protect our faces with mosquito netting. We camped on a small island and, after a frugal supper, spent a miserable night swatting insects which managed to get to us in spite of the mosquito net.

The next morning we set out as early as possible, anxious to get out of that horrid swamp. Soon after dawn we reached the edge of the marsh, where the forest began to climb the slope of the mountain. Here, to our great surprise, we came upon a place where the jungle seemed to have been **mashed down** recently. A swath of destruction a hundred yards wide led up the mountainside, and many of the larger trees were still oozing sap where their trunks had been broken off. It was a puzzling thing, and I detected a note of apprehension in Ramon's voice as he questioned me about it.

"What could have caused it, amigo?"

"Perhaps a landslide," I answered. "We heard the mountain rumbling two or three nights ago, remember? It probably dislodged a huge boulder which rolled down into the swamp, crushing the trees. Anyway, it makes a good trail to follow."

"Maybe we should not go up, Meester Hobson. Suppose the volcano should erupt?"

"I'll wager this mountain hasn't blown its top for at least several centuries. Besides, if it is going to erupt, that's all the more reason for us to find that treasure soon. Come on!"

Leaving most of our gear in the canoe, we started up the trail. It was actually harder going than regular jungle, and our only advantage in following the swath was to keep from getting lost. Occasionally we came upon deep circular pits about thirty feet across, which resembled great post holes sunk into the soft jungle floor. All of them seemed fairly new, and appeared to be arranged in a curious pattern extending up the slope. A faint, unfamiliar odor hung upon the air, mingled with the scents of smashed and rotting vegetation. Also, I noticed a strange absence of snakes and other creatures. When I asked Ramon what he made of those strange holes in the ground, he shook his head and did not answer, but I caught a look of fleeting fear in his glance.

By midafternoon we had emerged from the tangle and were continuing upward. The going, though steeper, was somewhat easier, but it was still no facile task. The slopes were covered with a gritty volcanic ash that was as hard to walk in as loose sand. Now and then we saw shallow pits in the ash which were strangely similar to the holes in the jungle below. At the time, I could not imagine what they were.

That night we camped on a ledge not far below the snow line. By morning it had turned so cold that we could see our breath when we exhaled. Moreover we had nothing with which to start a fire, and we had to eat cold canned foods for breakfast. After we set out again, however, the sun warmed the bare mountainside, and before long we were reasonably comfortable. We were actually sweating from exertion when we reached the snow line.

It was here, as we stopped to drink at a glacial stream, that we made our first discovery. Ramon, crouching on the gravelly stream bank, suddenly cried out in surprise.

"Diamonds!" he exclaimed. "Come quick!"

At his bidding, I examined several glittering bits of stone from the stream bed. They were indeed diamonds; and though they were of a low-grade quality, they raised our hopes greatly, for they promised of better things to come.

"Let's go on!" I cried out in elation, and we set out with renewed vigor. We had not gone far before we noticed that the snow patches, like the jungle far below, had been plowed through in a great swath dotted with those puzzling holes. This made the going much easier, but it also piqued my curiosity no end.

We climbed until about noon, when we suddenly came up against an abrupt cliff about a hundred and fifty feet high. Great rocks lay tumbled about as though a recent landslide had occurred, and we noticed an enormous ring of those circular pits at the base of the cliff. It took us about an hour to climb around this obstruction. Our hands and feet were numb with cold by this time, though the sun was warm on our backs.

Another hour's climb brought us to the rim of the crater, where we paused to rest and beat some feeling into our numbed hands. I felt quite tired and weak, probably due to the thinner air. Suddenly Ramon, who was ahead of me, cried out in amazement as he reached the inner edge of the rim. Hurrying to his side, I gazed into the crater with equal astonishment. It was nearly half a mile across, forming a perfect bowl-shaped valley sparsely dotted with patches of snow. At the center was a vast pit several hundred feet in diameter and at the brink of this pit stood a great stone edifice whose roof gleamed golden in the sun.

"The golden temple!" I exclaimed. "The stories were true."

"Let us go see," said Ramon, his voice tense with excitement, and we began to descend the inner wall of the crater. To our amazement, we now found that we were still following that enormous swath. It did not stop at the summit, as we had supposed it would, but continued over the rim and down into the crater, terminating finally at the brink of that monstrous pit in the center.

Arriving at the temple, we found it to be made of enormous basalt blocks. The domed roof shone like beaten gold, which perhaps it was. From the front of the building to the edge of the pit extended a flagstone courtyard, in the center of which stood an enormous altar. Surmounting this altar was an idol similar to the one we had found in the jungle, only immensely larger; and its eyes, each one as large as a man's fist, glittered green in the sunlight.

"Tupan!" murmured Ramon. "This is the temple of Tupan, and that is his image."

"Look at those eyes!" I cried. "They're emeralds!"

"Yes—but they are too high to reach. Let us see what we can find in the temple itself."

Crossing the courtyard, we entered through a giant door in the structure. The inside was but one immense room, illuminated by narrow windows high overhead. About the walls stood golden images on pedestals, and the walls themselves blazed with great ornaments of gold and silver. Everywhere we looked we saw metal or stone images of the twelve-legged monstrosity that evidently represented Tupan. A heavy silence seemed to settle about us as we stood in that dim-lit temple, and I found it strangely oppressing to consider how long that silence had reigned there unbroken by the voices of men.

"No wonder old Sancho de Verada and his henchmen came away empty-handed," I commented. "Everything here is too big to carry off."

Ramon said nothing, and I did not like the hollow echos my voice stirred up in that place. I decided to try dislodging the emerald eyes from the idol outside, and we returned to the courtyard. It was then we noticed the carvings around the base of the circular dias upon which the idol stood. These carvings formed a series of pictures in bas-relief, showing in detail the ceremonial rituals which the ancients had conducted in honor of Tupan. We paused to study them, and found them strangely

interesting.

The first picture showed a group of people being herded by exotic priests into the temple courtyard. In the second picture the priests had gone, and the people--both men and women--stood about in various attitudes of worship. The third picture showed Tupan rising out of the pit, towering above the people, and the fourth depicted a strange organ sprouting from the side of the god. Next, the people were shown being sucked up by this weird appendage, something like bugs might be drawn into a vacuum cleaner. And last of all, Tupan was shown with his twelve arms lifted in symbolic blessing. The pictures gave me a strange feeling as I glanced over them, and when I had finished I felt somehow uncomfortable.

Feeling a vague desire to have a closer look at the pit, I walked over to the brink and lay flat on my face, peering down into the mammoth shaft. I could see nothing down there but profound darkness. The sides of the pit were as sheerly perpendicular as those of a well; and a strange odor, like that which I had noticed before in the jungle, floated up to us. Evidently the volcano was quite dormant, as I had suspected. There was not even any indication of volcanic gasses, unless the queer stench we noticed indicated anything.

I grew curious as to the depth of the pit, and had Ramon help me push a large flagstone over the edge, hoping to determine the distance it fell by the length of time it would take in descending. We never heard it strike bottom!

"Let's get those emeralds and go," suggested Ramon. "I do not like this place!"

Strangely enough, I felt the same way, and was anxious to follow his advice. Ramon, by standing on my shoulders, could just reach the huge emerald eyes of the idol. He managed to dislodge four of them with his knife, but the rest were mortared in too tightly to budge.

"We will have to chip the rock away if we want to get out the others also," he called down.

"No matter," I assured him. "We have two apiece, and that's enough to make us both rich for life. Let's go!"

Both of us, I believe, were glad to be leaving. To me, the carven images on the altar seemed somehow suggestive of hidden horror, and that huge, unnatural swath leading to the pit made me imagine things I did not like to think of. Stashing the jewels in our knapsacks, we started back the way we came. We made better time descending than we had climbing up, and nightfall found us near the base of the mountain. Somehow, I was glad that we would not be spending the night in the crater, near that strangely forbidding temple and the deep, noisome pit which descended to such unguessable depths inside the mountain.

## V

That night, as we camped just above the jungle, Ramon seemed strangely talkative; or rather, he seemed talkative in a strange way.

"You know, Mr. Hobson," he began, "it is strange that the Conquistadores did not melt down all that gold and carry it away."

"They had nothing with which to make a fire up there," I commented. Ramon was silent for a space.

"You are sure the volcano is extinct?" he asked presently.

"Perfectly sure."

"Then why did we hear it rumble several nights ago?"

"Probably a landslide," I answered.

"Perhaps the landslide that cut the swath through the jungle below?"

"Perhaps."

After this, he was silent for some time, apparently lost in deep thought. But after supper, he started in again.

"How old is our earth, Mr. Hobson?"

I was startled at his question. "Several billion years old, I

would suppose."

"And how long has life existed upon it?"

"Not over a billion years, probably."

"Does that not seem strange to you, *amigo*?"

"Why should it?" I asked, my curiosity mounting.

"It seems illogical to me," continued Ramon, "that so long a time could pass without some kind of life existing. Nature abhors a vacuum, or so I have heard; and several billion years is a very long time indeed!"

"But conditions then were not suitable for life," I explained. "The earth was hot and semi-molten, and all water existed in the form of steam. Life could not possibly have existed."

"True, -- conditions were not suitable for our kind of life. But what about other kinds?"

"What are you getting at, Ramon?" I demanded impatiently.

"Why are you asking me these things?"

"I will tell you presently, Meester Hobson; but first I want you to suppose--just suppose--that some form of 'life' might have evolved under conditions such as those you have described."

"All right, I'm supposing."

"Then, is it not possible that such creatures could have survived down to present times, in places where conditions are similar to what they were long ago--perhaps near the center of the earth, or . . . or in the core of a volcano?"

"Of course not! that's ridiculous," I snapped, strangely irritated at what he was suggesting. "There is absolutely no evidence. . . ."

"Isn't there? What about earthquakes? What about eruptions--Pompeii and Mount Pelee? And, *amigo*, what about those strange holes in the jungle, and in the snow above? Do they not make one think of footprints?"

"Why, what nonsense!" I exclaimed, feeling a strange uneasiness creeping over me. "A creature such as you suggest would have to be almost a thousand feet tall!"

"Yes," said Ramon.

During the night my dreams were filled with frightening things. With the dawn, however, my fears had all vanished, and I set out laughing inwardly at Ramon's imaginative fancies. Even as we passed those strange holes in the jungle floor, with that unclassifiable odor lingering about them, my mood remained unchanged.

Before long, we reached our canoe and set out across the swamp, anxious to cover as much ground as possible before sundown. Once we were delayed in a floating tangle of strange, carnivorous plants, but fortunately none of them were large enough to be a menace to us. In spite of the delay we made good time, and by midafternoon we were back at the Zungaro, glad that we would not have to spend another night in the swamp.

Continuing down the river, we arrived at the rapids a little before nightfall. Here we suffered a serious mishap; for as we stepped out on shore, the canoe and all our supplies got away from us in the swift current. Quickly we waded in after it, but before we could reach the canoe it was swept down the rapids. In spite of our predicament, I was relieved to remember that we still carried the knapsacks containing our emeralds.

Circling the rapids, we salvaged what little was left of our supplies. The canoe was a total loss, and we were hopelessly stranded. Not being Indians, we could not hope to cross those many miles of jungle that separated us from the mission. Besides, it was already dusk.

"We had best camp here till morning," suggested Ramon. "Perhaps then we can construct a raft."

Accepting his idea as sound, I helped him kindle a fire, over which we cooked most of our remaining food. Soon after, the full moon rose and shone down like silver on the distant snow-clad peak of Tupanikamciseiteri. It made a lovely tropical scene, but we were in no mood to enjoy it.

For about an hour we sat around the fire, trying to keep the mosquitoes away by means of the smoke. Suddenly a slight noise made us look up, and I froze in alarm. A dozen or so Indians stood around us, their painted faces hideous in the firelight, and their spears and blowguns held ready. My heart sank with dread; I realized that the only weapon we had was Ramon's .22 pistol for killing small game.

"Do not act frightened, amigo," said Ramon evenly. "I will talk with them." So saying, he entered into a long discussion with the savage who appeared to be the leader. It sounded to me as though they were arguing heatedly; but since all the conversation of these Indians is habitually carried on in a loud and heated manner, I could not tell what the savage's true emotions might be. Finally Ramon turned to me and explained:

"They are going to the religious feast of Tupan, amigo. They say we must accompany them."

"But why?"

"I do not know—but don't worry. I'm sure these Indians mean us no harm, and we will be closer to the mission if we go with them."

We set off at once with the Indians, following dim jungle trails that only the natives could detect. Not once did they stop or speak a word, and it seemed that we were being ushered by ghostly shadows along those moonlit forest aisles. I lost all sense of time, but it must have been some hours before we suddenly came to a halt before a vast clearing. Both of us gasped in surprise at what we saw there.

Perhaps a hundred natives stood or squatted about the clearing in the moonlight, facing an idol like the one we had seen on the mountain. A great fire blazed before it, making fearsome highlights dance in its crystal eyes. Hideously painted and feathered witch-doctors stood about in gruesome silence, and several huge drums were spaced evenly in a circle around the idol.

A witch-doctor accepted our group into the mass, and we were each offered a bowl of nauseating *chicha*, which we dared not refuse. Then, at the order of the savage priest, the drums began to beat. The natives commenced to dance about the idol, chanting all the while.

"Ate, Tupan!" they cried. "Ate! ate!"

Ramon and I, watching from the edge of the clearing, noticed the tumbled blocks of ancient ruins lying about—stones similar to those of the temple on the mountain. Evidently, this was the place Rayburn and Moran had visited with the Padre some days ago.

"Do you think you could find the mission from here?" I asked Ramon.

"I think so. The Padre showed me his map once. If I remember correctly, all we have to do is follow the trail to the south, and we will come out at the river, not far from the church."

"Then let's watch for a chance to get away. . ." I began. Suddenly, I stopped and listened intently. From far off came the sound of thunder. It was the mountain rumbling.

"Tupan! Tupan!" the natives shrieked. The rumbling died away after several minutes, but the savages continued to dance with increasing frenzy. The drums beat louder.

"Moran would give his right arm to photograph this," I chuckled. Ramon said nothing, but he looked worried.

"Tupan! Tupan!" screamed the Indians.

For two or three hours we waited, seeing no opportunity to escape. We feared to disturb the rituals in any way, and we did not know how the Indians would regard our departure. We were about ready to try and slip away, hoping the savages were too engrossed in their dances to notice us, when suddenly we heard a far-off sound like a tree falling.

"What was that?" I exclaimed. Ramon was staring intently in the direction from which the sound had come. I could see

nothing but the blackness of the surrounding jungle. Then, even as we listened, the sound of several more falling trees reached our ears.

"It is Tupan!" whispered Ramon, the sweat standing out on his face. "He is coming!"

"Ridiculous!" I snapped, my nerves all on edge. The crashing sounds were coming closer. The dancing and chanting had stopped, and all was silent but for that dread noise from the jungle. The Indians stood about motionless, staring toward the edge of the clearing as though waiting for something to happen. The crashings grew louder and louder. . .

And suddenly, as I watched, a great humped form seemed to rise slowly out of the forest, towering over the tallest trees. Louder and still louder grew the tremendous crashings, and higher and higher rose that fearsome shape, until it blotted out the moon. For an instant, it seemed to me that the fire had cast an immense, black shadow of the idol against the sky; and then, the Indians screamed as a huge, dark, massive object began to descend into the clearing.

Before I could see more, Ramon pulled me after him into the jungle, threading his way rapidly along a narrow trail. Behind us I could hear a horrible roaring, sucking sound mingled with the cries of terrified Indians; and then, to my horror, came a different sound, one that neither Ramon nor I will ever forget, and which I cannot bring myself to fully describe. It seemed to come from a point high above and behind us, and was in volume like the roaring of a thousand cataracts. Yet this was not its only quality, nor its most horrible one. It was the most hideous thing I have ever heard; and as its reverberating thunder fell upon my ears I screamed out in terror and dashed away as swiftly as possible after Ramon through the jungle. . .

How Ramon found his way through the tangled forest I shall never know. Perhaps terror sharpened his instincts even as it had numbed mine. At any rate, shortly after dawn we stumbled into the clearing around the mission.

Rayburn and Moran were there with the Padre, and they all voiced their surprise at seeing us again. Without bothering to explain, we told them that we must leave the mission as soon as possible and start downriver. When they demanded the reason, we made up a story about being captured by the Indians, adding that they were preparing to go on the warpath. By midmorning we were ready to leave, and together with the reluctant Padre and his assistant, we all began our perilous journey down the Zungaro.

After innumerable hardships, we finally reached the Rio Negro, and eventually the Amazon itself. Neither Ramon nor I, since getting back to civilization, have spoken to a soul of our adventures on the mountain and in the jungle afterwards; yet they are never far from my mind. Often in my dreams I can hear that thunderous voice that bellowed after us as we ran shrieking from the clearing. Ramon seems to have been affected by it even more profoundly than I, perhaps because he understands the native dialects; but though I have questioned him many times on that subject, he would never tell me what I wished to know. Perhaps it is just as well, as the limits of sanity are ever narrow. For, horrible as it may seem, that monstrous voice we heard as we dashed madly into the jungle fell upon our ears in thunderous syllables, as spoken words of the native Quechua dialect!

## DREAMERAIDER

By Steve Troyanovich

the moon winds homeward  
clouds interweave with dreams—  
all Pictdom sleeps



# Donald M. Grant Interview

## Introduction.

Donald M. Grant is a name that is instantly recognizable to anyone involved in the fantasy field for his beautifully produced and illustrated fantasy books. His editions never stay in print for very long and always command premium prices once out-of-print. We're all familiar with Grant books, but few of us know anything about the man himself, in spite of his esteemed reputation.

At a time when many major figures in the fantasy field have been interviewed, I thought it a gross oversight that Grant had been overlooked. Jonathan Bacon was enthusiastic to the idea of a Grant interview for **FANTASY CROSSROADS**. I then contacted Grant, who readily consented. Armed with nothing more than my bubbling enthusiasm, an outline list of questions, and a tape recorder, I drove to West Kingston, a quiet, scenic town in southern Rhode Island, on 26 June, 1976.

Donald M. Grant is a tall, bespectacled man, soft-spoken, and modest about his accomplishments. He welcomed me warmly and during the course of the afternoon, showed me many examples of text and illustration from his forthcoming projects. His enthusiasm for his work is infectious, to say the least. I found that our conversation oftentimes left the path of my outline and delved into areas I hadn't considered--so much the better, for I feel this has provided greater depth. There were, in addition, questions I never posed, due to time limitations and my desire not to hamper the conversation with a rigid framework.

In editing this interview I have tried to preserve the conversational effect because I felt this is a more effective means than a cut-and-dried question-and-answer format. My own biases are apparent in places -- I have tried to keep these to a minimum in editing without destroying the flow of the interview. Some material has been rewritten by both Grant and myself to clarify statements while retaining the gist of what transpired. Other material has been deleted due to its inappropriateness. Readers will notice that several projects discussed as forthcoming have already appeared, and, indeed, by the time this is printed, may be out-of-print! This is simply another indication of the popularity of Grant's books.

It is my hope that **FANTASY CROSSROADS** readers will enjoy this long-overdue interview with the country's most active fantasy publisher.

Stephen T. Riley

## An Interview with Donald M. Grant.

FC: I'd like to thank you for granting this interview. Starting off, do you think you could give a brief biography of yourself?

Grant: I've always had an interest in reading fantasy. I suppose I did it as early as ten years old, and I think I was attracted by Edgar Rice Burroughs before anyone else, which is common enough for anyone in my age group. I think somewhere in the early '40's, the very early 1940's, I became interested in science fiction magazines, and probably this is

an outgrowth of the Burroughs interest. The Edgar Rice Burroughs stories went into **AMAZING STORIES** about 1941; they were the magnet. From **AMAZING** I went to **FANTASTIC ADVENTURES**, to **FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES**, to **FANTASTIC NOVELS**, to **WEIRD TALES**, and to a lesser extent to the other science fiction magazines. There were a great many of them in the early war years.

FC: Why has fantasy been of such interest to you instead of another genre such as mysteries or westerns?

Grant: I suppose it's the opportunity to use the imagination more than anything else. I'm a bit of an armchair adventurer but it doesn't go any further than that.

FC: I am myself. . . (laughter). I think too, it's a way to get away from the mundane events of everyday life, in a way, to put yourself in a different perspective, a change of pace. . .

Grant: No question. I suppose a lot of us identify with some of the characters that we've read about.

FC: Such as Conan, John Carter, or somebody. Was there any particular reason for your start in publishing, such as a desire to put your favorite stories into hardcover, or to make what you felt were classics available to collectors?

Grant: Well, when I started in publishing, there was only one so-called "fan" publisher, and that was Arkham House. Now, at the time, no one was doing science fiction and I became involved with Thomas P. Hadley. We more or less felt there was an opportunity to present some of the stories that were favorites of ours in a permanent hardcover form. I guess this is what initiated it.

FC: **RHODE ISLAND ON LOVECRAFT** was your first publication then, with Hadley?

Grant: Yes. We began work on that, I think, in 1944, though it didn't come out until 1945. By that time, I had gone into the service, into the army.

FC: And after that, with Hadley and Kenneth Krueger, you formed the Buffalo Book Company?

Grant: **RHODE ISLAND ON LOVECRAFT** came out under the imprint of Grant-Hadley Enterprises. We were both pretty young at the time, (laughter) and downright novices. **THE TIME STREAM** was the first hardcover, actually that preceded **THE SKYLARK OF SPACE**. That came out under the imprint of the Buffalo Book Company and GHE, which was Grant-Hadley Enterprises. The Buffalo Book Company came about -- Ken Krueger, who was an old fan, lived in Buffalo, New York, was stationed in New England in the. . . I think he was in the Air Force. . . and he came down to Providence while I was in the service. He was enthused about what Tom and I were doing, and he joined the company. . . and for some reason or other he pushed this Buffalo Book Company, the BBC.

FC: Could you tell me something about the Hadley Publishing Company? I've seen a bibliographic listing that seems to connect you with this imprint.

Grant: I was not a partner in the Hadley Publishing Company. I

was still in college at that time - out of the service and in college. I helped Tom from time to time, but no, he was the sole owner of the Hadley Publishing Company.

FC: After the Buffalo Book Company, you formed the Grandon Company, which lasted a number of years.

Grant: The Grandon Company originated in 1949, and involved me with James Donahue who was a long-time associate of mine. The first book we put out was **THE PORT OF PERIL** by Otis Adelbert Kline. Interestingly enough on that, Kline died by 1949. We were talking to the Kline agency as early as 1948. I had a couple of letters from Otis Kline prior to that. Now in 1949 I went down and signed a contract with Otis Kline's daughter who was more-or-less running the old literary agency, Otis Kline Associates. Mrs. Kline was in on the talks. Interestingly, in '49, we talked about the Conan books.

FC: Really?! That far back?

Grant: That far back.

FC: That's before Gnome Press got them into print.

Grant: That's before Gnome Press. This is before Oscar Friend took over the Otis Kline Agency. Now, oh, I was young, I was in school, I had a lot of ideas then. . . (laughter) **THE PORT OF PERIL** was going to come out first and be an overnight success, which it wasn't, it wasn't anything like that! (laughter) Then I was going to bring out the first Conan book. We were in accord on it, but I couldn't deliver. And then Oscar Friend came along and I worked with him as well. Oscar took over the agency and, well, the books were just not selling at the time. I was too young, too inexperienced, too much of a dreamer I suppose, too, and certainly a novice. Further, I didn't have the capital at that time. So it slipped away and after a time Oscar sold the Conans to Gnome Press. They had a time with them too!

FC: That's true. Some of the later titles were remaindered.

Grant: Oh yes. They were a very cheap edition which I wouldn't have done though I'm not exactly pleased with my earlier books. . . the formats of them. My interest in Conan went back that far.

FC: I've noticed that three titles were listed as being published by the Grandon Company, but I've never been able to find information on them. They are **THE SWORDSMAN OF MARS**, **THE GOLDEN CITY** and **THE FACE IN THE ABYSS**. Could you give some information on this?

Grant: Well, in 1949 the Grandon Company did publish **THE PORT OF PERIL** and the following year it published an A. Merritt story, **DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE**. Now these were favorites of mine, and in their field they stand up remarkably well. I'm still a great A. Merritt enthusiast, and **THE FACE IN THE ABYSS** seemed a natural follow up to **DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE**, as **SWORDSMAN OF MARS** was to **THE PORT OF PERIL**. Well, it was just a case that **DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE** and **PORT OF PERIL** didn't sell that well.

FC: So it was more financial difficulties than any lack of interest or desire?

Grant: It certainly wasn't lack of desire. That was always there. But it was not only financial, it's just that the field was not ready for hardbound science-fantasy at that time.

FC: The genre was still considered very immature.

Grant: It was a lot of fun at that time. It still is. I can still pick up **THE DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE** and enjoy it.

FC: What can you tell me about Betsy Wells Halladay? My research has indicated that she illustrated a number of your earlier books, and **THE PORT OF PERIL** is copyrighted by "Halladay, Inc."

Grant: Halladay, Inc. was the printer that did **THE PORT OF PERIL**. They also did **THE SKYLARK OF SPACE**, **THE TIME STREAM**, and one edition of **RHODE ISLAND ON LOVECRAFT**.

FC: Was that the first or second edition?

Grant: I believe it was the second. . . Betsy Wells Halladay was the daughter of Allan Halladay, who ran Halladay, Inc., a medium-sized Rhode Island printer. They still are in existence. They're not strictly a book printing plant as we know them today. But in those days they were (laughter) large to me. The only thing that Betsy Wells Halladay did, that I can remember, is she reproduced some of the artifacts from the Lovecraft collection for the pamphlet **RHODE ISLAND ON LOVECRAFT**. I believe that the dustwrapper of **THE TIME STREAM** was done by Allan Halladay, her father. The Halladay family was a, still is to a certain extent, a family involved with art in Rhode Island.

FC: Do you know what's happened to her?

Grant: Frankly, I don't even remember her. (laughter) I think Tom may have arranged that, to have those things copied, because Tom Hadley was friendly with the Halladay family: I didn't know them that well.

FC: The first book published under your current imprint was Henry Hardy Heins' **A GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY BIBLIOGRAPHY OF EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS**. This was a record seller wasn't it, going out-of-print in about two months?

Grant: Yes, for me it was astounding. Of course, the edition was 1000 copies which is a lot smaller than the current editions. But, at that time, I was very pleased with the way it performed, as well as the enthusiasm it was received with.

FC: Why was a hardcover edition printed if it had already been available in a paperback format?

Grant: Henry Heins had mimeographed an edition, I think the date was 1962 -- you could probably verify that. It was an 8½ by 11 mimeographed. It contained 25 percent or perhaps a third of the content of the clothbound edition.

FC: So the clothbound edition was expanded, revised and. . .

Grant: It was revised and it had a great deal more information in it than the mimeographed edition.

FC: It's quite a rare book today.

Grant: The cloth edition? Yes it is.

FC: Do you know what the current market value of it is?

Grant: As far as I know, it has been about \$125.00. I think that's a fair value on it.

FC: It doesn't seem to have gone up much since I last heard a

price quoted which was about \$100.00 and that was probably about four years ago. I had expected the book to sell for about \$150.00 by now.

Grant: Prices are relative. I'm sure that some of the dealers have placed it much higher than that, whether they sold it or not, I don't know.

FC: I've noticed that there's been a shift in the subject matter that you've published. Your earlier publications seem to be mostly science fiction—fantasy, but lately you've changed to Robert E. Howard and adventure—fantasy. Is this because of changing public tastes or changing personal tastes?

Grant: I would think a combination of both. Actually, if you'll go back to the early books, **THE SKYLARK OF SPACE**, **THE PORT OF PERIL**, **DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE**, they were highly imaginative books. They were fast moving and imaginative. Now, getting back to my current interest. . .you know, in my old age I do think that my tastes have changed. My real favorite, and he's a very uneven writer, is Talbot Mundy. I think Talbot Mundy's best stuff, and goodness knows there isn't enough of it. . .

FC: It seems that's the case with all our favorite authors.

Grant: . . . surpasses everybody's. But he did an awful lot of hack writing. Mundy had a very interesting career; I wish we knew more about him.

FC: Will you be printing a book on him, perhaps? A biography of sorts?

Grant: I honestly don't know. Mundy wrote for **ADVENTURE** magazine, developed there under Arthur Sullivant Hoffman, who was to my way of thinking the premier magazine editor in this country. At the same time, Mundy's contemporaries in **ADVENTURE** included Arthur O. Friel, whom you have told me you enjoy. . .

FC: Very much.

Grant: Friel was a standby for **ADVENTURE**, doing about seventy-five stories for the magazine. Another contributor was Harold Lamb, whose fiction appeared chiefly in **ADVENTURE** prior to his success as a biographer.

FC: Such as his book on Omar Khayyam?

Grant: Omar Khayyam, Tamerlane, Hannibal, the Crusades. . .

FC: Genghis Khan. . .

Grant: Genghis Khan. His fiction preceded this writing, though a part of the material that he incorporated into those biographies was also in **ADVENTURE**. H. Bedford-Jones was in **ADVENTURE**. I have in mind, **THE TEMPLE OF THE TEN**. This was right out of **ADVENTURE**, 1921, I believe. . .And, Arthur D. Howden Smith was in there, John Buchan was in there. . . there are any number of authors that were in there. William Hope Hodgson was in **ADVENTURE**.

FC: Really?!

Grant: Yes he was. Not very much but he was in **Adventure**.

FC: I don't even recall reading that in Sam Moskowitz' critical biography. (In **Out of the Storm**, Grant, 1975.)

Grant: There's mention of it in there. **ADVENTURE** is a great

favorite of mine. It began in 1910 and went into the '50's in approximately the same form. At its peak it was being issued three times a month. Now, take **ADVENTURE** magazine -- this was the magazine that influenced Robert E. Howard!

FC: That's true. It featured all the top-notch adventure authors of the day.

Grant: **REH** tried to break into **ADVENTURE**. He wrote his first materials on the idea of a character that was molded out of Talbot Mundy and Harold Lamb. He couldn't write in that vein authentically enough to break into **ADVENTURE**, but **ADVENTURE** was an enormous influence on Howard.

FC: It's easy to see the influence but Howard didn't stop there, he went beyond that. He sort of used it as a building block, at least in my opinion.

Grant: Oh yes. It's a building block; definitely.

FC: It reminds me of Lin Carter, who seems to be influenced by everybody and puts it together into a blend. Although, unlike Howard, Carter doesn't strike me as being a writer who does anything new with it -- he's just eclectic.

Grant: Howard was completely different. I think his train of thought was less orderly than Talbot Mundy or Harold Lamb. He was a more erratic person, and because of this, he's much more imaginative. I think, probably, people like Lamb were much greater researchers, they were more careful about what they did. Mundy? Well, Mundy saw a lot in the East, and he involved a lot of what he had seen in his stories. I don't believe in reincarnation (laughter) but when I read **TROS OF SAMOTHRACE** I almost have to think Mundy was a reincarnation of a man who had lived in Caesar's time. (laughter).

FC: I haven't read the books, I have them, but they are quite good from what I've heard. (Zebra Books is currently issuing the **TROS** series in the same format as their Howard books. I've read the first volume since then and must concur with Grant's opinion.)

Grant: Oh, incredibly good. There's a certain flavor of mysticism wrapped up in them, history, just enough fantasy in there to get your mind twisting and working. **Marvelous! TROS OF SAMOTHRACE, PURPLE PIRATE. . .**

FC: When did your interest in Howard start? When did you first encounter his fiction?

Grant: I think my interest in Howard went back to the time I acquired my first set of **WEIRD TALES** magazine, which would be early 1946. I was stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas, and I went home on furlough and naturally I hit the bookshops wherever I went. I went to Fort Worth, Texas, I went to Dallas and I did the bookstores in both of those cities rather thoroughly. In Fort Worth I found this great collection of magazines, and it consisted of a complete file of **WEIRD TALES** to that date, from the first issue. The first two issues were fifty cents, the remaining ones were fifteen cents each. There were also complete runs of **AMAZING**, **ASTOUNDING**, the Wonder group, **TALES OF MAGIC AND MYSTERY**, **MIRACLE SCIENCE**, oh, I could go on. . .

FC: That's enough to give a collector, today at least, a heart attack; hearing prices like that!

Grant: That's a long time ago, the interest wasn't there. They were delighted to sell them to me. They set the prices, I



didn't.

FC: Why does Howard interest you as an author? What is it about him that you like? Obviously, you are the major Robert E. Howard publisher.

Grant: Well, to date I've published. . . let's see. . .

FC: It must be about twenty titles. . . twenty-one. . . I think counting reprint editions though. . .

Grant: As I recall it, and we should verify this I suppose, seventeen books in nineteen editions. **ROGUES IN THE HOUSE** will make the twentieth, which will be out next month, and **THE LAST CELT**, which is the bio-bibliography of Robert E. Howard, will be issued at the same time. Plus a reprint edition of **THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER**, so that will put it over twenty hardcover books. I don't know what it is -- it's his imagination, his speed I think more than anything else.



FC: There's also that element of sheer conviction in Howard's work, as if he really believed what he was writing, whereas I get the impression that when other authors, such as de Camp and Carter, write one of their Conan tales, that element that is so necessary to bring the tale to life is lacking, because de Camp and Carter realize it's done for fun, for entertainment. I think Howard really put a lot of himself into these tales.

Grant: Frankly, I don't agree with you. No. (laughter)

FC: How would you feel about it then?

Grant: I think there's a lot of Howard in some of the stories, but there are probably less stories that have something of Howard in them than not. Essentially, I think it's Howard's speed that makes the stories work -- but remember, Howard created whole panoramas, whole civilizations in an antediluvian era.

FC: The Hyborian Age. . .

Grant: Exactly. Howard peopled it the way he wanted to, but he drew on a lot of sources to people it. It would seem reasonable that the magnitude of this panorama, the very grandness of it, is one of the elements which attracts readers to Howard. Strangely enough, one of my great favorites is Breckenridge Elkins. I like Breck Elkins at least as well as I do Conan.

FC: Speaking of Breckenridge Elkins, why was **A GENT FROM BEAR CREEK** the first Howard book you published, instead of, perhaps, **RED SHADOWS**, **THE SOWERS OF THE**

**THUNDER**, or some other sort of stories? Why did you decide to do the first American edition of Howard's first book?



Grant: Really, this comes down to finances. Glenn Lord and I were talking about Howard in the early '60's and we wanted to do something; we wanted to do it right. This took time. If you'll recall, at the time, all of my imprints were being published with typeset that was no more than an IBM Executive Boldface 2 typeface. Oh, it was justified, it was readable, **THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER** is done in that fashion, but typeset in those days was a problem, and also getting illustrations done. These colored illustrations that are in the current books just didn't come overnight. We wanted to do these books up right. Well, the book **A GENT FROM BEAR CREEK** had been done in England a year after Howard's death, in 1937.

FC: That's the rarest of all Howard books.

Grant: It's a very, very difficult book to obtain actually. It was presumably reprinted a year later in 1938, but I have never seen one.

FC: Glenn Lord had written me something about a "cheap edition" copy, but he said he doesn't know what differences there really are between them.

Grant: I don't think Glenn has ever seen it, either. Well, anyway, we were talking about Howard over a period of time and Glenn threw out **A GENT FROM BEAR CREEK** and said "Look, I can make this book available to you, the British edition. We can go from there." So I said fine, let's take a look at it. I read the book and I was very enthused with it. It's always been one of my favorites. I went out and photographed the British edition and that was actually the first attempt, a controlled attempt, at doing a book thirty-two pages up. . . a thirty-two page signature. The edition was 600-odd copies, I don't remember exactly. All of this information is in **THE LAST CELT**. That was the first one, the first Howard, 1965.

FC: Right. And that was followed by **THE PRIDE OF BEAR CREEK**.

Grant: **THE PRIDE OF BEAR CREEK**. Now this was typeset on the IBM Exec, again. It's readable but it isn't any great

shakes as far as I'm concerned. I've always been interested in typography and up until, well, the last few years, more or less, I hadn't been able to do with the typography what I wanted to.

FC: How about **RED SHADOWS**? Would you consider that to be your most popular title, particularly since it's gone through two editions and a third is planned?

Grant: I don't know. That's a very difficult question for me. I don't know really that I have a favorite either. **RED SHADOWS** has gone through two editions, but they have been small editions, both of them well under 1000, so that there are probably something like 1700 copies of **RED SHADOWS** out. Noticeably less than, say, **RED NAILS**, which is 3500, or **ALMURIC**, which is 3500. . . **ROGUES IN THE HOUSE** will be 3500. **RED SHADOWS** is going into a third edition. It will be completely redesigned. I have the artwork by Jeff Jones on hand now for it. **RED SHADOWS** in the new edition will be typeset on the new computer typesetter that we have here.

FC: Will it be printed in the same format or will the book be enlarged?

Grant: It will be an oversized book.

FC: Like the size of **BLACK VULMEA'S VENGEANCE**?

Grant: Not quite that size. **BLACK VULMEA** is a little bit larger than the Conans. It will be the Conan size.

FC: Aha, that should make a very attractive book!

Grant: I would think so, yes. Talking about **RED SHADOWS** as a favorite, of course, it's one of my favorites, no question about it. It's interesting, because I met Jeff Jones in Cleveland while he was still in art school in Georgia. He had some stuff displayed at the Cleveland convention and I was very taken with it. I thought he was a "comer"; he had to succeed. So I spoke to him. At this time he hadn't sold anything professionally. I spoke to him about doing a book. He was enthused and the result was the first edition of **RED SHADOWS**.

FC: Do you think the book helped him along in his career, it made him more popular or gave him the exposure that he needed in order to become one of the top illustrators in the field today?

Grant: I don't go that far. (laughter) I hope it helped him a little bit. . .

FC: Well, although Jeff's technique has improved and been refined to the point where he's incredibly good today, so good that his **RED SHADOWS** paintings look almost crude in comparison, I know people who love those paintings just the way they are.

Grant: I'm one of them.

FC: Me too!

Grant: I don't think that he has gone beyond **RED SHADOWS** really. I like some of the stuff he does now, very much in fact. Perhaps it's sentimental attachment, but I like the **RED SHADOWS** paintings very much.

FC: What made you decide to release the paintings inside the book as canvas prints in a limited edition? You've never

done anything like that since.

Grant: I was so enthused about the illustrations that I thought it would be nice. A lot of people that saw them wanted them, and I thought that to lithograph them would be a logical move. It was a good move. I haven't gone in that direction again because they're hard to handle.

FC: Do you think you might do it with the third edition of **RED SHADOWS**?

Grant: Doubtful, extremely doubtful. Not that I don't like the stuff. . . and, the new material for **RED SHADOWS** is completely different. It's very sombre and it's cold and shadowy.

FC: Why did **SOWERS OF THE THUNDER** take so long to see print? It was mentioned on one of the Bear Creek titles and that was about seven or eight years before the book was actually published.

Grant: **THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER** is another one of my great favorites. It does have some faults in typography, but there's a lot of love that went into **SOWERS**, both from the artist Roy Krenkel, who worked many years on it, and from me.

FC: It's obvious!

Grant: Actually, **THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER** took seven years to produce. Roy was very much taken by the material that went into **THE SOWERS** and he wanted to do it right. If you know Roy Krenkel he's very. . . well, he can't seem to please himself.

FC: He's his own worst critic, in other words.

Grant: Yes.

FC: He's quite a character. I think he puts himself down too much.

Grant: He does.

FC: He's got a lot more talent than he realizes.

Grant: (laughing) He's got incredible talent! He took a long, long time to produce the book. You can see why when you just thumb through it. There are well over 100 different illustrations in that thing.

FC: It's one of the most profusely illustrated books I've ever seen in my life. Did you plan to publish it this way originally or did this format grow as Roy kept doing more and more illustrations?

Grant: Oh, it grew, it grew. There were going to be a number of illustrations originally, but nothing like this. As we went along, we talked, and we talked, and we talked about it. The little facets of it evolved. The designs in the margins and the use of the folios and the use of the line illustrations -- they were worked into the text. Now, unfortunately, this book was set on the IBM Executive, it isn't a **bad** job, for the IBM Exec. It was the only way it could be done. There are so many run-arounds, and so many marginal pieces in there. . .

FC: It's a typesetter's nightmare!

Grant: (laughs) It really is! So, what was done. . . I prepared the page repros, made prints of the illustrations, and did a paste-up, combining the print of the illustrations with the page repros. They were produced in that fashion and made ready

for camera so all that had to be done in the darkroom was a straight line-shot. Of course, there is color on the title-page, and the frontispiece is four-color. The dustwrapper was a job. . .

FC: I had heard tales of how Krenkel kept repainting the cover illustration. He'd get it just right, then he wouldn't be quite satisfied with it and he'd scrape half of it off the canvas, and he'd go back and paint more.

Grant: That could very well be with the dustwrapper, I don't think it was the case with the frontispiece. Roy just can't seem to satisfy himself. **SOWERS** is a favorite with me and it is going into a second edition this month. It was a very successful book. The edition was 2500 copies, a lot for me at that time, and it went out of print rapidly. It did very well.

FC: It sold out almost as fast, or faster, than the Burroughs bibliography, didn't it?

Grant: Not quite that fast, but you have to remember, too, in 1964 when the Burroughs book came out there had been some heavy advertising in advance. My policy now is to stay away from advertising books far in advance. It creates problems. If you can't deliver on time, it builds up bad feelings -- ill will. And what is just as important for the small publisher who has a minimum of time, there are all sorts of people writing in demanding to know "Where is my book?" Which is legitimate. I don't blame these people at all. This is one of the reasons, that, today, I like to advertise the books as close to publication as possible. I know there are those who do not go along with this; some publishers like to advertise far in advance and take the monies involved.

FC: What was the story with **THE IRON MAN**? Zebra Books came out with a paperback edition, as far as I know, before the hardcover saw print, yet the hardcover says "First Edition" inside it. Is the paperback really the true first edition?

Grant: Well, the paperback did appear first. The clothbound was scheduled to come out. In fact, the typeset on **THE IRON MAN** I did. Zebra had made arrangements with the agents, with Glenn Lord and Kirby McCauley, to bring out a paperback edition, and they were in urgent need for Howard property. So what I did was allow them to use the page repros in advance. You'll notice the typeset is just the same for the two books.

FC: There's even the David Ireland illustrations, so I knew that the hardcover had already been typeset when the Zebra edition had appeared.

Grant: Right. Well, they went to press at the same time, but it takes longer to produce a casebound book. There's a lot more involved. They hammer out the paperbacks. It was probably done on a Cameron Belt Press. From start to finish it's a day or two or some ridiculously small length of time.

FC: Now the reason I asked that question is because **SWORDS OF SHAHRAZAR**, which FAX is publishing, has already appeared in England as a paperback, without any interior illustrations, and that's considered the true first edition of the book.

Grant: Still, a paperback first edition, to me, is different from a casebound first edition. First in paper, first in cloth.

(Tape shut off at this point for off-the-record conversation.)

Grant: (Talking about Mike Kaluta's illustrations for **THE**



LOST VALLEY OF ISKANDER and the stories). This sort of thing -- the story -- comes directly from **ADVENTURE**. It's right out of Mundy and Lamb. Howard by way of Mundy and Lamb. Currently, there is one guy who has the best "feel" for this type of writing, and he's the toughest guy in the world (laughter). Roy Krenkel, of course. Roy has an incredible feel for this kind of fiction. Right now, he has a Howard in the same vein as **THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER**. It's been over a year (laughter); I hope I get it pretty soon! One man who could have done it better would have been Coll, who is long dead. Another artist who could have done a creditable job would have been. . . uh. . . what's his name. . .

FC: Modern?

Grant: No, he was a **BLUEBOOK**, **COLLIERS** illustrator. He succeeded Coll on Fu Manchu.

FC: No, it doesn't ring a bell.

(Grant runs into another room and checks his reference.)

FC: That was John Richard Flannigan?

Grant: John Richard Flannigan. He was influenced by Coll also. The more you see of Coll. . . more people were influenced by him. Krenkel, Austin Briggs, John Richard Flannigan, who was very well known, a whole mess of them. . . where were we?

FC: We were at **THE IRON MAN**. We'd just finished that. In **BLACK VULMEA'S VENGEANCE**, I noticed the opening story is very similar to "The Black Stranger." Do you know offhand if it was written as a pirate tale, and couldn't be marketed, so Howard turned it into a Conan story, which was then completed by de Camp after Howard's death? (Published as "The Treasure of Trancos", in the Lancer Conan series.)

Grant: I have a complete version of "The Black Stranger" that was completed by Howard.

FC: There does exist a complete version?



Grant: I'm quite sure that it is complete. You'll have to check on that though. Maybe you'd better verify that with Glenn. He'd be the expert on it. It exists both ways. I think he did the pirate version first, and my reasoning there.

(Telephone interrupted interview at this point.)

Grant: **BLACK VULMEA'S VENGEANCE**, of course, is a pirate story, and he did these three pieces. . . my assumption here is that, Howard, again, was reading **ADVENTURE**. We've talked about that! **ADVENTURE** ran some good pirate stories, and, as a matter of fact, carried the first appearance in this country of **CAPTAIN BLOOD**.

FC: By Sabatini?

Grant: By Sabatini. It was in **ADVENTURE** as a series of episodes. Now, the funny part of it was Sabatini at this time hadn't drawn it together. He hadn't built the complete novel out of it. If you remember anything about **CAPTAIN BLOOD**. . .

FC: I've never read it, myself. Haven't found a copy. (This has since been rectified and the book is highly recommended.)

Grant: It's a super book! (laughter) I'll have to give you a copy. If you remember anything about the movie, even, the big ship that Captain Blood used as his flag ship was the "Arabella," named after the girl he eventually married, Arabella Bishop. She was the niece of the evil planter (laughter) Colonel Bishop, who hated Blood. In **ADVENTURE** magazine, Sabatini hadn't brought the story along that far. The ship is the "Colleen." It isn't the "Arabella" at all! This is in the early '20's, when all of these people were making a great influence on Robert E. Howard, so I think that when **CAPTAIN BLOOD** came out, Howard was ripe to try some pirate stories.

FC: From what I've heard about the novel, it seems to have influenced a lot of people. . . inspired them. Why did you choose Robert James Pailthorpe as an illustrator? To-date you've stayed basically in the fantasy field, choosing people who've done work in that vein, and here you went outside to a man who is a marine illustrator.

Grant: It was an experiment really. I wanted to see what he could do in that vein, and I was pleased with it. He is a nationally-known marine artist, but years ago he illustrated **THE MIGHTIEST MACHINE** by John Campbell under the Hadley imprint. Currently he has a series of Rhode Island Bicentennial prints that has been advertised widely on television. There's a 1776 waterfront scene of Providence -- a beautiful piece -- another one of the burning of the **GASPEE**, a third Revolutionary War General Nathaniel Greene's homestead, and the fourth is a sea scene. He has a feel for the sea and has done a great amount of research in that direction. I think I like his whaling portfolio best of all, and he has done some incredible work for a book on whaling.

FC: You had mentioned that to me in your letter.

Grant: I'm so enthused about it that we have talked about publishing it. I'd be completely out of my science-fantasy element if I did, but the work is so good that it deserves something permanent.

FC: Is it similar to his whaling portfolio or to the kind of work he did for **BLACK VULMEA**?

Grant: It's closer to the whaling portfolio. But still, there is a

departure. There's a finer line involved.

FC: I hope you can find some more people like that who aren't as well known in fandom, perhaps. You say **THE LAST CELT** will be out next month. . .

Grant: Yes.

FC: This is a long-awaited volume.

Grant: Four hundred and sixteen pages, seven by ten. I think it's a good buy. That much material. . .

FC: I'm going to buy it. (laughter)

Grant: A lot of people are waiting for it.

FC: How many copies?

Grant: Twenty-six hundred.

FC: Oh, so it's probably going to sell like that.

Grant: I don't know. Perhaps the price is prohibitive, twenty dollars, I don't know that it's going to sell like that.

FC: When did you plan to publish the Conan series, disregarding the time you wanted to do it back in the late '40's?

Grant: (laughs) We talked about that. . . Glenn and I talked about it, oh. . . well, around the end of '69 or 1970, and it was slowly formulated. Actually, the final decision on the format did not take place until after **THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER**, and I think **THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER** influenced the Conan series.

FC: Having a larger-sized book, a little taller and wider. . .?

Grant: Well, not only that, the general ornateness, the possibility of a better binding, and that's an expensive binding on **SOWERS**. Of course, the Conans are a three-piece binding. The dustwrappers are completely different. I've had people comment about. . . write in and they'll say "Well, I want to do a Conan and I would like to do a colored dust-wraper."

FC: You've got to keep the series matched, once it's started.

Grant: I won't deny that I gave some thought to the use of process color dustwrappers throughout the series. But dustwrappers are going to show themselves off when placed side by side on a bookshelf. Can you imagine what would happen when there are ten different artists involved?

FC: It would make a riot of color in that area.

Grant: Exactly! The wrappers would clash something fierce! That was the reason for simplicity in the dustwrapper. There are a lot of innovations and trials in this Conan series. For one thing, the drop folios and running heads are outside of the text margins.

FC: The running heads? What are they?

Grant: (Showing a page from a Conan title) This is a running head. This is a folio. And here is a drop-folio. The folio could have gone up there (indicates top of page).

FC: So the folio is the page number and the running head is where the title of the book is placed on the page.

Grant: Now this is a drop-folio (at the bottom of the page, or below the running head) as opposed to the folio in the running head.

FC: Okay, like in **THE BOWL OF BAAL** where the title is up on the page and the folio is over on the right-hand side. I'm saying this to get it into the tape recorder! (laughs) How many volumes do you anticipate for the Conan series? I really haven't heard a definite number.

Grant: I haven't really decided yet. It's probably going to be between fifteen and twenty.

FC: How are you going to package **THE HOUR OF THE DRAGON**? Is that going to be one volume? (Better known as the book **CONAN THE CONQUEROR**)

Grant: It's going to be one. . .

FC: Immense volume. (laughter)

Grant: Immense volume; yes. The 14 pt. Souvenir typeface is too large for such a book. Still, it has to be something eminently readable. . . probably a 12 point, one point leaded. There will be a lot of text -- probably build up to a good 500 pages -- and well illustrated. I haven't got an artist for it as yet, though.

FC: It's going to be quite a book it seems.

Grant: It will have to be the most expensive one in the series because of its sheer magnitude. Probably be about a twenty dollar book. It will be difficult to come up with the right illustrator for that one.

FC: Who are some of the artists that you have working now on volumes?

Grant: Well, as you know, **ROGUES IN THE HOUSE** has Marcus Boas. This will be released next month. **THE DEVIL IN IRON**, which will be the sixth Conan, is Dan Green. Jeff Jones is doing one. . .

FC: Krenkel?

Grant: Krenkel has talked about a hand-lettered edition of "The Hyborian Age" as part of the Conan series.

FC: Nice.

Grant: He wants to hand-letter the entire thing.

FC: It may be ten years before you get it!

Grant: That's a possibility. I'm not pressing; it's a big series. But I hope to have something of Krenkel's as part of it. Michael Hague -- he has sort of a Rackham approach -- is doing a volume.

FC: (Being shown examples of Hague's work) Oh, wow! A define Rackham influence.

(Material deleted at this point)

Grant: (Talking about the illustrations for the Conan series). There are people who like the Alicia Austin ones the best. Now, admittedly, Alicia's work is not what I envision Conan as. Neither do I envision Conan as a Neanderthal, either. (laughs) I think Alicia's work is beautiful and I can take it. After all, the whole idea, the whole premise for this series,

was to put it out with illustrations that interpreted the Conan stories as the illustrator saw. And this is just what's been done. They were all different. As I said, I've gotten more criticism of the Robertson illustrations than any of them. And there have been criticisms. . . not a great many now. . . there have been criticism of all of them, of Alicia's, of George Barr's, and David Ireland's.

(More material deleted.)

FC: How do you feel about the de Camp and Carter pastiches in the Conan series? They've been rather controversial and it's a question that seems to be asked of everybody these days, so I thought I'd pose it to you.

Grant: I prefer the Howard, frankly. They're both very successful authors in their own right, but they don't seem to capture quite as fully what Howard was trying to do.

FC: How long have you known Glenn Lord?

Grant: I think it would be, probably, the late 1950's. He hadn't taken over as agent for the estate. He wasn't involved at that time. In fact, when did **ALWAYS COMES EVENING** come out?

FC: '57, I believe.

Grant: '57, that's right. It must have been shortly after that date. . . no, I think I remember him before that.

FC: How did you come into contact with each other? Just two fans exchanging letters?

Grant: Probably. Chances are Glenn got some of the books, if not new ones, then out-of-print. (In addition to publishing, Grant has been a dealer in used and out-of-print books.)

FC: You've done publishing for Glenn, issues of **THE HOWARD COLLECTOR**. Do you remember how many issues you published, was it the entire set?

Grant: I don't remember how many; it wasn't the entire set. The first two or three were professionally typeset and printed. At that time, I had a small offset which I'd bought as a means to an end (laughs) . . . printing has always been an expensive proposition and through the years has become increasingly so. When Glenn asked me if I would take over production of **THE HOWARD COLLECTOR**, with the interest I had in it, I was happy to do so.

FC: You've had associations with other publishers, too. One of them is Joseph Payne Brennan's Macabre House. You published, what was it, three or four titles. . . ?

Grant: Yes, I produced some of his issues of **MACABRE** -- on the small press -- in the same way that **THE HOWARD COLLECTOR** was produced.

FC: Do you still publish **MACABRE** for him?

Grant: No, I haven't done anything like that for several years. The early magazines and books were run off on a small A.B. Dick offset press, two pages up. Everything was hand-folded in those days. . . it was the way I produced books at that time. Then we were associated with **SCREAM AT MIDNIGHT**, **THE DARK RETURNERS**. . .

FC: And **THE CASEBOOK OF LUCIUS LEFFING**.

Grant: Right.

FC: And you showed me something that is in progress.

Grant: **THE CHRONICLES OF LUCIUS LEFFING** is now into typeset. It has been illustrated. I do have the illustrations on hand for it. This will be under my imprint.

FC: It won't be under Macabre?

Grant: It won't be under Macabre, no. It should be an attractive little book. You've seen some of the type for it.

FC: What is your arrangement with Centaur Press?

Grant: I'm one of the original partners in Centaur Press.

FC: Did you, and do you still, do typeset for the books?

Grant: Some of the typeset in the books was utilized from casebound, from the hardcover editions. For instance, the Howards. I did do the typeset for **THE PATHLESS TRAIL**, I can remember. Very small. . .

FC: I remember **TIGER RIVER** was miniscule.

Grant: **PATHLESS TRAIL** is the real small one. See, (showing book) that was done on the IBM Exec. **TIGER RIVER** is more readable. We had to get that into so many pages and that was the only way it could be done, frankly. (laughs)

FC: What happened to **THE KING OF NO MAN'S LAND**? It's mentioned on the back cover of **THE PATHLESS TRAIL** and it's never. . .

Grant: It's never been published in paperback. I would like to think that my associates would want to follow through on it eventually.

FC: I hope so. I have a hardcover copy and loved it. I think a lot of other people should have the chance to read it too.

Grant: There's a fourth one, also.

FC: Do you have a spare copy of it? (laughter)

Grant: It's called **MOUNTAINS OF MYSTERY**. All four of these stories ran in **ADVENTURE**. We're back to **ADVENTURE** again! There was a later yarn called "In the Year 2000" in which the descendants of the heroes go back into interior South America to the land of "The King of No Man's Land." It appeared in magazine only; never did make it into hardcover. The original appearance of the four books, **THE PATHLESS TRAIL**, **TIGER RIVER**, **THE KING OF NO MAN'S LAND** and **MOUNTAINS OF MYSTERY** was in **ADVENTURE** magazine as long serials. Then Harpers, who was a major publisher at the time, put them into book form. Harpers also published **RIVER OF SEVEN STARS**.

FC: That's the non-fiction book?

Grant: That's the non-fiction one in which Friel details his explorations in South America in search of the "White Indians." He came back with some most interesting conclusions. Mrs. Friel told me that when he got off the boat he was virtually skin and bones. He barely survived that trip!

FC: Whew! Why did **THE BOWL OF BAAL** appear as a hardcover under your imprint when it was originally projected to be a paperback edition in the Time-Lost series?

Grant: **THE BOWL OF BAAL** is a title that I've wanted to do for

years -- long before Centaur was ever dreamed of. The story originally appeared in **ALL-AROUND** magazine, as you know, and it is a devilishly difficult thing to obtain today. Actually, the magazine was competition for the Munseys. By and large, it featured a fantastic type of story. **BOWL OF BAAL** was in there, of course. But some of the other inclusions were: **BEYOND THIRTY**, by Edgar Rice Burroughs, the Centaur paperback **THE TREASURE OF ATLANTIS**. . .



FC: The Dunn book?

Grant: Yes, that's the one. **BEYOND THE RANGE** -- that's the book title -- appeared in **ALL-AROUND** as **THE UNDERCOVER TRAIL** by George B. Rodney.

FC: I'm not familiar with that one.

Grant: That's a lost-race thing. They did a lot of stuff in that vein. Well, we wanted to get into that, in Centaur, though I had wanted to do it right along in hardcover. I found the heirs of Robert Ames Bennet, who wrote his first book in 1901. That was **THYRA**, another fantastic.

FC: So it was quite a while ago.

Grant: Yes, it was quite a while ago, but I did find Bennet's son alive and paid a royalty for the book. Eventually, I hope that it will come out from Centaur because it is a real period piece.

FC: How have the non-Howard titles sold? I know that the **RED SHADOWS** collections, the three paperbacks, have gone into reprintings. How about the other titles?

Grant: Nothing in the Centaur line has sold as well as the Howard material. Sales on the other authors have been, say, moderately good. **THE TREASURE OF ATLANTIS** has dragged worse than the others. . . I don't think **TREASURE** has sold as well as we had anticipated.

FC: Do you have any projected titles in the series that haven't seen print yet? Books that are in progress or for which you're negotiating the rights?

Grant: There are some, but at this time I'm not at liberty to mention them.

FC: When you go about publishing a book, after securing the rights to the story, what are your next steps? What are some of the duties you have to go through in order to see the finished volume come off the presses?

Grant: That is a very good question. It depends upon how you approach it. Can I edit it, do I want to edit it? There's editing



involved with say, Friel. **THE BOWL OF BAAL**. . .there's some rewrite there. Basically you've got to figure what direction you're going to do with that book. Am I going to put it into my, what I call my trade editions, the size of **THE BOWL OF BAAL**? About five by seven and a half book. They're nicely casebound, and I like a good readable type for them. Basically, my bread-and-butter typeface is Baskerville. I think it's the finest typeface for readability that's ever been created. The five by seven and a half books, **THE BOWL OF BAAL**, **THE IRON MAN**, **TIGERS OF THE SEA**, **WORMS OF THE EARTH**, **ALMURIC**. . .they're all Baskerville. Twelve point Baskerville. . .mostly two points leaded; twelve on fourteen. I think that the measure -- the column width -- is 22 picas on most of them. Baskerville is a good, readable typeface. For other books, there might be the need, the call for them to go into a 7 by 10 size, or, in the case of **BLACK VULMEA'S VENGEANCE**. . .originally that was going to be even larger than the seven and a quarter by ten and a half inch book that it now is.

FC: It was going to be larger??

Grant: I was thinking in terms of. . . the painter that illustrated. . . that influenced so many people, Wyeth, Schoonover. . .

FC: Oh, Howard Pyle!

Grant: Howard Pyle, of course.

FC: His **BOOK OF PIRATES**?

Grant: I was thinking in terms of the **BOOK OF PIRATES** and in fact I layed it out that way but I couldn't justify it. There isn't enough marginal material to go with it. So I went to a seven and a quarter by ten and half. (Looking at a copy of **BLACK VULMEA'S VENGEANCE**) Now, this is a completely different typeface; the first time that I have used it. It is Goudy Oldstyle. What I tried to do is take the story and use the type that seems to go with it. Since this is an historical pirate tale, the face that lent itself to the book most agreeably was Goudy Oldstyle. The heads, the running heads, are Greco. (Turns to title page) The title page is designed with a Greco title. This is Goudy Oldstyle (pointing to illustration credits and his imprint at the bottom of the page).

FC: Do you usually choose an artist before or after you've chosen the typeface and typestyle? Or does it vary, again, with the book?

Grant: It would vary with the book. I might find the artist before I acquire the book. The Conan series is done in Souvenir. Now, Souvenir is a very popular face today, but it's an ad face. It is not used for text work like this. It's not used for a book.

FC: (laughing) Very readable, though!

Grant: It seems to lend itself to Conan, which is why I went with it. I do enjoy this sort of thing. . . I suppose it is the design factor that attracts me. . . not design in the sense of illustration, since I have no artistic ability. It's the complete packaging process. . . . Fitting the type with the editing, the proofreading, the preparation of literature, and the advertising.

FC: You try to think of a book as an entity. Cover to cover. . .

Grant: Sure. There's a lot of blood, sweat and tears that go into each book.

FC: It shows. About how long, on the average, does it take to do a book, barring any unforeseen delays or something. . .

Grant: (laughing) Seven years!

FC: . . . or does it really vary from title to title?

Grant: It varies completely from title to title. I couldn't begin to say. **THE LAST CELT** has been a few years in the working, but it's incredibly detailed. It has been a very difficult book to do. The Lovecraft-de Camp book, **TO QUEBEC AND THE STARS**, is also a very difficult book to produce because of the text. Remember, Lovecraft wrote this for his own enjoyment -- it's the longest single piece of writing that he ever did -- and he has taken on eighteenth-century word forms that we tried to use throughout the book. An example would be the word "Majesty's" which HPL wrote as "Maj" and then made the "t-y-'s" a superior in a smaller typeface. A superior is a character -- letter or figure -- that prints above, higher than, normal character height. This was devilishly tough, and made more difficult when the computer insisted upon inserting a tiny degree circle instead of an apostrophe. I ended up cutting most of these in by hand. The book is 97,000 words long.

FC: What books are you planning to issue in the future, outside of the Conan series, and books you've already mentioned, such as the Lovecraft-de Camp book, **TO QUEBEC AND THE STARS**?

Grant: Well, I'm far along on the Clark Ashton Smith bibliography from Don Fryer which should have been done a couple of years ago. That's going to appear. I'm extremely excited over the Harold Lamb material, and the first one. . . actually, you may have noticed it in the other room on the bookshelves, **DURANDAL**. . .

FC: About the sword?

Grant: The sword of Roland, yes. **THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER** is just drawn out of **DURANDAL**. Now, **DURANDAL** ran as three separate adventures in **ADVENTURE** magazine, in the '20's.

FC: Getting back to **ADVENTURE** again. . .

Grant: Getting back to **ADVENTURE** again. A few years later, Doubleday-Doran issued it as a semi-juvenile in one volume -- the book has appeal for all ages -- illustrated by Alan McNab. I exchanged some letters with Harold Lamb back in the sixties, just before he died.

FC: He died that late?

Grant: Yes.

FC: I had thought he died in the '50's.

Grant: No, it was either '62 or '64. Lamb was very enthused over my projects and I was just at the point of saying: "Look, I'd like to do one of your stories. . ." when I read of his death in **TIME**. In fact, I think I did put such a proposal before him in a letter that he could not have seen, just a few days before he died. Now, I have a contract with Lamb's son, and I'm working in full cooperation with the Lamb estate. **DURANDAL** was chosen to begin the Lamb series because of its remarkable influence on Robert E. Howard. I have gone back to the original versions of the three stories as they appeared in **ADVENTURE** magazine -- before they were reworked for the Doubleday-Doran edition. The "Durandal" stories will be issued as three individual books, each

illustrated by George Barr. The readability is more adult, and they will carry the notes and information which Harold Lamb revealed in the "Campfire" department of **ADVENTURE**. It's excellent stuff.

FC: Good!

Grant: I have hopes that this Lamb material can equate some of the popularity of Howard. Certainly it has all the ingredients. . . the action. . . the writing ability. . . the background.

FC: I've enjoyed those Lamb biographies I've read.

Grant: Wait'll you read this stuff. It's good!

FC: You were telling me about a George Barr artbook when I arrived?

Grant: Yes, **UPON THE WINDS OF YESTERDAY**. It contains 54 pieces of full color -- "The Paintings of George Barr." Actually, it contains more than just color. There is some line work, a couple of introductory pieces by Tim Kirk and Stuart Schiff, and an Afterward from George himself. All in all, it contains 141 pages, in an 8½ by 11 page size, clothbound. Since George Barr is one of the guests of honor at the MidAmericon in Kansas City, I plan to issue it there. . . And we'll have a Joseph Clement Coll book coming out which I'm very excited about. I think the man was incredible.

FC: I look forward to seeing that! Particularly since I'm unfamiliar with most of his work.

Grant: I'd like to see more illustrators develop something of Coll's style if they could.

FC: Who are some of your favorite artists, outside of those you've already published? Obviously you enjoy their work.

Grant: Yes, I like the artists I've been using, otherwise I wouldn't have used them! (laughter) Obviously. A favorite. . . gee, I couldn't pick a favorite! But, I do like Joseph Clement Coll very much as an illustrator, line opposed to color.

FC: Frank Frazetta?

Grant: I think he's very good. Perhaps not a great favorite because he doesn't have that mystic quality -- for me -- that I can find in Coll or Finlay or Krenkel, or in Barr or Austin or Jones.

FC: What about some of the Golden Age illustrators like Dulac, or Rackham or Parrish?

Grant: I like Dulac. I've seen one book of his that's incredibly good. I like Rackham. I like N. C. Wyeth, Schoonover, Neilson. . .

FC: Are you familiar with Willy Pogany?

Grant: I've seen some Pogany that's incredibly good, I've seen some that isn't so good.

FC: Same here.

Grant: He's uneven. I like Harry Clarke.

FC: I love Clarke's work! What is your opinion of the current fantasy boom? It's grown beyond anybody's expectations in the past few years.

Grant: It's just incredible! (laughing) I don't know what more I can say about it. . . I'm very pleased -- glad that we finally have the recognition after so many years. I don't know that it's any more fun today, though, than it was then.

FC: I think it may die a bit, but do you think it'll fade out again, back into obscurity, or do you think it's pretty much here to stay now that it's so widespread and popular? Do you think we've finally entered "literature" or are we still a "bastard child" of sorts?

Grant: I think we're a part of literature now. There has to be some let down, but I don't see how it can fade completely with the inroads science-fantasy has made into movies, television, and especially education.

FC: Did you ever think that Howard's work would be so popular?

Grant: No.

FC: You took a gamble when you published the Bear Creek titles, back ten years ago.

Grant: Yes.

FC: And Howard has become a "monster" practically. Howard fandom today, that is.

Grant: It was close to twelve years ago that I started the Bear Creeks, early '65. Actually, we were talking about it in '64. No, I never thought it would be a fad, as it is.

FC: In a way I think it's too bad, because while I appreciate all the stories and information that's come to light due to Howard's immense popularity, prices have been driven sky-high and factions and squabbles have developed to some degree. I wonder whether the benefits aren't outweighed by the hassles involved.

Grant: There were hassles among the authors, even in the '30's - perhaps not to the degree there are now. After all, there are more people involved now.



FC: What advice would you give to young artists who seek work from you? What criteria do you judge them upon?

Grant: Well, I don't have any art training, Steve. I guess we've discussed this before. So all I can go by is whether I like it or not. There are certain styles I like, there are certain artists whose work I like.

FC: You probably do get packages in the mail from time to time. . .

Grant: Time to time? Every week!

FC: What involvement did you play in setting up the Providence convention last year? Were you chairman?

Grant: No, I was a vice-chairman. Actually, you can put the blame on Kirby McCauley! (laughs) Not blame, really; I'm only joking. We had talked -- Charles Collins and Chris Steinbrunner among others -- about having a convention in Providence. It seemed like a natural, but we never did any more than talk. Then Kirby McCauley came to town and Harry Beckwith gave him his famous tour of Lovecraft's Providence. I met Kirby that night for dinner and he dropped a bombshell. "I went to the Holiday Inn and reserved a group of rooms for a convention!" On such-and-such a day, that Halloween weekend. Kirby took the bull by the horns, smothering the rest of us had never done, and the success of the convention should be attributed to Kirby McCauley.

FC: Are you planning another convention? A yearly event, perhaps?

Grant: Not for Providence. The second World Fantasy Convention will be held in New York. For a third there are people who want to hold it in Brownwood, Texas, and then there's a group on the west coast that want a Clark Ashton Smith-oriented convention in California. I would love to see it in Brownwood because it has so much of Howard. I'd like to go there while Tevis Clyde Smith is still in good form and Tevis has volunteered to take a bus tour in much the same fashion we had here in Providence. (Referring back to the Providence convention). . . It was a very emotional convention. It was great to see these old masters come in and they were touching. I'm talking about people like Bob Bloch, who gave a very emotional speech. A fine person. Fritz Leiber came. Long and Munn, both of whom are getting along in years, were in attendance. And the convention was directed at them and at Lovecraft's Providence. In that respect it was far different than the average science fiction convention.

FC: I wish I had attended, but circumstances dictated differently at the time.

Grant: It was worth going to. Several of the authors stayed around afterward, just exploring Providence; Lovecraft's Providence I should emphasize. Fritz Leiber and Bob Bloch gave lectures at a local college.

FC: It was so long overdue. We've had science fiction conventions since 1939. It took us, what, thirty-five years later to get a fantasy convention together?

Grant: Well, the organization is much better in science fiction. For some reason, in my old age. . . science fiction just doesn't do as much for me anymore. I much prefer the fantasy.

FC: I still enjoy science fiction. When I get tired of fantasy, when all the barbarians and ghouls start to sound alike, I'll

read a few science fiction books for a change of pace and then go back to fantasy with renewed vigor and interest.

Grant: Well, when that happens, I can switch to, say, Harold Lamb, who, well, at times he gets a little fantastic, but he's. .

FC: He's viewed primarily as an historical biographer.

Grant: Yes, he's known as an historical biographer, but this is his fiction which was in **ADVENTURE**, which is **not** known today. And I can turn to people, say, like, A Merritt, who is as different from Robert E. Howard as science fiction is. Or I can turn to Talbot Mundy, whom I enjoy thoroughly. Or Friel. They're so different!

FC: To wrap things up, what advice would you give to fans who are interested in publishing, whether it's on a fan level or whether they're anticipating a professional thing? What philosophy would you impart, something to follow and keep in mind, from someone who has the experience and insight you do?

Grant: I think I'll give a different interpretation, a different direction than most people would. I would say get all the graphic arts you can and learn from the ground up. An understanding of production. . . Do as much of a book as you can.

FC: Even if you have to print it page by page?

Grant: Page by page. . . This is something we don't get enough of today and I think that the individual is left out. He can't get a proper understanding. I think it helps him right along the line.

FC: I'd like to thank you again for consenting to this interview.

Grant: My pleasure. I hope you get something out of it! (laughs)

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#### A Bibliography of Donald M. Grant Publications.

##### Grant-Hadley Enterprises:

1945 **RHODE ISLAND ON LOVECRAFT**, edited by Donald M. Grant and Thomas P. Hadley, 26 pp, wrapps, 2 editions: 500 and 1000 copies, illustrated by Betsy Wells Halladay. (The second edition had different illustrations.) O.P.

##### Buffalo Book Company:

1946 **THE TIME STREAM**, by John Taine (Dr. Eric Temple Bell) 218 pp, hc—dj, 500 copies bound (1000 printed), illustrator? O.P.

**THE SKYLARK OF SPACE**, by Edward E. Smith, PhD., 218 pp, hc—dj, 500 copies, illustrator? O.P.

##### The Grandon Company:

1949 **THE PORT OF PERIL**, by Otis Adelbert Kline, 218 pp, hf—dj, 3000?, illustrated by J. Allen St. John. O.P.

1950 **DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE**, by A. Merritt, 295 pp, hc—dj, 1000 copies, illustrated by Russell Swanson (wrapper) and Virgil Finlay (frontis). O.P.

1953 333: **A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE SCIENCE-FANTASY**



- NOVEL, edited by Joseph H. Crawford, Jr., James J. Donahue, and Donald M. Grant, 79 pp, 500 copies (450 pb, 50 hb), illustrated by Roy Hunt (wrapper.) O.P.
- 1957 **THE RETURN OF THARN**, by Howard Browne, hc, 500 copies. (Even Grant himself lacks a copy of this title.) O.P.
- 1958 **THE WEREWOLF OF PUNKERT**, by H. Warner Munn, 138 pp, hc—dj, 350 copies, illustrator (wrapper)? O.P.
- Listed, but never published by the Grandon Company:
- THE GOLDEN CITY**, by Ralph Milne Farley.  
**THE SWORDSMAN OF MARS**, by Otis Adelbert Kline.  
**THE FACE IN THE ABYSS**, by A. Merritt.
- Donald M. Grant, Publisher:
- 1964 **A GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY BIBLIOGRAPHY OF EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS**, edited by Rev. Henry Hardy Heins, 418 pp, hc—dj, 1000 copies, illustrated by J. Allen St. John (wrapper). O.P.
- 1965 **A GENT FROM BEAR CREEK**, by Robert E. Howard, 312 pp, hc—dj, 732 copies, illustrated by Henry Eichner (wrapper). O.P.
- 1966 **THE PRIDE OF BEAR CREEK**, by Robert E. Howard, 221 pp, hc—dj, 812 copies, illustrated by Henry Eichner (wrapper). O.P.
- 1968 **RED SHADOWS**, by Robert E. Howard, 381 pp, hc—dj, 896 copies, illustrated by Jeff Jones. (Illustrations out of sequence.) O.P.
- 1970 **SINGERS IN THE SHADOWS**, by Robert E. Howard, 55 pp, hc—dj, 500 copies, illustrated by David Karbonik (wrapper) and Robert Bruce Acheson (interiors). O.P.
- 1971 **RED SHADOWS**, by Robert E. Howard, 381 pp, hc—dj, 741 copies, illustrated by Jeff Jones. O.P.
- RED BLADES OF BLACK CATHAY**, by Robert E. Howard and Tevis Clyde Smith, 125 pp, hc—dj, 1091 copies, illustrated by David Karbonik. O.P.
- VIRGIL FINLAY**, edited by Virgil Finlay, with an Appreciation by Sam Moskowitz and a checklist by Gerry de la Ree, 153 pp, hc—dj, ? copies. O.P.
- 1972 **MARCHERS OF VALHALLA**, by Robert E. Howard, 121 pp, hc—dj, 1654 copies, illustrated by Robert Bruce Acheson. O.P.
- ECHOES FROM AN IRON HARP**, by Robert E. Howard, 109 pp, hc—dj, 1079 copies, illustrated by Alicia Austin. O.P.
- 1973 **THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER**, by Robert E. Howard, 285 pp, hc—dj, 2509 copies, illustrated by Roy G. Krenkel. O.P.
- THE TEMPLE OF THE TEN**, by H. Bedford-Jones and W. C. Robertson, 159 pp, hc—dj, ? copies, illustrated by Richard Robertson. O.P.
- 1974 **WORMS OF THE EARTH**, by Robert E. Howard, 233 pp, hc—dj, 2500 copies, illustrated by David Ireland. O.P.
- THE PEOPLE OF THE BLACK CIRCLE**, by Robert E. Howard, 149 pp, hc—dj, 3000 copies, illustrated by David Ireland. O.P.
- TIGERS OF THE SEA**, by Robert E. Howard, 212 pp, hc—dj, ? copies, illustrated by Tim Kirk. O.P.
- 1975 **ALMURIC** by Robert E. Howard, 217 pp, hc—dj, 3500 copies, illustrated by David Ireland. O.P.
- A GENT FROM BEAR CREEK**, by Robert E. Howard, 312 pp, hc—dj, 1500 copies, illustrated by Tim Kirk. O.P.
- A WITCH SHALL BE BORN**, by Robert E. Howard, 106 pp, hc—dj, 3100 copies, illustrated by Alicia Austin. O.P.
- THE TOWER OF THE ELEPHANT**, by Robert E. Howard, 94 pp, hc—dj, 3100 copies, illustrated by Richard Robertson. O.P.
- VIRGIL FINLAY: AN ASTROLOGY SKETCH BOOK**, 148 pp, hc—dj, 2000 copies.
- OUT OF THE STORM**, by William Hope Hodgson, 304 pp, hc—dj, 2100 copies, illustrated by Hannes Bok (wrapper) and Stephen E. Fabian (interiors) O.P.?
- THE BOWL OF BAAL**, by Robert Ames Bennet, 351 pp, hc—dj, 2000 copies, illustrated by David Ireland.
- RED NAILS**, by Robert E. Howard, 143 pp, hc—dj, 3500 copies, illustrated by George Barr. O.P.
- THE BANNER OF JOAN**, by H. Warner Munn, 127 pp, hc—dj, 975 copies, illustrated by Michael Symes. O.P.?
- 1976 **BLACK VULMEA'S VENGEANCE**, by Robert E. Howard, 223 pp, hc—dj, 2600 copies, illustrated by Robert James Pailthorpe.
- THE IRON MAN**, by Robert E. Howard, 186 pp, hc—dj, ? copies, illustrated by David Ireland.
- ROGUES IN THE HOUSE**, by Robert E. Howard, 91 pp, hc—dj, 3500 copies, illustrated by Marcus Boas.
- THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER**, by Robert E. Howard, 285 pp, hc—dj, 1250 copies, illustrated by Roy G. Krenkel.
- THE LAST CELT**, edited by Glenn Lord, 416 pp, hc—dj, 2600 copies, illustrated by Marcus Boas (wrapper).
- UPON THE WINDS OF YESTERDAY**, by George Barr, 141 pp, hc—dj, 2500 copies.
- THE DEVIL IN IRON**, by Robert E. Howard, illustrated by Dan Green, 154 pp, hc—dj, 3500 copies.
- TO QUEBEC AND THE STARS**, by H. P. Lovecraft, edited by L. Sprague de Camp, illustrated by Robert MacIntyre, 318 pp, hc—dj.
- In Association with Macabre House:
- 1959 **THE DARK RETURNERS**, by Joseph Payne Brennan, 110 pp, hc, 150 copies. O.P.
- 1963 **SCREAM AT MIDNIGHT**, by Joseph Payne Brennan, 124 pp, 250 copies, O.P.
- 1973 **THE CASEBOOK OF LUCIUS LEFFING**, by Joseph

Payne Brennan, ? pp, 750 copies, illustrated by Neal Mac-Donald. O.P.

Currently in progress:

**THE CHRONICLES OF LUCIUS LEFFING**, by Joseph Payne Brennan. (This will appear under Grant's imprint, rather than that of Macabre House.)

**In Association with Centaur Press:**

1969 **THE MOON OF SKULLS**, by Robert E. Howard, 127 pp, pb, illustrated by Jeff Jones (cover).

**THE PATHLESS TRAIL**, by Arthur O. Friel, 128 pp, pb, illustrated by Jeff Jones (cover).

1970 **THE HAND OF KANE**, by Robert E. Howard, 127 pp, pb, illustrated by Jeff Jones (cover).

**THE TREASURE OF ATLANTIS**, by J. Allan Dunn, 126 pp, pb, illustrated by Robert Bruce Acheson (cover).

1971 **THE TREASURE OF ATLANTIS**, by J. Allan Dunn, 160 pp, hc—dj, 750 copies, illustrated by Robert Bruce Acheson and Donald Fish. O.P.

**SOLOMON KANE**, by Robert E. Howard, 126 pp, pb, illustrated by Jeff Jones (cover).

**TIGER RIVER**, by Arthur O. Friel, 186 pp, pb, illustrated by Jeff Jones (cover).

1972 **THE WOLF IN THE GARDEN**, by Alfred H. Bill, 144 pp, pb, illustrated by Virgil Finlay (cover).

**SWORDSMEN AND SUPERMEN**, anonymous editor, 120 pp, pb, illustrated by Virgil Finlay (cover).

1974 **CITY OF WONDER**, by Charles Vivian, 182 pp, pb, illustrated by David Ireland (cover). (Pubbed in Nov.)

**CAESAR DIES**, by Talbot Mundy, 157 pp, illustrated by Frank Brunner (cover). (Pubbed in Nov.)

**GREY MAIDEN**, by Arthur D. Howden Smith, 159 pp, pb, illustrated by David Ireland (cover)

1976 **DR. CYCLOPS**, by Will Garth, 155 pp, pb, illustrated by David Ireland (cover).

**THE WEREWOLF OF PUNKERT**, by H. Warner Munn, 148 pp, pb, illustrated by Stephen E. Fabian (cover).

**Miscellaneous:**

Various issues of Glenn Lord's **THE HOWARD COLLECTOR**.

Various issues of Joseph Payne Brennan's **MACABRE**.

A set of four prints on canvas, measuring 16 x 20 inches, reproducing Jeff Jones' illustrations to **RED SHADOWS**, c. 1968, limited to 100 sets, O.P.

A print of Jeff Jones' illustration to the cover of **THE PATHLESS TRAIL**, size and number of copies unknown, c. 1969. O.P.

**CITIES AND SCENES FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD**, by Roy G. Krenkel, 82 pp, hc—dj, 3000 copies. (Published by Owlswick Press, 1974, Philadelphia. Grant assisted with the book's composition.)

Additions and corrections are welcomed for this bibliography. This is not meant to be a detailed listing of books that Donald M. Grant has had a hand in; while I have complete information (color of binding, original selling price, etc., in addition to what is listed) for many of Grant's books, such information is lacking for many of his earlier publications. I have listed only certain information for each title in order to give the reader an idea of what books Grant has published.

Readers are also referred to Glenn Lord's **THE LAST CELT** for more detailed information on certain titles before 1974, Donald M. Grant's periodic catalogs (collectors' items in themselves), and to **THE INDEX TO THE SCIENCE-FANTASY PUBLISHERS**, edited and compiled by Mark Owings and Jack L. Chalker (The Anthem Series, Baltimore, 1966, 76 pp, pb, O.P. And, of course, to the books listed above.

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## FANTASY CROSSROADS

By Brian Lumley

F iends of hell and warriors bold,  
A ncient sorceries, towers of gold,  
N ighted crypts where tales are told  
T o chill the blood of demons fell.  
A wful magicks fill each page,  
S words flash from a bygone age,  
Y oung bloods face a might mage,  
C hallenging his every spell.  
R eavers rage and roar their wrath,—  
O lden runes obscure their path,—  
S till they cleave a bloody swath,  
S ending all their foes to hell.  
R aging monsters from the deeps  
O f primal oceans guard the keeps  
A nd sepulchers where star-spawn sleeps,  
D rowned since time long gone --  
S o, my friend, read on . . . !

# A Vision of Rembathene

By Darrell Schweitzer

It is late at night, the feasting long over. Guttering torchlights swim in a haze of stale incense. The ghosts of ancient heroes, like shadows, stir in the corners, behind the limp hanging draperies and begin to move about as darkness creeps upon the exhausted court.

Amidst the revellers the King raises his head, and looks wearily over all. The Queen by his side whispers something into his ear, and he calls out to one on whom his eyes have come to rest, saying, "Tell me now of the cities of your dreams, that I too may behold them when I sleep."

The storyteller replies, "Of which, O King?"

"Of Rembathene."

"Ah Rembathene! Rembathene! Of all the cities revealed to me thou art the fairest! Rembathene, thy towers catch the dawn glow before even the mountain peaks the gods have wrought. Ah glorious Rembathene, a diamond with a thousand thousand facets, not built, but grown like some strange tree from that single pebble called The Soul of the Earth. Rembathene, all the Worlds envied thee!"

It was in Rembathene that Anahai the young king sat, on a throne of the East Wind carven, of night air frozen into a solid thing by magic and ancient rite, and shaped in secret beneath a broad moon of old, when they who first conceived Rembathene came out of the East armed with the sword. On this seat of his forebears he sat, brooding for the first time in the six months of his reign, the days of which before had dawned on nothing but peace and contentment, the enemies of his people having been subdued long before the birth of any man yet alive. Perhaps it was the very grace of his reign, and the splendor of his realm, that had brought him woe, for a pestilence had descended upon Rembathene, of the sort that a petty god sends when he is jealous.

By these signs was it known: First, a chill, such as one might feel when a window is left open in the evening, then a fever following, very slight, still not cause for alarm. But after that the suffering was swift and terrible. The afflicted one would awaken one morning covered with sores and welts, as if he had been flogged; blood would stream from every pore, and from his nose and ears; and he would go mad. In the end the flesh would decay while yet animate, and that which had once been a man would claw putrid chunks from itself as long as hands remained, and only after long hours of howling and writhing find relief at last in death. When a person was so stricken, all those around him would flee, for touch, or even nearness to such a one would mean contamination, and a similar fate within days. So the people of Rembathene and the lands around fled in all directions, into the city and out of it, from villages and towns into the fields, and from the fields into villages and towns. They trampled the crops they had planted. They clogged the roads. Many were crushed in the great arch of Rembathene which had been built for triumphant armies. And all this was to no avail, for when one of their number screamed and fell they could only turn in another direction, often back the way they had come. The subtlety of the plague was that in any crowd there were always a few who were already infected but did not know it yet, so that Doom walked always as a silent companion among the refugees.

This young King, who knew himself to be the father of his people, who was willing to supplicate whatever god was angered and to sacrifice himself if need be, who had never truly proved to the people by effort that he was their king, listened helplessly to the reports brought to him, and watched much from his high windows. He felt in his heart the misery of the citizens of Rembathene.

He asked first of his Physician, "What cause?"

And the Physician answered, "Lord it is not known. Many and marvellous are the secrets of creation, and marvel enough would it be if a cure were to come to us, or some mitigation of our suffering. To know the cause is to ask too much."

He turned then to his Master of Leechcraft, saying, "Has your art been tried, to draw out the evil humors?"

"Aye, Majesty, and there are fewer of my brothers than there were before."

And to his Magician he said, "And magic?"

"Magic has been tried, O King, and there are today fewer magicians in the land than there are physicians or leeches."

Anahai ran his fingers nervously through his beard -- it was not much, for his years were few -- and the learned men stood impotent and afraid before him, and silence ruled in the room, until one spoke whose voice had not been heard before, an ancient who was not learned but wise, who had given up his name because he was so holy. All faced this revered one as he rose from where he had been seated, his black robe draped over him like a shroud, his polished ebony staff glistening like a living serpent.

"Most noble King," said he, "the cause of Rembathene's sorrow is not an imbalance of earthly humors, or a magical curse laid on the land by some enemy, or even the anger of a god, but this: beyond the world's rim there sits a Guardian with the Book of Earth in his lap, and this Guardian has fallen asleep with the Book open in his lap to the page of Rembathene, while he sleeps the spirit Nemesis has crept close, whispering "Death, death, death" into the book."

"Then the Guardian must be awakened. How can this be done? What god shall I pray to?"

"There is one god only who can help you, one who is greater than all the gods of Earth. The God of Mysteries alone has power over the rim and beyond."

"He is not one to whom I sacrifice each day," said the King, puzzled. "Tell me of this god."

"Lord, there is little to say, for little is known. He resides in his tower, apart from the other gods, who are to him as ants to a great beast. He brushes them aside with a wave of his hand. His name cannot be known. His face cannot be seen. Perhaps he is not a god at all, but Fate or Chance, or some other force not yet imagined, for his ways are mysterious and hidden from men."

"But how was he carven then, for surely his image was carven?"

The nameless man paused, then looked at the others about him and said, "This is a secret only the King may know."

The physical, the leech, the magician, and all the others were sent away, even the two massive eunuchs who stood perpetually on either side of the throne. Then when they were alone, the holy one continued.

"Know, O King, that of old a carver in Rembathene was touched by a madness, and his slaves took him to the top of the highest tower in the city, and they gave him his tools, and stone to work with, and they drew a curtain around him. For a month he carved, as the moon waxed and waned, and when the moon was gone he shrieked horribly, and staggered out, his face ashen and wide, and when his slaves beheld him they knew their duty, and slew him. They touched not the curtain, and none shall, until the ending of time, when one shall tear it back, look on the face of the God of Mysteries, and bring non-existence to all things."

"But if we cannot see his face, how can we know his nature? Is he cruel or kind? We cannot know if he mocks us."

"Even so, O King, for his ways are hidden from men."

"Still I must go to him. Where is his tower?"

"From a distance, it is seen by many. Close by, by a very few. Its base I touched for the first time in the fiftieth year of my contemplation, and I have gone there many times since. I can take another with me, for I have gained this strength."

At sunset, when the way he was to walk had been purified as far as ordinary men could follow it, King Anahai went with his



guide through the streets of Rembathene, until they took a turn no others could take, and the city grew dim around them. They came at last to a tower glimpsed often by travellers who look back on Rembathene against the western sky, but seldom discerned by anyone else, and the King alone entered. He climbed a stairway of a hundred spirals, looking out windows at each turn, and saw the dark and quiet rooftops sink away below him; saw the sun burning low and golden, the purple on the horizon; and at last, when he neared the top, the stars appeared, seemingly below and round him, as if he had left the earth altogether.

He came finally to a room at the top of the tower, which the old man had described to him, wherein resided the god he sought. It was dark in there, dimly lit by tapers and without windows. The air was heavy with incense and dust and the stench of slaughtered offerings, making the place very holy. At the far end lay the crumbling skeleton of the mad carver, whose remains had never been touched, and beyond them was a curtain.

The King prostrated himself before the curtain, but presented no sacrifice, for when a ruler seeks rescue for his people from a god, the only thing he may offer is himself. Thus he rose empty handed to his knees and spoke humbly to the god, telling how the folk of his country had suffered, and begging that some cure to the disease be revealed.

Whatever was behind the curtain remained still. Anahai remained on his knees for many hours until his legs were numb, and still no answer came. He wanted very much to leave, but dared not, fearing the anger of the god, and hoping that the god was only thinking, and about to speak. Also he knew that if he were to leave, and return to his people without some solution, there would be no hope at all, and he would have failed in his duty. Kings who fail, he had always been taught, are seen in the corner of the eye as dim shapes which vanish when gazed upon directly. They are phantoms, wisps of smoke, sounds in the forest when no ear listens, unworthy to walk either on the earth or under the earth in the land of the dead.

The musty air made his eyes and his whole body heavy. He first sat back on his ankles, then brought his feet out from under him after a while and sat cross-legged. Later he slumped to the floor, asleep.

A dream came to him. He saw himself asleep in the tower, on the floor before the black curtain. Suddenly a wind blew the drape back, against the god, and there was a hint of an outline, a form hunched and powerful, and a face not at all like that of a man. The figure on the floor screamed and thrashed about, yet there was no sound, and the spirit of Anahai, oddly detached and floating in the air overhead, knew that there was cause for terror, yet felt nothing. The body did not wake, and the dream continued. The lips of the idol moved and formed words silently, and in silence the body of the King got up and left the room. The spirit followed it down the hundred turns of the stair, into the city over which a heavy mist had fallen, through streets of looming, grey shapes, and out into the fields. Leagues passed, and at last a forest rose ahead, drenched in the fog so that the trees stood like dim Titans in the night. Led by a will not his own the King's body and awareness walked among them for a long way, somehow sure of the path no eye could make out.

Suddenly something before him moved, a shadow detaching itself from the general gloom to become a man.

"You!" cried the King. "Who are you?" As he spoke he awoke, and heard his voice echoing down the towers, "areyouareyouareyou. . ."

He was disoriented for a moment, but then he knew that the god had answered. He prostrated himself once more, in thanksgiving this time, before the curtain which was unruffled, and behind which no shape was visible, and he left the room. He looked out the first window he came to and saw that there was indeed a mist over the city, as he had dreamed, lapping against the towers like the silent waves of some magically conjured sea.

It was still the middle of the night. He was met in the darkness at the door of the tower by the holy man without a name, and with him he went through the faint, strangely turning streets until they emerged onto the pavement on which all men may walk. They went wordlessly back to the palace, where the King was met by his physician, his leech, and his wizard.

"Majesty, is it well?"

"I am sent to another place."

"Then go as a king must go, resplendent in your robes, with crown on your head and sword at your side, riding your finest stallion, with a troop of royal guards at your back."

And he did all these things, and rode out of the main gate of Rembathene, called the Mouth of the City, with his cavalry behind him, and his magician, his leech, and his physician at his side. Also with him was the old man of mystical learning, who spoke to the king in strange signs, and in whispers none of the others could hear.

When they were more than a mile beyond the town, the mist had swallowed all the towers, Anahai turned to the horsemen and said, "I need you no longer," and sent them away, and the old man nodded.

After another mile he sent away the three who had advised him, saying to them also, "I need you no longer."

And when he came to the end of the wood he had seen in his dream he said to the wise man, "I need you no more either. From here I must go alone."

The one holy, beyond naming, smiled. The King paused a second, unsure of himself and spoke once more.

"Know you to whom I am sent, or what price shall be asked?"

"No one knows that, save He who will not reveal it. He may have no price, or the world may be his price. He may jest and give forth nothing."

"Then goodbye," the King said, and he dismounted, handed the reigns of his horse to the other, and walked into the forest. His purple cloak, his red leggings, and his golden armor and crown seemed grey in the depths of the fog. He turned and looked back once and saw only an empty field. Far off he thought he heard hoofbeats on the muddy ground, then all was silent.

He entered the forest, and the mist hung over him like a damp blanket, and his steps were directed, as they had been in the dream. The trees loomed over him, and vanished in the darkness above.

Then suddenly, as had been foretold, he met a stranger. One shadow detached itself from the rest and became a tall, thin man of fierce, weatherworn features, dressed in a cape the color of the fog, and a tall peaked hat. His sudden motion startled the King.

"Who are you?" Again his voice echoed, but this time he did not wake.

The other did not answer, but stood again motionless, as if he were some strange and twisted tree that had seemed by some sorcery of mist and night to be momentarily alive.

"I am sent to you," said the King. "It has been revealed that I should meet you here by one who sits behind a curtain in the tower few can reach."

At that the stranger seemed to recognize him, and still not speaking, he motioned for the King to follow. Deeper into the woods they went, along a winding way the other knew. The stranger's cape hid him until at times Anahai feared he was alone, and lost, only to hear once more the soft, steady footsteps receding in front of him.

After a while the ground began to slope upward and the trees thinned out a little. They came to a gorge in which grey-black clouds broiled. A dwarf with a long spear challenged them with a savage yell, but the one who was leading cast a jewel as big as a fist over the head of the little man and into the pit. There was an explosion like the wrath of an angry god, and a bridge of ancient wood appeared. They crossed, and when they set foot on the other side, the bridge vanished.