

# Pixel Dreams



# Pixel Dreams

Herewith is a year  
in pixel and prose;  
Celebrate by smiling  
or holding your nose.

## What do you do with what you do after you do it?

Most of the stuff I do is given away; not a sound business practice. Some pieces appear in an all too brief hurrah then disappears forever. Other stuff is not so lucky and this I flog elsewhere with varying success; win a few, lose a few.

In the hay-day I was crushed when my offerings were not accepted for publication, yet today I would be horrified if anyone saw the stuff.

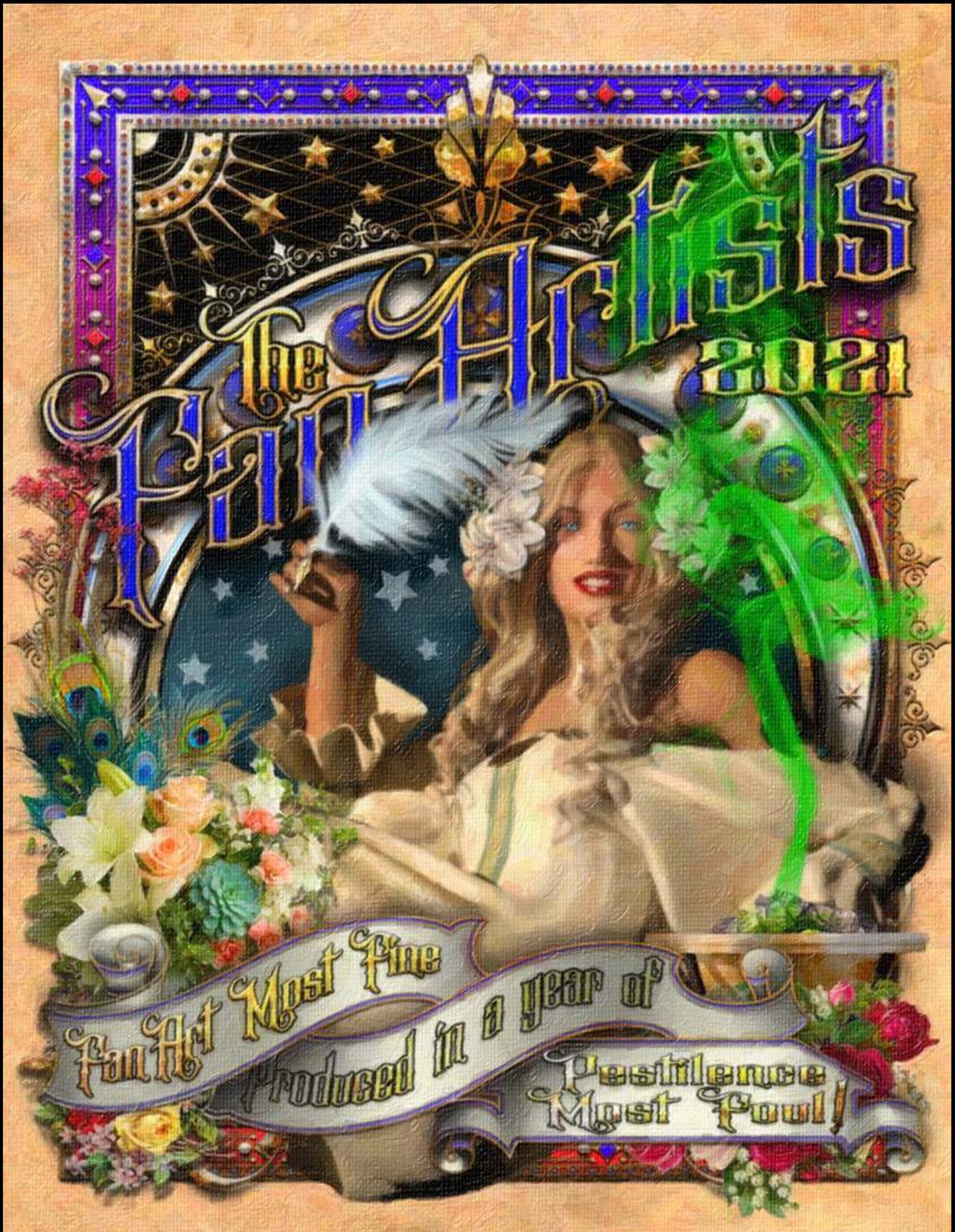
Here resides 2022's harvest of every arty bit, special snapshot taken and tales to have reached eyeballs on some level as listed on [efanzines.com](http://efanzines.com).

This year I make an accounting of all the time gone into doing art or unintelligible scribbling; some more successful than others.

I hope you will find *something* worthy of approval.

Alan

JANUARY

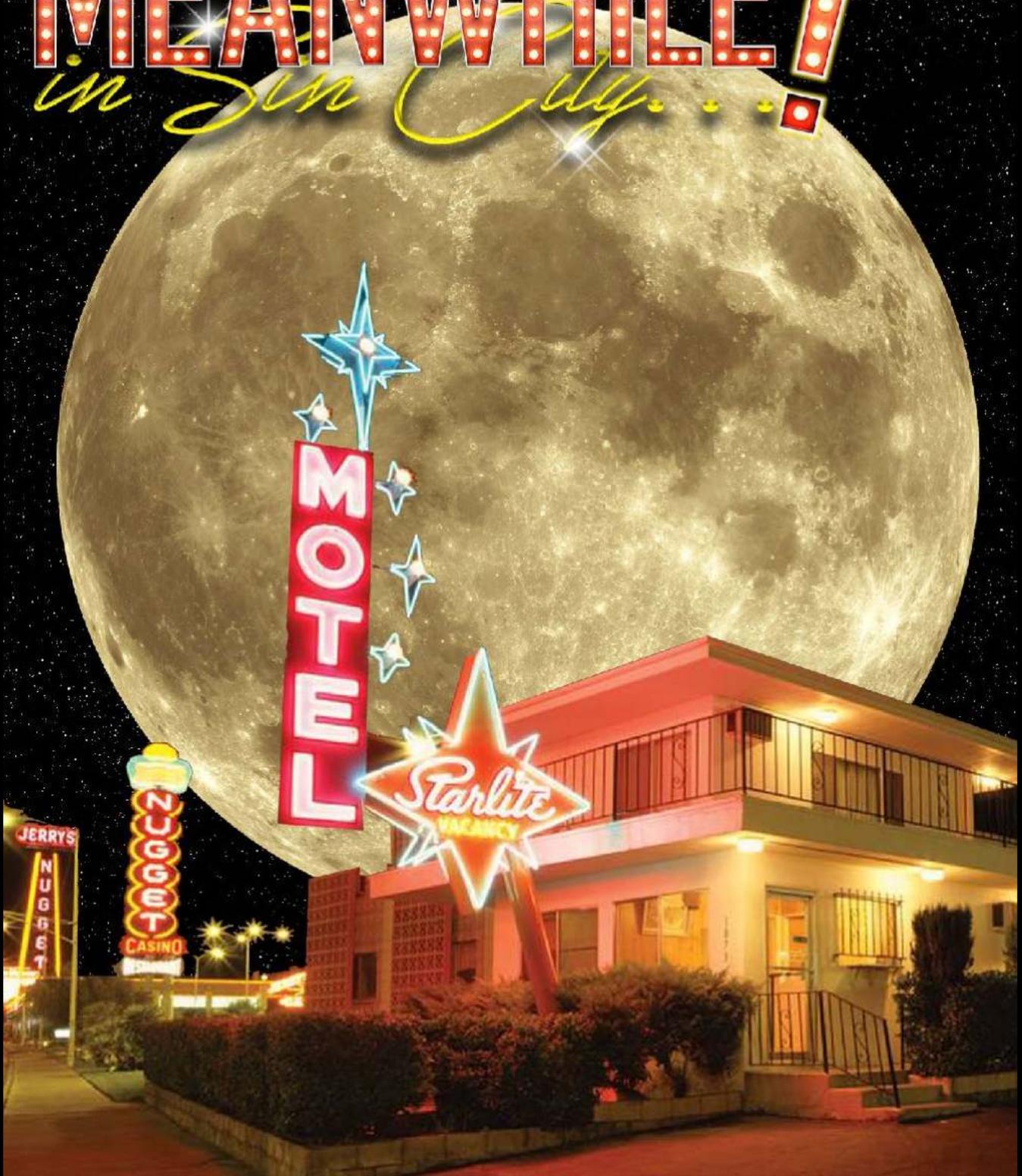


THE FAN ARTISTS 2021

Available [HERE](#)

# MEANWHILE!

*in Sin City...*



MEANWHILE IN SIN CITY #1

Available [HERE](#)

# DRONE DOWN

WE WERE NOT MEANT  
TO FIND

**THEM!**



DRONE DOWN

Movie Poster

MARCH



TIGHT BEAM #330

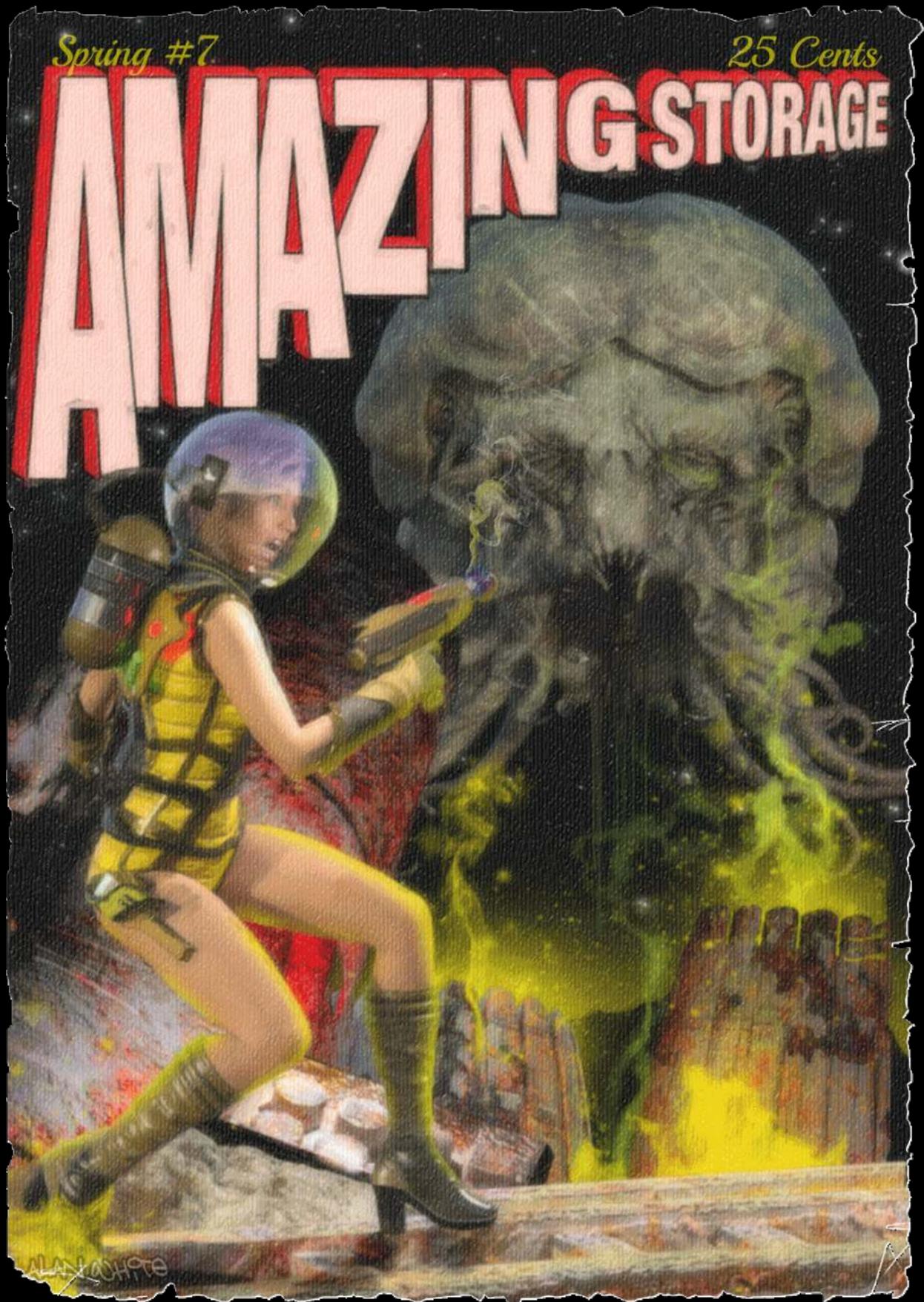
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MEANWHILE IN SIN CITY #2

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APRIL



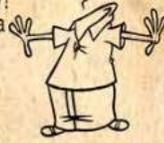
PORTABLE STORAGE #7

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## DEATH-RAY SPECS



Noisy Neighbors? Barking Dogs? School Bullies?  
Disobedient Teachers? Hours of Fun!  
Put on these scientifically proven  
Death-Ray Specs and with a wink...  
Blast them into a frightful slurry!  
Guaranteed to work or request a  
refund if you dare.



**SEND \$1 TO: "DARPA"**

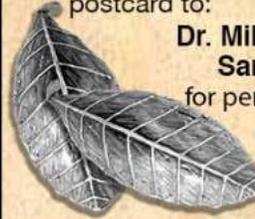
AND NEVER LET HOODLUMS (Or Charities)  
TAKE YOUR LUNCH MONEY AGAIN!

## FREE SEEDS

Tomorrow you won't be just  
another lonely nerd!

"Love, desire, ambition, faith,  
without them life is so simple."  
Just send your name, address and  
number of family members on a  
postcard to:

**Dr. Miles J. Binnell**  
**Santa Mira, CA.**  
for personal delivery



Seeking  
distributors

## DIRT POOR? TRY SELLING CRAP! MAKE YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE.



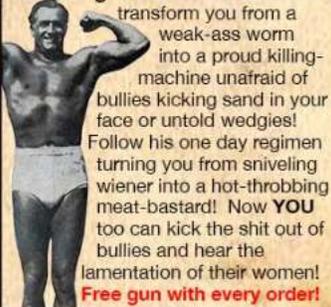
**BUY EVERYTHING YOU'VE EVER  
SEEN IN THE MOVIES!**

Sell 300 copies = earn \$6 per week!  
**HERE'S "YOUR" OPPORTUNITY  
TO BEGIN A LIFETIME  
WORKING FOR "THE MAN".**

*Warning...* don't let the tough guys  
see you carrying this bag.

## BECOME APPALLING!

Let the great Charles Meataxe



transform you from a  
weak-ass worm  
into a proud killing-  
machine unafraid of  
bullies kicking sand in your  
face or untold wedgies!  
Follow his one day regimen  
turning you from sniveling  
wiener into a hot-throbbing  
meat-bastard! Now **YOU**  
too can kick the shit out of  
bullies and hear the  
lamentation of their women!  
**Free gun with every order!**

## REAL SMOKE BOMB!

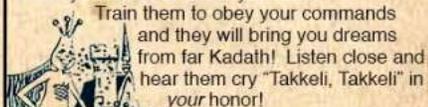
**HEY KIDS,  
ASK YOUR  
PARENTS  
FOR A BOX  
OF MATCHES!**



Think of the fun you'll have  
"stinking" up the "Girls Locker  
Room" or putting the Brimstone  
back in church! I'll bet a friendly  
policeman will give you a donut  
while waiting for your parents!

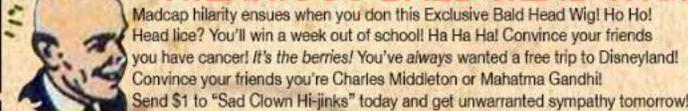
## SEA SHAGGOTHS

Greet your new friends from the Exotic South  
Seas who will be R'lyeh glad to meet you too!  
Bring them to life and hear tales of undead  
worlds and Elder Gods sleeping in the deepest  
realm of the sea and those horrid things lurking  
within your walls or under your bed!



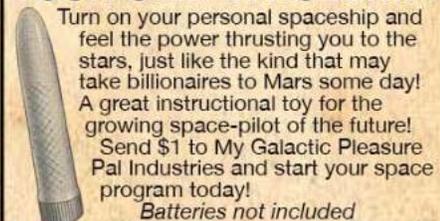
Train them to obey your commands  
and they will bring you dreams  
from far Kadath! Listen close and  
hear them cry "Takkeli, Takkeli" in  
your honor!  
They will remand the  
disrespective, unapologetic  
ones and bring horror to the  
non-believers!  
*Feed them well, expand  
their habitat until they  
summon the evil ones!*

## HILARIOUS BALD HEAD WIG!



Madcap hilarity ensues when you don this Exclusive Bald Head Wig! Ho Ho!  
Head lice? You'll win a week out of school! Ha Ha Ha! Convince your friends  
you have cancer! It's the berries! You've always wanted a free trip to Disneyland!  
Convince your friends you're Charles Middleton or Mahatma Gandhi!  
Send \$1 to "Sad Clown Hi-jinks" today and get unwarranted sympathy tomorrow!

## YOUR OWN SPACESHIP!



Turn on your personal spaceship and  
feel the power thrusting you to the  
stars, just like the kind that may  
take billionaires to Mars some day!  
A great instructional toy for the  
growing space-pilot of the future!  
Send \$1 to My Galactic Pleasure  
Pal Industries and start your space  
program today!  
*Batteries not included*

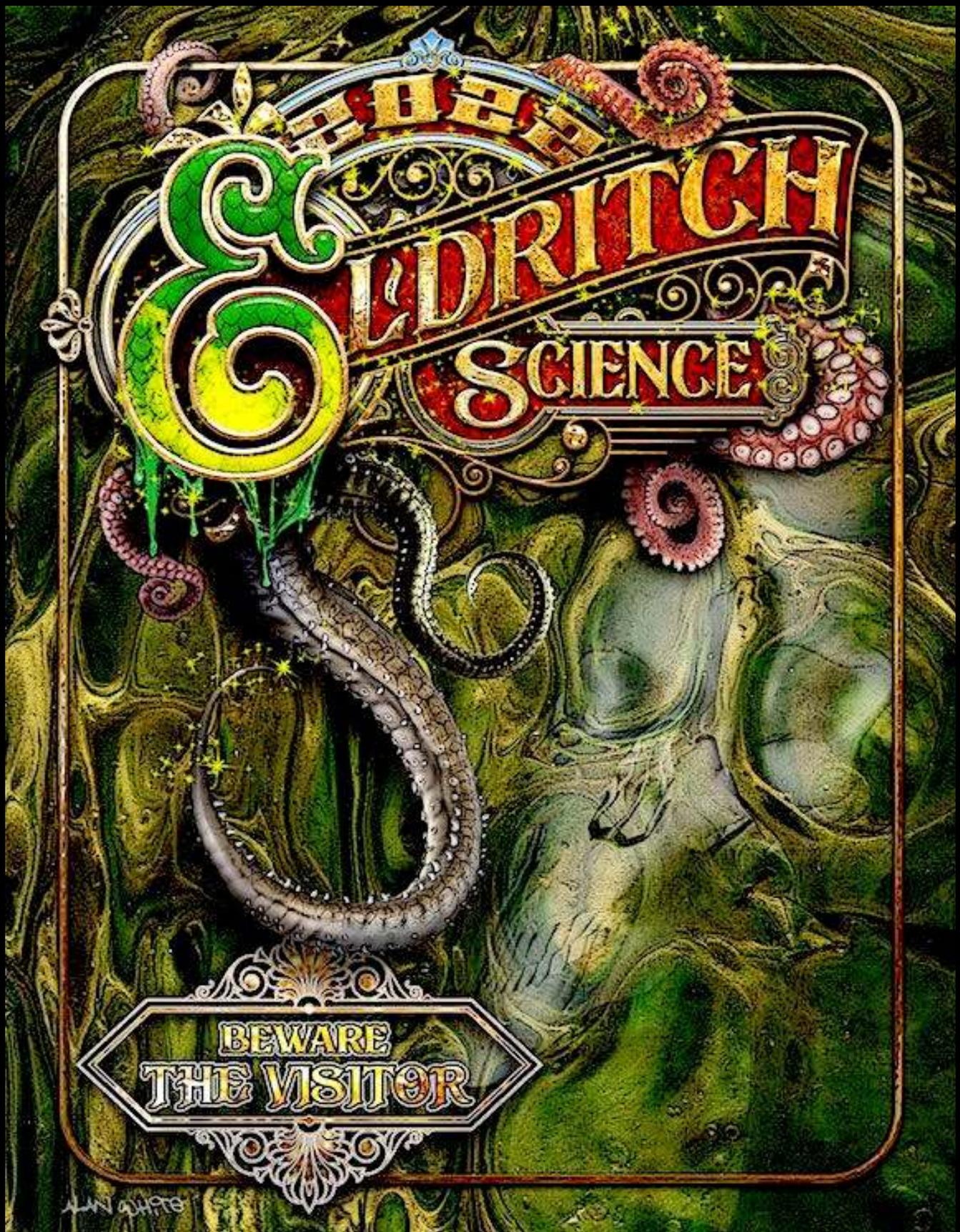
## MYSTICAL ILLUMINATI EMBLEM REVEALED!

The secret sigil revealed here for the first time in eternity can be yours **absolutely free!**  
**FREE** for **YOU**, pitiful mortal!

This sacred emblem tattooed on your forehead will grant you entrance to all Illuminati  
ceremonies, influential parties, movie premieres, sexual favors from movie stars, private  
presidential affairs and by speaking these numbers aloud three  
times while gazing into a mirror just may summon Cthulhu to  
do your bidding! Now is your time to reach beyond the stars!  
Need proof? Simply add the numbers together... See?

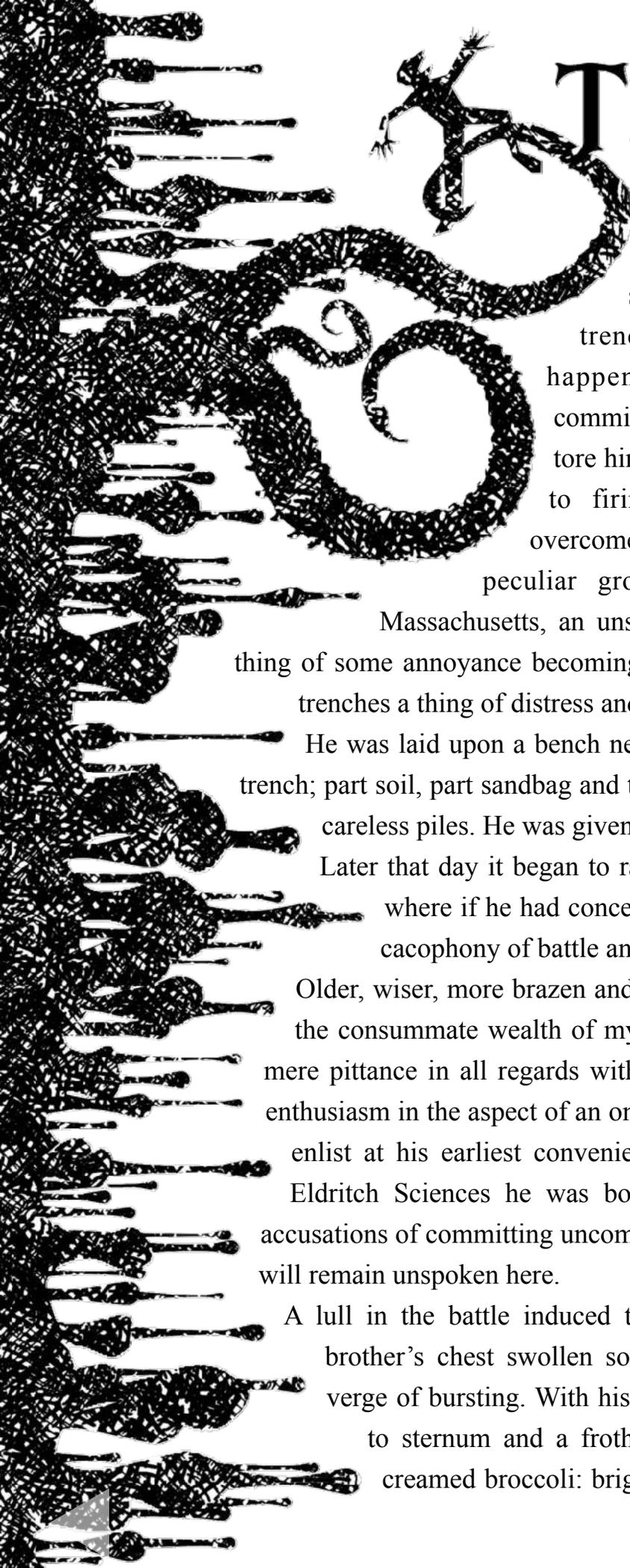
**DON'T ASK** rats ha Note: After being tattooed you will be  
required to k tomorrow st! Join us and receive all that is  
rightfully yours. s of bk





ELDRITCH SCIENCE 2022

Available [HERE](#)



# THE VISITOR

Less than a year since the death of my brother I noticed a creeping downturn in the sociability of my parents. His death in a trench in France was unbearable, not by happenstance of battle; nothing that might commiserate distraught parents but a sickness which tore him asunder the day he arrived at the front prior to firing a single shot. He was inexplicably overcome by what might best be described as... a peculiar growth. This he noticed the day he left Massachusetts, an unsightly blemish in the center of his chest; a thing of some annoyance becoming worthy of comment and upon reaching the trenches a thing of distress and finally despair.

He was laid upon a bench near a small infirmary cut into the walls of the trench; part soil, part sandbag and the rest merely shadows of the dead strewn in careless piles. He was given a cup of coffee and covered by a canvas tarp. Later that day it began to rain whereupon he disappeared under the tarp where if he had concerns, they would not have been heard over the cacophony of battle and screams of men and metal.

Older, wiser, more brazen and ambitious than myself he was sure to garner the consummate wealth of my parents upon their demise while I remain a mere pittance in all regards with neither cause nor purpose. He found much enthusiasm in the aspect of an oncoming war, requiring no other enticement to enlist at his earliest convenience. Despite beginning a fine career in the Eldritch Sciences he was booted from Miskatonic University following accusations of committing uncommon yet I might add unfounded practices that will remain unspoken here.

A lull in the battle induced the doctor to roll back the tarp to find my brother's chest swollen so badly the buttons of his shirt were on the verge of bursting. With his boot knife he slit the man's shirt from navel to sternum and a froth of fungus burst forth like an explosion of creamed broccoli: bright forest green and from the crown of each a

small tentacle waved back and forth snatching flies on the wing. The doctor stepped back aghast, unmindful of the battle raging just above!

He took a scalpel with a deft hand, sliced through a stalk when a spray of blood... presuming his blood was now *green*, fired from one side of the trench to the opposite to be devoured by the mud and blood of battle and covered him from head to foot. The fungus was not growing *upon* him but *from* him, whereupon he screamed as blood pumped from the severed fungi. Petrified the doctor stood eyes wide, pale, without response and gazed in horror at the abomination this man had become; nothing remained of his humanness. If he was alive there was no sign of it.

For two days the battle raged while tentacles grew and fell between the slats of the bench as if they had gutted a squid, several of which had grasped an assortment of rats and left bones cleaned white and fallen to the ground like snow. Thus turning heads of the curious who thought nothing of shooting strangers in the face and using their bodies as stepping stones through the mud from one trench to another.

Though badly wounded, the doctor found it within himself to overturn the bench and collapse the trench upon my brother and let him remain entombed lest others stumble upon him in the dark unknowing what simmered beneath.

Thoughts of war had become fog before that very doctor visited our home with this tale; but his face though shrouded was horribly disfigured and through which convolutions he found his way remained unknown. He was also missing a leg and the stump of which continued to ooze an unwholesome fluid while humbly telling his story like a dog about to be whipped with an utterance more like projectile vomiting than speaking every word which I swear sent my parents into a tailspin of despair.

The next day he was found hanging from a tree at the edge of town near a sign reading "Welcome to Arkham, a Fine College Town" much to the inquietude of the locals. As the officials attempted to remove his body a purée of fungus gushed from his collar, his singular pant leg and the grotesque growths upon his face where his head became a putrescence, collapsing like a rotten melon sliding through the noose onto the ground where the flesh of his face remained like a rotting halloween mask. Left foot upon a ladder right upon on the ground, the workers stood silently aghast until dusk where they regained their sense of immediacy, climbed into their vehicle and sped away leaving their ladder behind.

Not for a moment doubting his story as heresy or madness it was upon this very day my parents became aloof, distant, seldom leaving their room. Less seldom did they leave the shadows of the house as if the very light offended their senses and each day a candle snuffed giving the appearance that darkness was slowly herding them into their room at the top of the winding stair. Both my parents, the house and the sky itself gained a gray sickly pallor that hung

motionless, with barely the strength to rise above the skeletal shrubbery and deserted trellises. Our caretakers save one deserted the premises that very night leaving not just their belongings but wages as well and all that remained was given to a singular caretaker: a pallid ghost of a woman as an inducement to carry on. The workload had diminished greatly which was the bigger incentive. Dusting was no longer a concern, nor tidying the contents of any room on any floor of the house. Nor sweeping nor polishing the silver and letting knick-knacks gather their dust and spiders spun their webs without hindrance

All that was required was to leave a pair of bowls at the door of my parent's room. Content of the bowls remained unknown and the maid was loathe to divest the smallest particles of information regarding her employers.

My parents never spoke *of* nor *to* me again. The dreariness has become tangible and the maid could be seen at times doing... what? No one knows. One day I snared a rabbit, the first I'd seen in months and presented it to the maid who neither dressed the carcass which at one time would have made a fine Hasenpfeffer but laid it solely on a tea tray and placed it by their door.

I would not consume the slightest morsel from her kitchen and every other day journeyed into town for a fine and filling meal and something to hold me over another day.

Upon my every appearance at the "Inn of the Fluke's Eye" fellow patrons found this moment to pick up and move their vittles to the farthest point from wherever I had chosen to sit. Finally, the owner bid me... "henceforth come to the rear of the establishment for service".

You might ask why I not find housing elsewhere, but I must tell you this house is my sole inheritance and all that I may own but a small stipend from my parent's life insurance. Though with each splinter, wormhole, and fleck of paint I see the value crumbling before my eyes.

Since they have chosen a reclusive existence they cannot perish quickly enough to suit my patience nor purse. It was here I became infuriated at being their only son smart enough to avoid the war to be sure and their one true descendent and yet so shabbily treated. Nearing dusk I returned to the house in a rage that I may confront my parents at last and secure a palatable future for myself before this God-forsaken residence crumbles upon us.

The maid appeared on the stair forbidding my progress. A pale and unkempt thing, a specter she had become and frail beyond any consideration of which I could easily dash her to the floor with barely a blink of an eye had I been a gnat's breath less of a man.

In frustration I picked up that vase, my mother's favorite, heavy though it was and in my madness flung it high over the railings of the second floor against the doors of my parent's room where it was reduced to shards in a cloud of dust, scampering rodents and a pile of empty bowls.

Momentarily there began a rumbling that shook every timber of the house and the twin doors of their bedroom burst open.

Here was disgorged a great wave of fungus spilling down the hallways, down the stairs, oozing through the railing and over the balcony into the great room forming a mound, then a mountain from which became a river flowing towards the door and here a smattering of bones perhaps those of my parents or the maid's missing counterparts while she in her dalliance was consumed. The sea of fungus now submerging much of the furniture in the great room and filling the hallways. Terrified I ran from the house across the lawns as the fungi overtook the fountains, shrubberies, the rose garden, up the trees to their uppermost limits and from there into the air like dandelion seeds and then to... everywhere.

Overwhelmed by futility I faced my pursuer, shaking my fist and cursing my last and best... and was thus engulfed. I was lifted high into the air even with the tops of the tallest pines where this lurid abomination spoke to me... though kindly, declaring my purpose to be master of this food awaiting the oncoming Gods that they may feast well upon their arrival. And here gently returned to the surface though trembling I could barely keep my footing.

And *there, ever-so* high in the evening sky near the handle of the Big Dipper a singular star twinkled a little brighter.

END

"H.P. Lovecraft meets World War One!

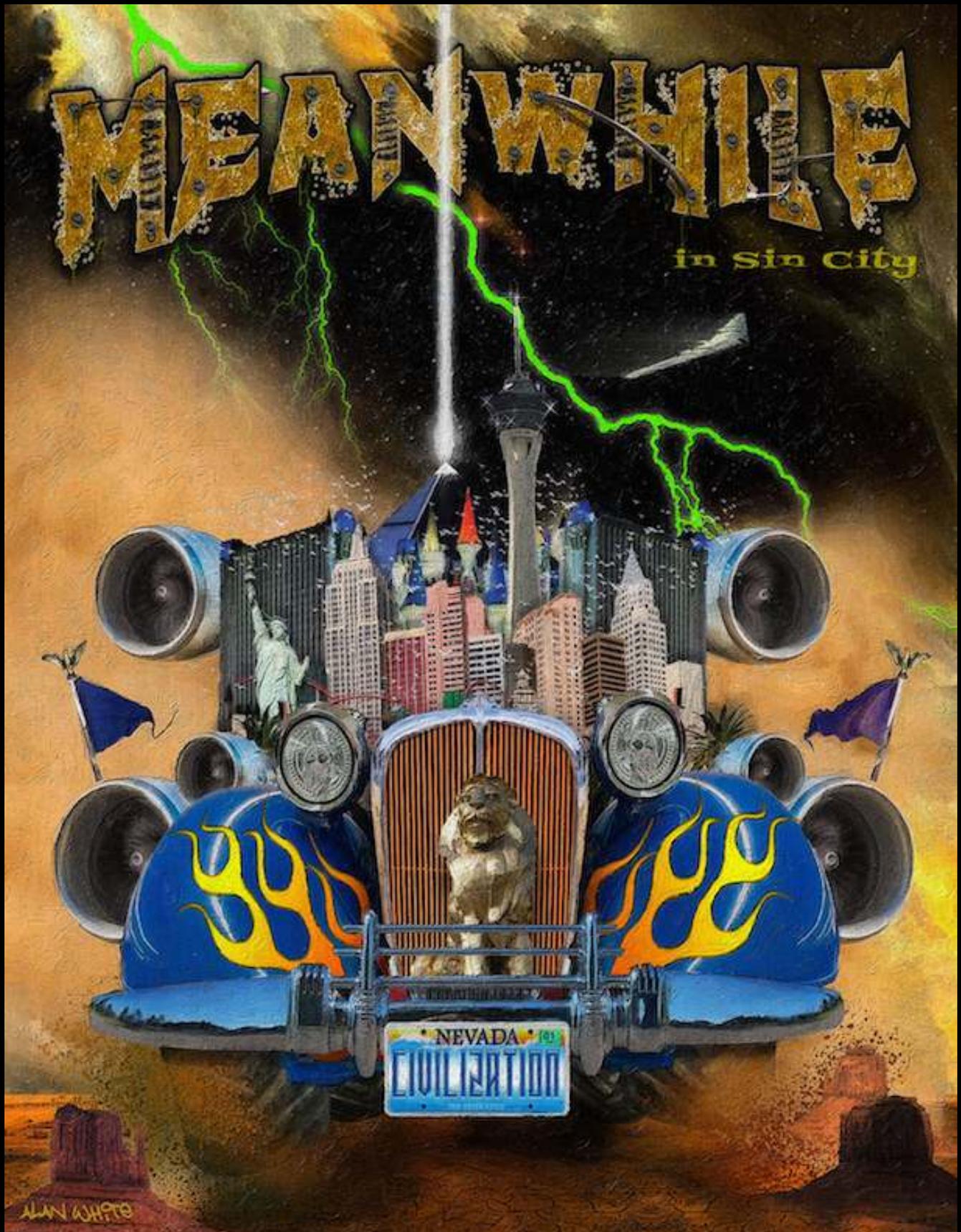
Which of the two is the more horrifying? You've done a remarkable thing with this story, capturing the horrific spirit of Lovecraft's arcane horror and blending it with the raw horror of WWI. I like your use of the grisly arcane descriptors Lovecraft was so fond of -- unwholesome, putrescence, etc.

I also like the implied ending, where you hint at worse things to come but don't actually reveal them. In some ways, that's worse than a specific description! Your narrative description is very vivid, and you have captured the Lovecraftian spirit wonderfully."

— Jefferson P. Swycaffer



JUNE



MEANWHILE IN SIN CITY #3

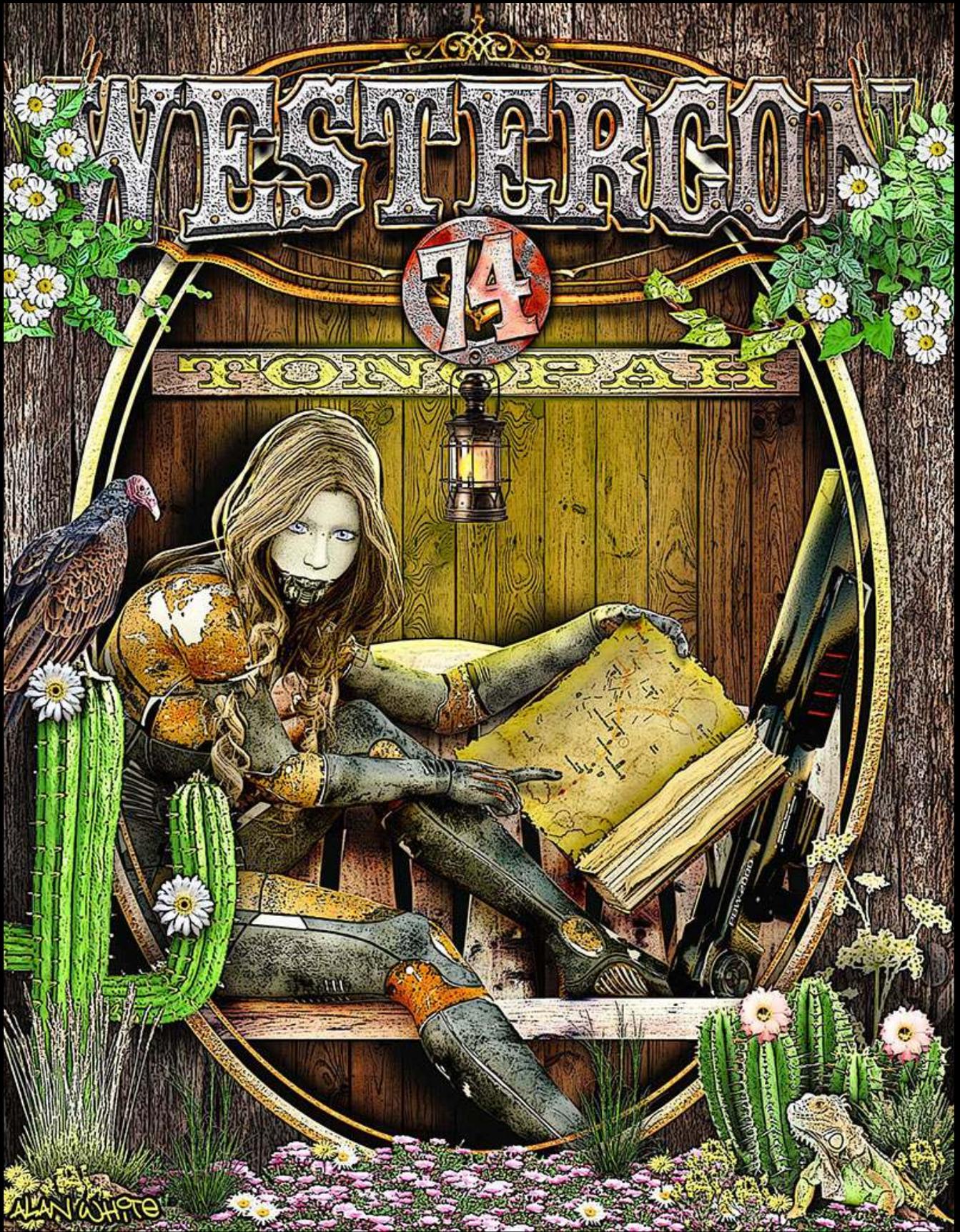
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JULY



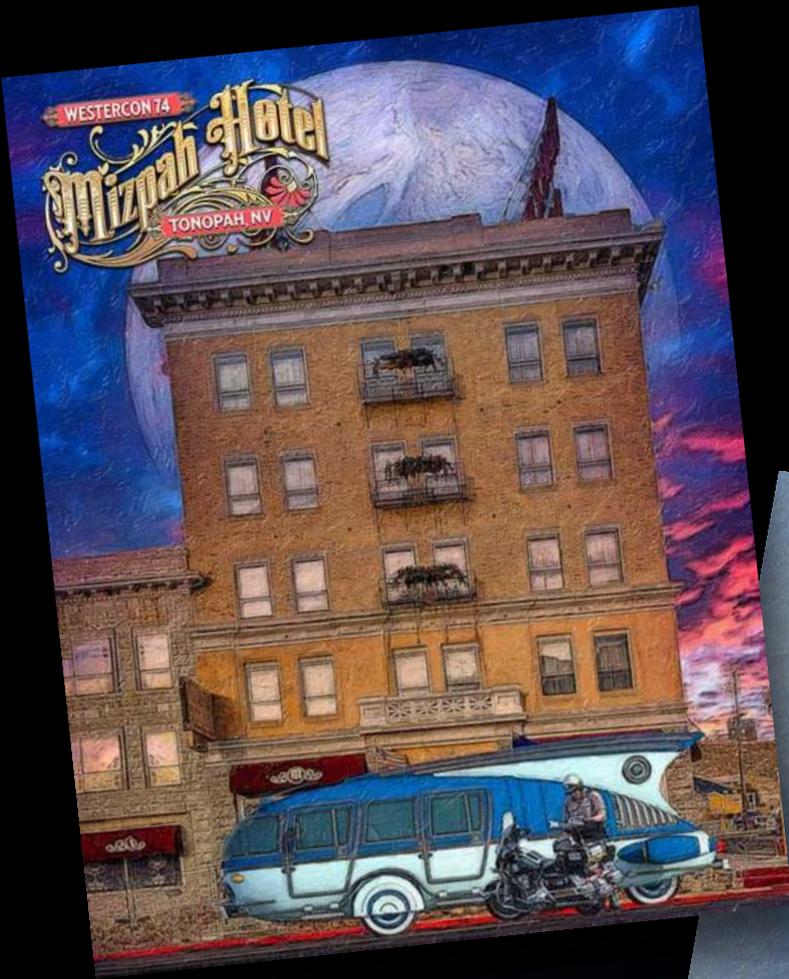
UNDEAD PASSAGE - BOOK COVER



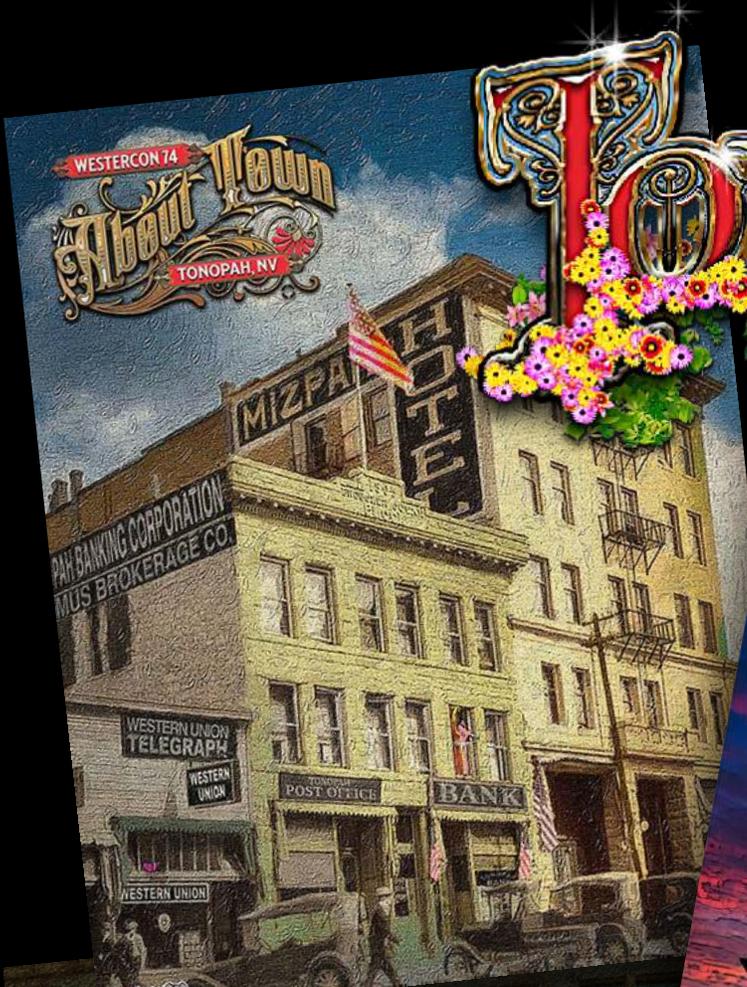


WESTERCON 74 MEMORY BOOK

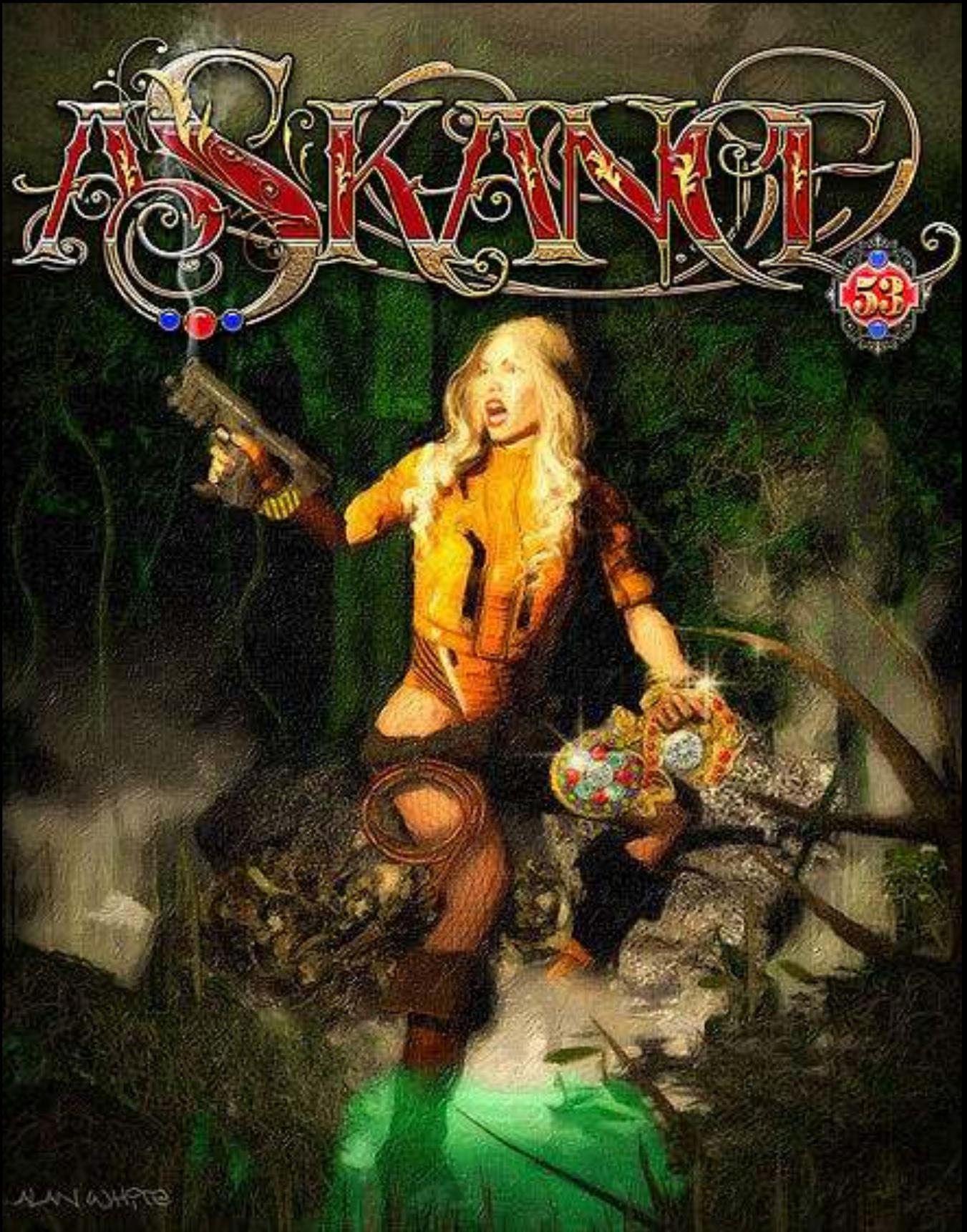
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# TONOPAH



AUGUST



ASKANCE #53

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SEPTEMBER

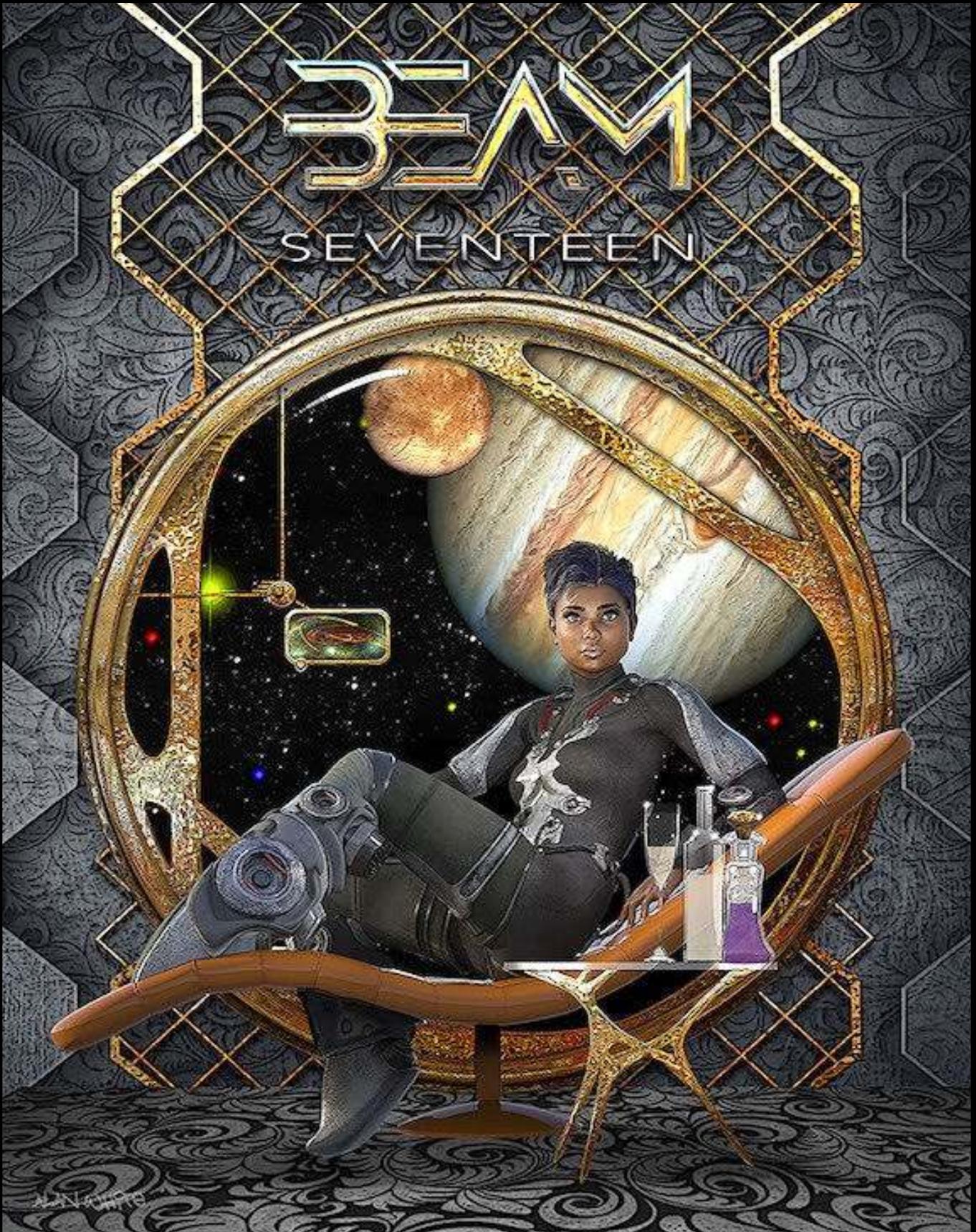
# CHALLENGER

43



CHALLENGER #43  
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DECEMBER



BEAM #17  
Available [HERE](#)

# HEROIC WOMEN



**N3F**  
THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN FEDERATION  
Covering All Branches of:  
Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror, Occult  
Including books, films, manga,  
anime, television, comics, poetry, music, cooking

Ten fanzines emailed to your computer:  
The National Fantasy Fan: Monthly Newszine  
Tightbeam: Monthly Reviews  
Origin: Monthly Fan History  
N3F Review of Books: Monthly  
FanActivity Gazette: Monthly News of Clubs,  
Cons, Zine Reviews, TV, Film and Calendar  
Ionisphere: Bimonthly Fan/Pro Interactions  
N'APA: Bi-Monthly APA  
Mangaverse: Quarterly Manga and Anime  
Fantastic Films: Quarterly Classic SF Films  
Eldritch Science: Uncanny Fiction

Interest Bureaus:  
Short story contest • writer's exchange, art,  
birthday cards • fan history • games • round robins,  
gourmet bureau • pro and fan interviews,  
correspondence • web page • Facebook  
and mew groups and pages.

Membership levels: Electronic: \$6/year  
Regular: with paper-mailed National Fantasy Fan  
Family: \$12/year (regular/electronic member at same address)  
Public: Free (non-voting)

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2019

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Mangaverse: Manga and Anime • Fanactivity Gazette: Monthly Fandom News  
The N3F Review of Books: Monthly Book Reviews

Interest Bureau • Short Story Contest • Writer's Exchange  
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Family: \$12/year (regular/electronic member at same address)  
Public: Free (non-voting)

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2019

# Barrel Racer

## VIBRANT GRAPHIC ARTS





BARTY Pencil Sketch



CORFLU PANGLOSS  
Unused

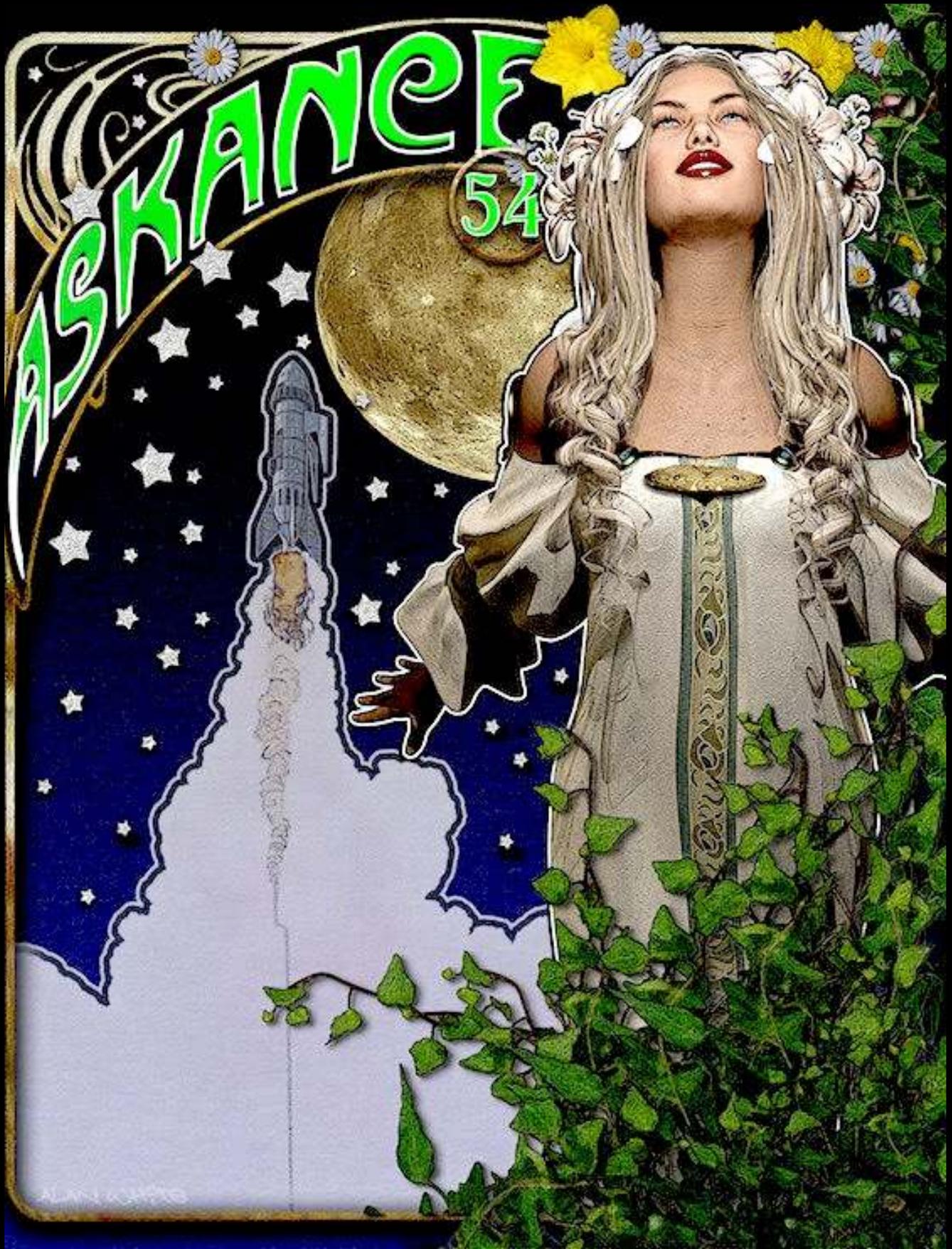


THE HOMELESS OF 2022. . .



THE HONEYMOONERS

Available



ASKANCE #54

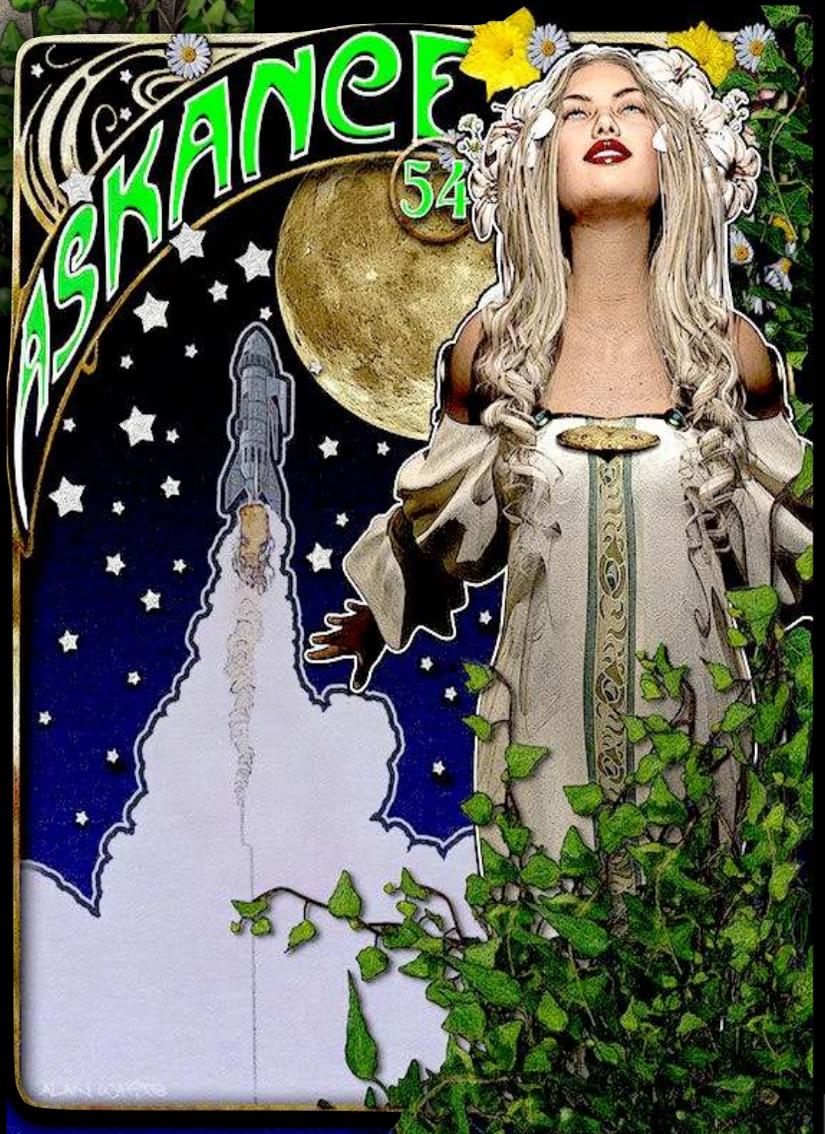
Available for Customizing



Asked to do art for Corflu Vegas in 2024 and wanted to do more than a zine cover but a poster. Much like those Mucha posters selling tobacco and booze, hoping some classy fan might hang the thing instead of just filing it away or hitting the delete button.

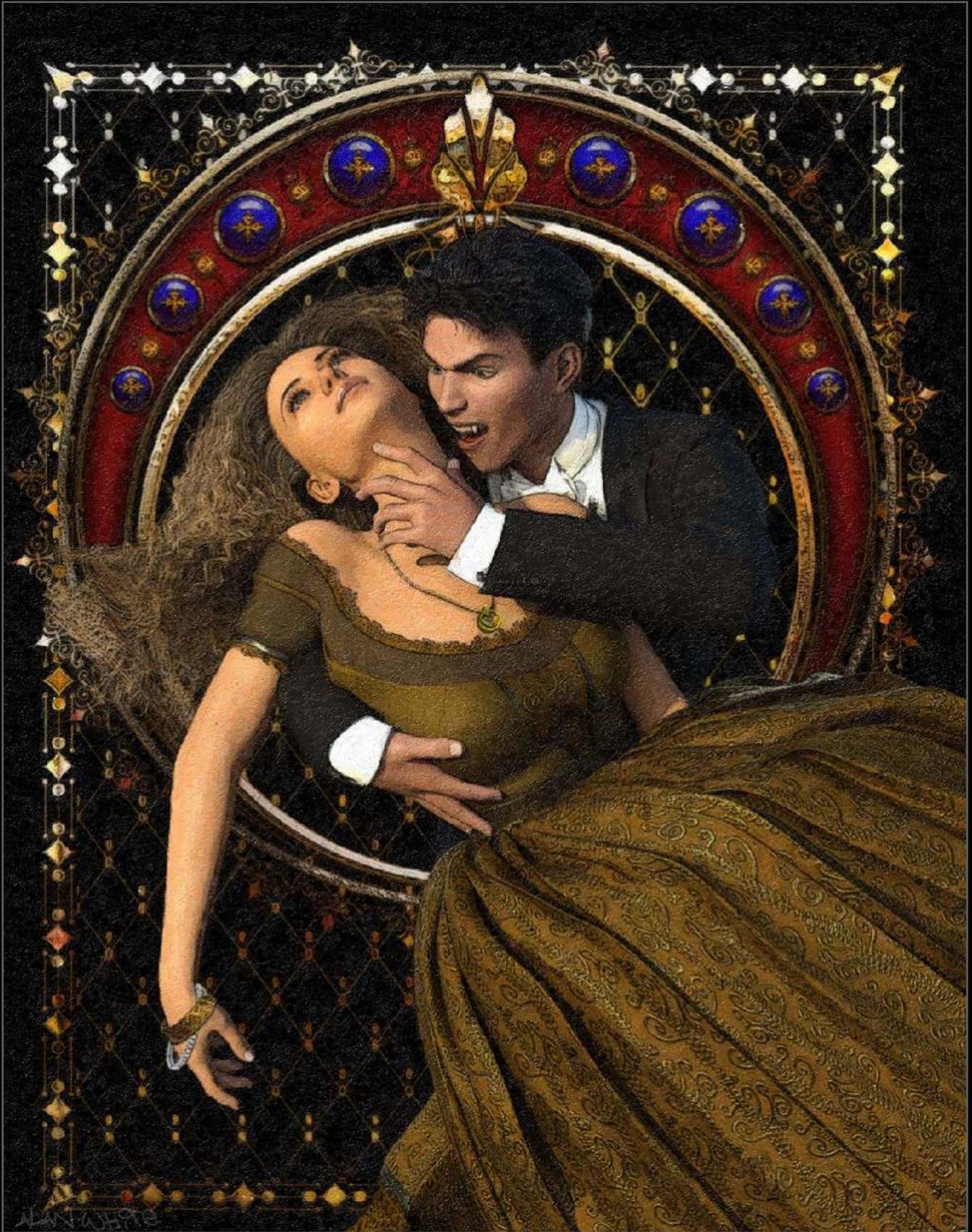
Nixed. Fortunately the astute John Purcell allowed it to become the cover for Askance #54 and changes were made.

At the last minute a lovely Ulrika O'Brien piece was substituted and *this* cover is headed back to the drawing board, tsk tsk.





**THE MAD QUEEN**  
Available



**THE VAMPIRE**  
Available



**FAUN**  
Available

# SNAPSHOTS



# A TRUE STORY FROM THE MELOCHROME

## Maintaining Fluxation At All Costs

A Tale of Particulate Matter in an Unconceivable Number of Moist and Unruly Micro-BioChapters.

### Forward. . .

Deep within uncountable multiverses larger than the Gods themselves yet smaller than even the Gods could comprehend resides the Realm of the BioConstruct where form is what you make it and material exists only by your own virtue to make it so.

Danger lurks about and within and you must maintain your substance or perish!

Herewith is an adventure through the Undergrub and into the Meta-Miasma from whence no one returns. . . . Commencing at the Flush.

There was so much screaming: "PLEASE, Melterm," Philargn spoke reassuringly "You must concentrate or your body will remain in a state of non-assemblage and you'll be unable to maintain your matter properly. . . ; but perhaps we should start with something less complicated;" and here Philargn held a glowing nodule in Melterm's direction, and from that still screaming gelatinous bio-form there issued a pseudopod; lithe and sinuous it came, wrapping itself about the fleshy aggregation of cells when Philargn cautioned "Do your best to maintain the molecular structure; feel the atoms coursing through your substance. . . ." and for a moment the item shifted its causality but just as quickly regained its mass and snapped into the form of a weapon pointing in the general direction where Philargn's heart could be seen beating rapidly; to which he coolly responded "I assure you, it's not me whom you should blame for your current state of flux."

"You realize ceasing my fluxation you will only be condemning yourself to the horrors of the Clostridium; It's best you consider the re-life I have given you as a gift and take the cardinal estuary to the subordinate realm before the prelates discover you exist; don't be foolish, escape if you can;" and it was here Melterm consumed his weapon, filtered into the bio-passage and disappeared as Philargn gave a sigh and returned to his next assignment where his final consideration was "Shit happens."



## Melancholy Apocalypse

A breeze whistles through broken windows;  
dust pirouettes across the ballroom floor  
upon a hint of Persian rug;  
buried in eons of forgotten dreams;  
dancing merrily up the stairs around  
and through the skeletons who appear  
to be flying upwards into a realm where  
curtains wave their endless goodbyes.

### The Duel (in 100 words)

Here is a very fine pair of antique pistols of exquisite manufacture. Inlaid with gold, precious stones and passed family to family from the early 1700s.

Tamped into the barrel of each upon a charge of powder and small wad of cloth lay an immense blue diamond of uncommon purity.

Following a duel, the stone shall be dug from the wall behind either duelist and kept as a souvenir or gouged from the corpse of a failed combatant by his family who could then live quite handsomely for the rest of their lives without want.

Ready. . . Aim. . . Fire!

# The Gambler

Schmedly?

Yes Quibbins?

Ever consider being a Super Hero?

Why no, Quibbins, I never looked good in tights, and I'll wager it involves getting up before noon

Well, I wish I had super powers, flying about and all, capturing villains, peering through skirts and such.

Really Quibbins. . . .

Well, I do miss garter belts you know.

Hard cheese old man. However, everyone on earth already has their own super power, maybe two, but most people don't realize it, don't know how to turn it on and never took the time to find out what it was. Not everyone can shoot flames, fly or see through underpants you know.

What if your power is the ability to spit a peach pit from here to Barstow? Impressive eh? Just not dramatic enough for the average Joe.

Maybe your power is finding lost pets, but only when holding items once owned by Lady Gaga.

Ever try that?

Uh, No.

My point exactly.

I see. . .

And shooting fire isn't the kind of power you want anyway - too obvious, really, what would you do with it besides getting shot by the police?. Therein lies the secret: Inconspicuousity!

"That's a word? Still, I wish I had a super power of some sort. . . But how do I discover I have one?"

Such powers are mostly discovered by accident.

Accident? What do you mean?

Well, you notice something peculiar happens when you do something completely unrelated. Maybe your power can only be turned on by standing in an old Radio Flyer in a pair of mukluks and screaming "Tally Ho! It's different for everyone you know.

There isn't time to try everything, much less realize you've just done it and didn't realize it! Powers are not necessarily as dramatic as you may wish. Maybe the ability to write your name in unknown languages; not everything has a point you know.

"Sounds biblical."

"Some try the obvious, flinging themselves from rooftops. Most fall to their death but those who succeed, are too traumatized by the fall to fulfill their dreams."

"Then why do they do that?"

"Overconfidence Quibbins. They were misinformed and their super power may not have been flying after all. Maybe their power was making Charcuterie with incredibly square bits of cheese and luncheon meats and toast with immaculate points. Not everything involves Flying and Flames."

“But, but, I’ve been watching’ you for weeks. You got something, something real... something special but I can't put my finger on it.”

“Well Quibbins, It took me thirty years to discover I indeed have a super power and how to use it wisely.”

REALLY Schmedly? Crushing coal into diamonds?

Not at all. . . that would require another party to cash in.

I do have a power of sorts. I can’t pick up a car or save an airplane from tumbling from the sky or shoot fire from my ass for god sakes.

“It’s simple as these things go, but I have the ability to manipulate gaming pieces.”

“Not Bridge or Cribbage, or Pool, but if a complete stranger lays money on a gaming table, that’s the catalyst giving me the power to push things in my favor . . . . if I choose to do so. Or if a stranger leaves an unclaimed credit in a slot machine, that too works on my behalf.”

“I’ve won millions and millions of dollars and live quite well in a fabulous suite here in this casino as you see.”

“But these modern casinos, can’t they catch you with their cameras and such?”  
I win millions because I also plan to lose millions and no one is the wiser. If I won a million dollars every week and immediately left the building I would already be blackballed from every casino in town. After all, the games in Vegas are all on the level, just in favor of the house and that oddly works in my favor you see.”



“You’ve won over 4 million dollars this past month without the casinos blinking an eye and you’re living like a king.”

“I won over 4 million dollars because I had the presence of mind to lose 8 million of my total winnings and leave with the scraps, which in this case happened to be 4 mil. I have the power to win every hand at every game I play, but sometimes, I’ll win a million, then purposely lose the same million, to throw everyone off track. Maybe keep just enough to leave a big tip for the dealer... always a good idea.

Have a couple drinks, dinner - on the house, come back and pocket half a million, pay my taxes immediately in the casino and that is what I live on - under the wire, it’s so much easier.

Sometimes I’ll go home without winning anything. That seals the deal with. . . . the house dicks.”

When people gather around and scream with every roll of my dice, that’s when I go on a losing streak. Draw attention to myself, then purposely fail in front of everyone. One time I went on a planned losing streak for two weeks. Then I go on vacation, sit on a beach for a month, return and play at the casino next door.

It’s allowed me to live over eight years completely free of charge.

The casino comps everything while I’m playing and no one is the wiser. It’s all about the BIG picture you know. Someday I’ll cash out and retire.

“But what does that mean for me?”

“Seek it out my friend and should you be successful, lay low, pay your taxes, don’t hurt yourself and never wear a costume.”



# Two Gentlemen on a Floating Platform

Act Zero

SIR, you there. . .

Who? Me?

Yes, you!

What may I do for you sir?

Have you been staring at me sir, for the better part of an hour?

Why yes, I have. Forgive my impudence but there are only the two of us... leaving no-one else to gaze upon.

I'd prefer you not doing that sir, unnecessary staring gives me hives. Perhaps I have something that would amuse you.

That would be extremely swell, of which do you speak?

Well, Let me see here, Oh, I have a pair of steam-keys, A William McKinley assassination commemorative shoehorn, and three pair of rubber gloves.

Oh wait, I, I do have this gun sir, perhaps if it would amuse you if I shot you in the head. . .

Hmmmm, Yes, perhaps it shall.

Then allow me to exhibit my firearm, a small pistol with ivory handles. . . that just happens to carry a single bullet.

Oh, very smart, that will do nicely.

Very well, allow me to point it thusly between your eyes.

Oh, Very dramatic sir.

Indeed it is, are you ready?

Hmmmmm, just a moment, this doesn't quite work for me. Perhaps if you hand *me* the gun and allow me to point it at *your* head for practice. . . ?

Oh, very well. Here you go sir, anything to be of service.

Hmmm, feels very comfortable in my hand, and the ivory handles are a nice touch.

Now If I raise this gun and point it thusly between your eyes. . .

Yes, this works for me. . . Am I correct in thinking I simply pull the trigger?

Yes, that's all that remains.

Very well, resume your position, and thus I pull the trigger. . . .Oh my, the gun didn't fire! Hard cheese old man,

My apologies dear sir, I left the safety on.

The safety? How is that resolved?



Allow me. . . You see there is a small lever on the side of the weapon,

Ah, quite so.

Simply push this lever *forward* and the weapon is ready to fire.

Thank you sir, you've been quite a sport about this. Now, where were we?

You were pointing the gun between my eyes. . .

Oh yes, like this?

Yes, that's it, a quick learner you are.

Very good, so all that remains (if I understand correctly) is to pull the trigger?

Quite so, but if I may add to "*Squeeze*" the trigger! *We are gentlemen are we not?*

Excellent, then here we go. . .

3 - 2, wait, wait just a moment. is a countdown really necessary?

Oh, I don't think so, it's only the two of us, just get on with it.

Bang!

Ah, Excellent, there you have it! The gun worked perfectly. You should be proud of such a fine weapon. The gun fired as I understand it should, you received a hole directly between your eyes and fell properly to the floor. Well done sir!

Would you like a hand up sir?

Sir?

Sir?

Brains! . . . . .

Excuse me, I didn't catch that!

BRAINS. . . . .!

No there won't be another train till Thursday!

BBRRAAIINNSS!

What? What are you doing sir? Don't tell me you're now a zombie after I've been so accommodating? Damn your hide you despicable soul, I suppose now, you'll want to eat me. . .

Dear me, why is everything such a bother.

Arrrrrrggggggg!



# Death Tastes Like Lipstick

I grabbed my shore bag and blew a kiss to the U.S.S. Stoker hugging the pier. Free for three days and it felt great to be on solid ground.

Thirty years I've not had to think more than three days ahead, but only paid enough to get stewed; never enough to disappear.

I had a pocket-full of two dollar bills, and hit the boardwalk.

The first street: Pacific Avenue. Named so regardless of how drunk you are, you never forget what side of the country you're on.

A year after the war, a chilly breeze blew rubbish and flyers declaring "We Won" down a miserable garbage-strewn avenue that begged to differ.

Pool halls, pawn shops, strip clubs, tattoo parlors, barbers and bars. Yeah, lots of bars enticing lonely sailors looking to get laid and/or plastered. The Well Keeled Hull, Beer Bunker, and Gunner's Nest. Each sported broken neons of hula girls and faded pictures of bad tattoos in questionable places. Shitfaced sailors spilled into the street then spilled their guts into the gutter followed by loud country music full of despair. And yes, there were floozies looking for a good time, a big score or man of their dreams. They'll be disappointed on all counts, I'll wager.

I passed a strip club called The Drunk'n Punk'n "I got what you need, honey" called a fount of despair covered in bruises and cheap perfume. But I didn't believe she had a bus ticket outta here and kept walking.

I turned into the first flop-house I approached called the "Fang and Claw" Hotel promising: "Bed: Two Bits 20 minutes; Two Bucks a Night". Seemed legit.

The room-keep was a nervous, sweaty little man with eyeglasses so thick, I could see what he was thinking but was too embarrassed to repeat it.

I signed the register under a dozen other 'John Smiths". It's been my name so long I don't remember *who* I am.

"How long?"

"Two nights."

"Four bucks. Want company?"

"I'll pass." He slid a key across the counter with a broken plastic fob that read "Howard Johnsons, Quincy, Massachusetts" with the number "4" written on a piece of masking tape.

The room was so small, I could open the door without getting out of bed.

I passed out fast and woke up quick. It was eleven pm. The wallpaper smelled of cabbage and urine and made me hungry. I set aside enough cash for a sandwich and coffee or a couple shots, but no sense getting all fancy my first night in town; a few drinks should hold me over.

What a night, the clouds were grayer than the sheets in my two-bit room. Two dollars if you wanted company and you won't notice the sheets.

Speaking of thin, I could hear bedrails to the east and west of me, slamming the walls with more force than the Titanic hitting an iceberg. Sometimes in unison, mostly not. Through the wall I could hear a woman scream: "Ohhhh, you're so big! You're the King!"

*That guy must have bought the "Executive Package."*

I had to leave this Anvil Chorus and stuffed my Owl Head .38 into the back of my pants just in case and hit the pavement...

I ducked into a dingy dive called The "Naval Stray Inn". The window boasted a bulldog wearing an army helmet, holding a machine gun and firing olives and onions into a row of martini glasses. "Well, if that doesn't say welcome home, nothing does."

The door opened with a friendly tinkle but the place looked like death warmed over and the despair was so thick it was like walking through cotton candy. There was a single lightbulb in the middle of the room whose light didn't quite reach the corners and left sinuous shadows on the walls, only God knows what lurked within. The air conditioner rattled and shook, making the lightbulb dance like a hanged man and shadows of the patrons looked like they too were dancing. The room reeked of people who made a lot of wrong choices, but it smelled like home.

This is the kind of place where you order something you open yourself, lest you wake up on a steamer heading for Singapore. Fool me twice, shame on me.

I took a seat at the bar just as the door swung wide to the sound of the bell's tinkling and there she was.

Yeah, it was past midnight and she still wore a pair of those dark glasses, the kind Barbara Stanwyck wore in *Double Indemnity*. Her skirt was so tight I swear I couldn't flick an Ace of Hearts between those nylon pythons. She slithered across the floor without a sound (and I swear) the jukebox went silent as she passed.

She was wearing a champagne coyote fur with a collar so big, she could have hidden the rest of the coyote. Reaching the bar, she perched like a bird of prey two seats down.

The stranger pulled a ten-inch cigarette holder out of her purse holding a fag that was already lit.

The bartender, wearing an incredibly torn and stained wifebeater ignored me completely, slithered the length of the bar like a huge hairy loogie sliding down a glass window.

She said simply: "Manhattan / Olives".

As he turned his back to me, I spoke rather loudly "Brew, cold... in a bottle...I'll open".

"What brings YOU here, stranger?" She asked softly!

Miffed at the bar service, I answered dryly, "I came for the ambience and stayed for the dancing girls."

"You sir," she replied matter of factly "have been... misinformed."

The bartender slid a beer bottle and church-key in my direction. No tip for *that* bastard.

She took a drag that reduced the entire cigarette to ash in a heartbeat, raining upon the black and white linoleum and poured the drink down her throat in a single gulp, slammed the glass on the bar and spit out the toothpick that did a one-pointer into the glass.

She never exhaled the smoke; I was in love.

"So really, what brings you to our beach community?"

"I have to finish a story. . . but I'm drawing a blank, something about "What the Hell Was I Thinking?"

"Oh? So how's it 'lookin", killer?" she said as if in on the joke.

"You could kill me *anytime*."

"I'd oblige, but I... just did my nails." She looked bored, turned away and stared at the jukebox as if she could change the music with her mind. Her eyes wandered to the quartet of derelicts draping the tables as if seeking proof of life.

Suddenly the jukebox broke silence. "Swan Lake" hissed and crackled alive.

I leaned in and offered softly, "Frightfully turgid for this shithole, don't you think?"

"Does that Roscoe sticking out of your ass mean business or just for show?"

"What did you have in mind?"

The four subdued patrons began to shuffle, stretch, and yawn almost in unison. Slowly they gained their feet as if yet asleep, and came drearily in our direction. How appropos for *Swan Lake, four little drunks*.

"Kneecap that bartender if he moves" she cooed.

Sure, I can take a joke and pulled the gun from my pants and took a gander at the knees on that fashion-disaster behind the bar.

The quartet stumbled closer, blocking the exit, flipping the sign to Cerrado.

She slid to the floor, while reaching into the collar of her coat and withdrew an 1855 Colt revolving shotgun, only shortened, no longer than her humerus but there was nothing funny about what was going down. It looked like a pirate pistol from a very disgruntled pirate.

Suddenly these creatures, if that was what they were, came to life, bared fangs and ran towards us.

She cocked the weapon and let fire a round with such wide dispersal, the heads of the two creatures ceased to exist yet their bodies almost made it to the bar before toppling to the floor. Here she stepped forward onto the backs of the fallen with legs spread... just so... and fired downward into the next two who were almost upon us.

The bartender reached under the bar for what I assumed was standard issue crowd control but wasn't about to wait. I let the greasy bastard take lead in both knees. He fell to the floor squealing like a pig.

She fired again at two more appearing from nowhere; a hail of diamonds spraying the room reducing them to pulp.

"Silver shot keeps them from regenerating" she added for no particular reason and which I didn't understand anyway.

"This is a Vamp Camp sailor and you'd be on the menu if I hadn't seen you wander in here. I've had my eyes on this place for a week.

They keep the lights on just long enough to snare a few flies, who are never seen again.

"How do you know all this?"

"Naval Stray Inn", it's an anagram for "Transylvanian" dummy, and the bartender is their familiar keeping an eye on them during the day and waking them with the vampire anthem whenever a suitable schlemiel walks in.

She hit the till, pulled \$50 in singles and grabbed a bottle of rot-gut from behind the bar, poured it over the shit on the floor, cocked a flame on her Zippo and chucked it into the mix.

"What about that bartender?"

"Oh, I'll bet he *really* starts screaming in another four seconds. Your beer is getting warm."

*This chick was cold.*

"So now what"?

"Well sailor, I have a '35 Ford Sedan half-block up the road, want to do this again in the next town over?"

"You don't have to ask me twice. Hey, what's *your* name, anyway?"

"Morns," holding out her hand. "*Easterly Morns*"

"What's yours"?

"Call me John Smith."



# MYSTERY OF THE ERRANT CACKLEBERRY!

A Play in One Scene or Less.

The sirens had ceased their wailing but lights continued to illuminate the scene of the crime.

WATSON: Ah, Mr. Holmes, I'm glad you could make it.

HOLMES: What's your take on the crime WATSON if indeed it was a crime?

WATSON It appears that tonight a certain Mr. H. Dumpty fell, jumped or was pushed to his death from this parapet far above to the very pavement beneath our feet.

HOLMES: Ah yes, Lastrade, I see you're up to your ankles in tragedy. What was the weather like at the time of his demise?

WATSON: I remember it was Dark and Stormy.

HOLMES: (HmMMM, sounds oddly familiar) Were paramedics called?

WATSON: All of the kings horses and all the kings men tried but failed eggspontentially.

HOLMES: You should have called Dr. Frankenstein who has experience in lifeform assemblage with chemicals and electricity. But it looks too late now for anything short of mushrooms and onions.

WATSON: And look, those fools trod across the crime scene.

WATSON: We'll refer to it as a "Splashzone".



HOLMES: Ahhh, now you've put your foot in it.

HOLMES: Let me get some facts about Mr. D, what was his color?

WATSON: White (with Speckles),

HOLMES: His Race:

WATSON: Rhode Island Red

HOLMES: Do you believe Mr. Dumpty was of sound mind?

WATSON: He used to say, "My momma always said, life is like a carton of eggs. Almost everyone is a little cracked."

HOLMES: The yolks on him then ain't it?

WATSON: Yeah well, seems I've heard that one. . . .As you can see by the remains of his clothing he dressed rather eggstravagantly,

HOLMES: To what do you attribute that?

WATSON: He was. . . Transeggsual.

HOLMES: Hmmm, I've heard he was a little "Over Easy" (if you catch my drift). Do we have any Usual Suspects on the menu?

WATSON: It could have been that rascally roe, that gamey gamete himself The Yoker! and his slimey sidekick The Griddler.



HOLMES: But who would have benefited most from his demise. . .?

WATSON: It would be that rotten egg known in the ring as a Mister Googoo G'joob who opened a swine café for criminals called "Ham and Yeggs!"

But there was no sign of life left in Mr. D's shattered shell, so we funneled his yokey goodness into an oversized take-out box, and sent him off to the coroner whom we have yet to receive a reply. Just a moment, here comes the messenger now!

HOLMES: What's in the envelope, my good man, what did the coroner have to say?

WATSON: Hmm, that's peculiar, just a single word. It reads: "Delicious!"

HOLMES: Well then WATSON, I guess we've digested this case, do you realize what that means?

WATSON: Breakfast?

HOLMES: Alimentary My Dear Watson, alimentary.





A DEADLY MISE  
PRODUCTION

