

Buffalo Steak Tartare

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BUFFALO STEAK TARTARE premieres: millions thrilled, royal message expected

Welcome to you, complimentary issue of Buffalo Steak Tartare! We hope you'll like what you see in the pages that follow and that you'll be eager to rush us subscription money so you won't miss the next issue (hint, hint). But before we move on to the articles, we're going to answer the questions you might have about BST.

Q: What does Buffalo Steak Tartare mean?

A: We'll tell you later.

Q: Who is responsible for this zine?

A: Linda Carson and Jim Gardner. Hello. We're married even though we have different names -- I (Jim) refused to change mine. We live in Waterloo, Ontario, a small city noted for its universities, its insurance companies, and its breweries.

Q: What got you started?

A: A friend named Steve Hutton

publishes a top-rated zine named "No Fixed Address", dedicated to the postal Diplomacy hobby. ("Diplomacy" is a registered trademark for a game invented by Allan B. Calhmer and copyright by Avalon Hill Game Company, 4517 Harford Road, Baltimore, MD.) As a wedding present, Steve gave us a lifetime subscription to NFA, introducing us to the world of zinedom. Linda contributed a number of articles to NFA, mostly describing foreign food that Steve hated. The overwhelming response to those articles led first to the legendary Hummus-Con, and now to Buffalo Steak Tartare.

Q: And why is it called Buffalo Steak Tartare?

A: All in good time.

Q: Who reads BST?

A: This issue will be sent out to our friends and relatives, as well as many people who subscribe to

postal Diplomacy zines (since that's an audience we know a bit about). It will also be sent to a number of people on the Net, a sort of international computer bulletin board.

Q: What sort of material will BST publish?

A: This issue gives a good sampling of our range of interest. Our articles will deal with "games and other amusements". That includes any activity people do as a pastime. As you can see from this issue, BST will have some regular columns on the topics nearest to the editor's hearts, plus a variety of other articles dealing with anything our contributors like.

Q: Are you looking for other contributors?

A: Absolutely. The people who have written material for this issue are all from the Waterloo area, so they were easy to browbeat into writing. However, we don't want to hold a whip over their heads for the rest of their lives, so we welcome pieces from other readers. Payment will be two free issues per article. Regular contributors will also be invited to the BST annual dinner.

Q: Are you ready to tell us what Buffalo Steak Tartare means?

A: Nope.

Q: Do you have any guidelines for articles?

A: BST is looking for material with personality: your personality. Always explain what you're talking about for people who may not be informed on your subject. For example, suppose you are writing about baseball. You can probably assume that people know what a home run is, but you should explain that RBI stands for "Runs Batted In".

Q: Will BST ever turn down submissions?

A: Probably. We're going to try to maintain the zine's current size for a while, which means there's a limit to how much we can print. We hope we'll be in a position where we'll have more submissions than we can handle, so that we can afford to be choosy. If time permits, we have visions of being true editors, helping writers improve articles that don't make it on first draft.

Q: What are the deadlines for articles?

A: The deadline for the next issue is January 10 (Jim's birthday). Note that we have a lot of stuff for issue #2 already, so it's possible that things you send in may show up in #3 or even later issues, even if it reaches Waterloo by the deadline.

Q: Where do we send articles?

A: The official BST address appears in the masthead. People on the computer Net can submit articles to "jagardner@watmath".

Role-playing games have long, honoured history

Depending on how you look at it, role-playing games started in 1974 or several million years B.C. Adults play them, munchkins play them, lion cubs play them. In the first of a series of articles, Jim Gardner gives an introduction for those who are unfamiliar with the field.

THE GENESIS OF ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

I could tell the story this way:

In the beginning, there was chess; and the gamers looked and saw that it was good. But chess had precious little to do with true battle, so other combat games were invented. Some games worked on the "theatre of war" level: the map showed a whole continent or the world, and the pieces represented vast armies and navies and air forces. Some games worked on the strategic level: the map represented a single country and the pieces several thousand fighters. Some games worked on the operational level: the map showed a few hundred square miles of relatively detailed terrain, and the pieces represented brigades of a few hundred soldiers. Some games worked on the tactical level: the map showed a small piece of ground in fine detail, and the pieces were squads or individuals. The traditional playing piece was the "counter", a square of cardboard, 5/8ths of an inch to the side, printed with numbers that showed attack strength, movement rate, and so on. In tactical games, however, many players preferred to use "miniatures", figurines that might be knights or legionnaires or stormtroopers. They said it brought the game to life. Then in 1974, two Wisconsin gamers named Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson took miniatures one step further: in a letter to a zine named "Alarums and Excursions", they said something to the effect of "We've come up with an interesting wrinkle on playing with miniatures -- we give each of

our miniatures a name and a personality, and we kind of act out little stories in addition to just fighting."

Or I could tell it like this:

In the beginning was Cops 'n' Robbers, and Cowboys 'n' Indians, and Robin Hood, and Pirates, and even Playing House. Children pretended to be people who were involved in some kind of nifty adventure. And one of them would set the scene by saying, "Okay, you're the sheriff and you're guarding the gold, and here we come sneaking up on you from behind." It was great fun, if everyone could just avoid fights like, "I shot you!" "Did not, you missed." "Did too." "Did not."

Or I could tell it this way (if role-playing games are old hat to you):

In the beginning was Dungeons and Dragons. And D&D begat Advanced Dungeons and Dragons, not to mention Tunnels and Trolls, the Fantasy Trip, RuneQuest, Empire of the Petal Throne, Chivalry and Sorcery, DragonQuest, Fantasy Hero, and who knows how many other medievalish swords and sorcery games. But evolving beside the fantasy RPGs were games from other genres: Space Opera (Traveller, Other Suns, Ringworld); post-holocaust worlds (Gamma World, The Morrow Project, Paranoia, Twilight:2000, Car Wars); superheroes (Villains and Vigilantes, Champions, Golden Heroes, Superworld, DC Heroes); horror (Call of Cthulhu, Chill); modern detective/spy stuff (James Bond, Top Secret, Danger International, Mercenaries, Spies, and Private Eyes); and a grab-bag of other games including Boot Hill (Western), Bushido (feudal Japanese), En Garde (Three Musketeers), Justice Inc. (pulp fiction), Bunnies and Burrows (rabbits), and Toon (TV cartoons). Whee!

(cont'd on page 2)

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Or I could give some kind of example.

Games Master: You're in a 747 over the Atlantic, on your way to Rome. It's a normal flight so far. Anyone want to do anything special?

Player: As a world famous spy, I have an image to maintain. I'll try to pick up one of the stewardesses.

Games Master: How?

Player: Chat with her. Ask where she's from. Say I have a sister who's an airline hostess, and I've always wanted to see the place where they cook meals.

Games Master: Okay, you talk a good line. Her name is Gizelle, she's from Switzerland, and she says she'll take you up to the galley if you like.

Player: I'll follow her.

Games Master: You get up to the galley, and she's showing you the fridge where the meals are stored when another guy comes into the room. He looks nervous.

Player: I'll look at him closely. Is there anything unusual about him?

Games Master: (AFTER ROLLING SOME DICE) You're observant enough to notice a small bulge under his coat.

Player: A gun?

Games Master: Could be. Are you going to do anything?

Player: I'll pretend to be heading back to my seat and try to pick the gun out of his pocket as I bump in to him.

Games Master: Do you have Pick-pocket skill?

Player: Yes.

Games Master: Roll and see if you manage to get the gun.

Player: (AFTER ROLLING DICE) I blew it.

Games Master: The guy notices what you're trying to do and whips out the gun. He shouts, "Stand still!"

Player: No way. I'm going to try to punch him.

Games Master: Roll to see if you hit him.

Player: (AFTER ROLLING DICE) I hit!

Games Master: Roll for where you hit him.

Player: (AFTER ROLL) In the stomach.

Games Master: How much damage?

Player: (AFTER ROLLING DICE) 15 STUN.

Games Master: Not enough to stun this guy. Now it's his turn. He shoots at you. (ROLLING DICE) The good news is, he misses you. The bad news is, his shot goes wild and breaks a window of the plane.

Player: (APPROPRIATE EXPLETIVE)

Games Master: All the air in the plane is whistling out the window. It's dragging you with it.

Player: I want to grab hold of something!

Games Master: Make a dexterity roll. (PLAYER ROLLS DICE) Okay, you're fast enough to grab the fridge. Make a strength roll to see if you can hold on. (PLAYER ROLLS DICE) You succeed. Of course, the stewardess is on her way out the hole.

Player: Can I try to save her?

Games Master: Sure. You want to let go of the fridge?

Or I could take the boring approach and say flat out what a role-playing game is.

A role-playing game is an adventure conducted in the privacy of someone's home. The materials you use are simple: pencil, paper, dice, and rule books. For combat, many people like to have miniature figurines to show where heroes, villains, and others are standing, but you can do

just as well using pennies or pins or cardboard counters from other games.

The players take the roles of characters in the adventure. Now when some people hear that you play a character, they think it's something like Clue where you can play Colonel Mustard or Miss Scarlet or whoever. But Clue characters are just convenient names and have no personalities at all. In an RPG, there are no predefined characters and personality is everything. For example, here are the characters I play, regularly in RPG campaigns.

- A middle-aged priestess of an orgiastic religion which is trying to become the power behind the throne in a medieval kingdom;
- A dealer in antique weapons who claims to be a descendant of Zorro and keeps it very quiet that his major job is industrial espionage;
- A superhero in silver armour, sole survivor of an alien race, a compulsive liar, and just maybe, the Saviour of the Universe.

I have also played a Russian gypsy working for a New Orleans detective agency, a little purple imp who reacts to tobacco like cats to catnip, an empathic rabbit, a one-armed English professor, the Lord of Cats, and a hobbit pickpocket who talked like Miss Piggy. Anything goes.

The adventure is conducted by someone called the Games Master (or the Dungeon Master, or the Chill Master, or the Keeper of Secret Lore). The GM is author, host, and referee for the other players. He or she sets up the situation that confronts the characters, plays the role of anyone the characters meet, supervises the game session, and decides on rule interpretations when necessary...not to mention that many GMs feel free to change rules to make the game play better.

The rules of a role-playing game can be thought of as the "laws of nature" in the world where the adventure takes place. In a fantasy game, for example, the rules will describe the laws of magic: what spells are possible, how spells are cast, what effects they have, and so on. In a science fiction game, the rules might talk about the sort of technology that's available, ways that spaceships work, etc. In a superhero game, the rules discuss superpowers and their limitations.

The rules of a role-playing game are used to resolve the kind of questions that plague children when they make-believe: if a cop shoots at a robber, does the bullet hit or not? Good RPG rules will provide a way to calculate how skilled the cop is with the gun and how hard the robber is to hit. Usually the situation boils down to a roll of one or more dice. If the policeman rolls well, the bullet hits; if not, the bullet misses (and may go on to hit something else). You can expect an RPG to have rules that deal with the following topics.

Quantifying Characters

Such rules assign numbers to a player's characteristics (e.g. strength, intelligence, dexterity), skills (e.g. acrobatics, first aid, computer programming), and normal abilities (e.g. running, jumping, perception). These numbers either specify the extent of what a character can do (e.g. how much weight he or she can lift) or measure the probability of the character performing an action successfully (e.g. climbing a steep cliff).

Resolving Combat

These rules describe how combat is conducted, possible combat actions, how to decide if you hit an opponent, how much damage you do if you hit, how you can recover from damage sustained in battle, and so on.

Daily Living

These rules describe everyday aspects of the world that underlines the adventure. For example, a fantasy game might give you an idea of the fantasy world's economy, its religion(s), its history, its races, and so on. A space opera game may describe levels of technology, interstellar government, classification of alien flora and fauna, etc.

Special Features of the Genre

Rules books also contain rules designed to give your game sessions a particular flavour, usually related to the genre of the adventure. Fantasy RPGs deal with magic; superhero games with superpowers; horror games with the monsters you may meet and their affect on your sanity. Such features can often make or break the RPG as a game: a few interesting quirks can greatly enhance the game's personality.

RPG rules do not cover "winning" or "losing". You play the game for the fun of participating in an adventure: for the satisfaction of finding a clever solution to a problem, or succeeding in a mission, or at least dying with honour. Sure, the players can win or lose a fight against the enemies that the GM creates...but the players aren't trying to "beat" the GM and the GM isn't trying to "beat" the players. That would be pointless: the GM can set up any situation and any opponents and any number of opponents; the GM has absolute control so the GM could always trash the party, if that were the goal.

But that's no fun. The GM and the players have to work together for a good adventure. The GM has to set up a situation that is challenging, but possible for the players to handle. The players have to work hard and co-operate to achieve whatever goal they set for themselves, whether it's a noble goal like rescuing orphans from evil giants, or a not-so-noble goal like looting an alien treasure house.

When it's all over, what do you get? Well, in terms of the game, the characters get "experience points", which can improve abilities and skills for the next time the characters sally forth on an adventure. In broader terms, the players get much much more: good stories to tell other gamers; the glory of success or the agony of defeat; and if nothing else, a few pleasant hours passed in the company of friends.

NEXT ISSUE: Character Creation -- Alignment, Disadvantages, and Numbers That Kill.

---Jim Gardner



Foundling Home: orphaned role-playing scenarios come in from the cold

The Foundling Home is a regular feature of BST, providing thumbnail sketches of possible role-playing game scenarios. These ideas are intended to serve as points of departure for Game Masters in search of inspiration. Submissions to the Foundling Home are welcome. They should be short (two or three typewritten pages) and general enough to apply to many game systems. This month, John McMullen gives us a sneaky scenario for a superhero campaign.

DEADLY DOUBLES

A SUPERHERO SCENARIO

This is an adventure which concentrates on one of your less super characters (one who gets tired and must sleep). Obviously nothing here is writ in stone, and much is left open for the GM to play with. This scenario provides a number of chances to save normals from death, some clever thinking and a bit of psychological role-playing. It is possible to fit a big bash-'em-up into the storyline, although it is not integral.

Set-up

One or two adventures earlier, a nebbish (a loser, a schmuck) character should be introduced. Perhaps your heroes could capture him.

For the sake of convenience, I am going to assume that the nebbish is a Mad Bomber type, although any low-grade thug will do -- an arsonist would also be acceptable. The crime should be expandable to some kind of large-scale power: explosives, fire, electricity, cold powers, God-knows-what. It makes a nice parallel if this power is one in the target hero's repertoire.

Just before the adventure, the nebbish dies. It's nicer if the hero and the nebbish are caught in the same backlash but only one survives. (Dum da dum dum!)

The Story

The target hero then runs into a number of explosions, all in a twenty-four or forty-eight hour period. No matter where he goes, there seems to be a bomb going off, or about to go off, or just gone off. This should keep Sir Goodguy busy for some time. Run variations on the theme -- blow up houses, factories, hospitals, shopping malls, homes of hero's friends, and finally the hero's home, just as he or she is about to bed down for the night. At none of the crime scenes can the police or super-detectives find evidence of explosives, which seems to indicate supervillain activity (or clever normals, or supernatural activity, or any of a dozen things, but most players will be checking their list of explosive villains by this point). Goodguy may have mentioned at this point that at some (almost all) of the crime sites, he thought he saw, in the smoke and haze, himself...

Who is doing this? What is the source of this vendetta? Has it put the hero's friends in the hospital? Will the hero ever get to go to sleep?

What's Going On?

The nebbish has become a doppelganger. The doppelganger is a spirit which so envies a living person that it seeks to become that person. To do this, it requires a number of hours while the other person, the target, is asleep. To facilitate this, the doppelganger is trying to exhaust the hero, so that Goodguy will have no choice but to sleep for ten or twelve hours.

Now What?

The hero will probably need hints to be guided to a supernatural explanation (unless your player has read this...heh heh heh!). These can come from a priest, an old woman, the nebbish's mother, a mystic character, whoever. The hero may want to tough it out (see Extras, below), or the hero may want to sleep. The only safe place to sleep is sanctified ground (i.e. a church), while explosions rocket outside. The only way to get rid of the doppelganger is to convince it that it is dead. ("Loudly Silver Mirror tried to reason with the ghost while explosions destroyed the headquarters. The other members of Earth-watch protected the New Accelerator, for should he be knocked out, his soul was not his own...")

Extras

By itself, there isn't a lot to this. Oh, it's okay for a one-night

filler, but a lot can be added. Try tying it into another plot-line, perhaps the arrival of some arch-foes or the outbreak of gang warfare. The activities of the doppelganger might be confused with those of the other group. ("Strange...the Mauve Marauder never used explosives before.") Perhaps the hero is a fervent rationalist and dismisses this talk of ghosts. Perhaps the hero has some major event about to happen in his personal life, and he has to face it after two straight days awake and forty-five people rescued.

If the hero is currently hunted by all law-abiding folk, it is difficult to get permission to sleep in a church. And so on, and so on.

If It's So Good

Why haven't I run it myself? Because I already have alternate history copies of people, various characters swapping souls, clones, vampires and currently my players undergo a twist in reality every few months or so. It seemed too much of a good thing to make them play this, too.

---John McMullen

Mix Me A Drink: no-nonsense alcohol consumption

"Mix Me A Drink" first appeared in Imprint, the school newspaper of the University of Waterloo. Many people have said it tells just about everything you need to know about its author, John W. Bast.

MIX ME A DRINK

So, it's 11:30. There's no action in the place at all, and there's bummer-all on the TV. It's second pitcher city, and the world is still steady...and closin' time's 'a comin'. The story of my life, right?

So I saunter up to the bar, sneer knowingly at the booze racked up just out of my reach. Whatthehell, I think to myself, and summon the bartender with a long, hard, cold, calculating glance.

"Mix me a drink," I say, slowly but firmly. "Mix for me a drink whose purpose can be nothing but anaesthesia. No frills, nothing to dull the impact of the booze, nothing to pretty it up. Mix me a drink that means business, one that will tell people my only reason in being here is to get blitzed."

"It should be a drink that says to the observer, this man wants to get drunk fast. He wants his brain set in neutral and his liver threatened with imminent demise. He's not at this bar to meet people, socialize, chat about the weather, talk politics, or listen to music. The drink he is holding tells the entire story."

I glanced about. I had an audience.

"It should say the drinker doesn't want anything but to dive to

the bottom of his soul through a sea of ethanol and never come up. This is high tragedy, deeply personal, and no one else is invited. If you tried to comfort him he'd hit you, and if you looked at him questioningly, he'd spit in your eye sooner than talk to you."

That had the desired effect. The barman and I were alone. He stared at me, mesmerized. No one had ever ordered a drink like that here. People here were up and coming, not out and going...but he seemed to be getting the idea. I concluded, "The drink I contemplate is not for enjoying. It should be neither nice to look at, nice to taste, nice to swallow. The smell alone should give it away as a killer. One must be drunk already to touch this drink, because no one in his right mind would touch it."

"This drink should be pure poison. It should be dilute enough to swallow, but powerful enough to rip gouges in the throat on the way down and to beat your stomach into submission when it gets there. One should put a man away for a night and a day. Two should hospitalize him. Three should embalm him."

I paused for effect. Then, looking at him directly for the first time since I began, I said earnestly, "Mix me such a drink."

He did a good job. I had two, got some Chinese food, and drove home. I think I killed a squirrel on the way...

---John W. Bast

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Greenhorn: intrepid writer boldly tackles the unknown, confronts the unseamed

Ronald M. Green is BST's daredevil. Each month, he will be set a task that leads him into brave new worlds and never-before-attempted feats. Readers are invited to submit possible challenges for Ronald to undertake in future...but keep them relatively inexpensive, okay? BST can't afford to send Ronald around the world in a one-man sloop, even if we'd get a great article out of it.



WHERE NO MAN HAS GONE BEFORE

My name is Ronald M. Green. I am a twenty-two year old Caucasian, heterosexual, single male who is mustached, bearded, near-sighted and generally unkempt. I am six foot two and a half inches tall and weigh around one hundred seventy-five pounds. My hobbies include reading (mainly science fiction), writing (ditto), taking long walks, meditating and girl-watching -- though not in any particular order. I am fairly easy-going, fun-loving and more than willing to help out friends.

This last item explains why I'm doing this.

Jim and Linda thought that it would be interesting for someone to write about new experiences from an utter novice's point of view. This involves either trying something new or allowing something to happen to me for the first time. I was trusting enough to go along with the idea, reviewed a list of suggestions compiled by my two bosses, and indicated which ones I was willing to try.

I told them to surprise me with whatever assignment I was to undertake. I should have known better.

"Make something from a kit" said the list. Heck, I thought, I've helped out Dad (who redecorates and repairs houses) with enough jobs to know how to handle most structural materials, and I did a fair amount of model-building as a kid. What could Linda and Jim give me to use that I hadn't worked with before?

Answer: a sewing machine with accompanying paraphernalia; three swatches of fabric; and a McCall's set of patterns for producing aprons. Well, I must admit, I've never tried sewing before -- this may be due to the fact that I come from a family where such pursuits were strongly discouraged among the males. But I like to think of it as just being due to a lack of personal motivation (I hate to put down my family).

"I want you to make apron F," said Linda with a smile. If she was expecting me to flee in terror or faint dead away on the spot, I disappointed her. I figured I could wait until I had the darn thing finished before I disappointed her with it.

Once home, I looked through what I had been given. Doesn't look too bad, I thought -- the pattern instructions look simple enough, the fabrics seem okay, and the sewing machine looks like it'll hold together. If I'm going to screw up, it's going to be my own fault. Darn.

What the heck -- enough knit-picking (sorry). On to work!

Out come the pattern sheets. I was glad that I had to cut the pieces apart anyway -- I don't think I could have ever folded any of the sheets back to their original form. No doubt this is how sewing shops discourage the return of patterns.

Sifting through the mass of printed tissue paper, I finally manage to isolate the appropriate sheet (containing pieces #12 to #20, for use in a men's apron) and lay it flat on the floor. I then look through the instructions, where I see a diagram showing how to lay out the pieces on the fabric prior to cutting. This is simple enough, I think to myself, as I proceed to cut out the pattern pieces.

It should be noted here that I am doing a stupid thing at this point in time. As was pointed out to me later by one of my technical consultants, Sharon Gardiner, patterns are pinned to the fabric (leaving a margin) and both are cut simultaneously. Obviously, the layout guide was provided in order to force people to buy additional sets of patterns after they have mangled the first set.

Anyway, I eventually had a set of separated pattern pieces. Through some miracle, I was able to avoid ripping any of them as I cut them out. These pieces were then laid out on the fabric which I had laid out on my floor (producing an interesting layered effect which left me terrified to move -- I have very limited floor space), and I once again take up my scissors.

The second I raise a portion of the fabric, all the pattern pieces shift. Obviously, I have to hold them in place somehow. Once again, I consult the instructions -- hmmm... I can either use tracing paper and a dressmaker's wheel (although I am not told what to do with them), or I can use pins and chalk. Pins and chalk are within my comprehension, if not within my room. I quickly obtain a piece of chalk and return to my room. No sooner do I shut the door than I remember that I've forgotten the pins. No problem, I think to myself -- I'll improvise.

A few minutes later, I was putting into effect the newly-developed "heavy book and chalk" method of fabric marking. Using a heavy book to hold down the pattern piece atop the fabric, I mark cutting lines with chalk. I realize that this is not exactly professional, but then again, neither am I.

After marking the fabric, I finally take my scissors and cut out the pieces of fabric. At this time, I have done yet another stupid thing -- as long as I had the patterns placed on the fabric, I should have marked folding and stitching lines on the pieces of cloth as well. Mentally kicking myself, I set aside the pattern pieces for future reference (and another day).

In case you are curious, the work up to this point has taken roughly three hours. Yes, I know it's a long time, but I had to consider: a) my utter lack of experience; b) my utter lack of knowledge; and c) my utter lack of a weapon if Jim and Linda (who paid for this stuff) catch me destroying the material they gave me to use. I decide to relax for the rest of the day, and take it easy working on an assignment for one of my classes.

Early the next morning, I am figuring out (with frequent references to an instruction manual) the mysteries of the contemporary sewing machine. With its four control dials, its four "presser feet" and its controlling foot pedal, I feel like I'm about to take the Discovery on a shakedown cruise. I must put off this historic work, however, in order to attend my classes.

I return from my classes, brain numbed. The door to my room is slowly

opened, revealing the machine... still on my desk. I can feel the excitement building in the air, my blood pounding through my body, the breeze blowing in through the open doorway which is blowing my pattern pieces around the room, the -- WHAT? Muttering about the indifference of natural forces to historic events, I quickly shut the door behind me and get things cleaned up. I finally commence sewing.

This next section is a flashback. All epic tales should have at least one flashback. Besides, it lets me put off telling you the depressing end of this story.

"I though basting was something you did with a roast or a bird," I asked Lise Fortin (my main technical consultant) over lunch.

It is, she explained, but went on to say that it is also used in sewing. According to Lise, basting is putting a temporary stitch into a seam in order to get some idea of how the whole thing looks -- without committing yourself. This sounds good to me, and I resolve to baste wherever possible.

End of flashback.

An hour and a half later, I realize that I owe a deep debt of gratitude to all the people in the garment industry, without whom I would surely be walking around naked.

I CANNOT SEW! I rage and fume at this cruel whim of nature, but I do not deny it. For an hour and a half, I tried basting after basting -- ripping out my shoddy work, cutting the workings of the machine free of masses of tangled thread, patiently putting the same piece of cloth through again and again and again...

I sweat. I toil. But I remain a complete idiot.

Angrily, I pack up the machine, set it aside, and go get lunch. As I eat, I consider my options: a) continue my attempts at basting, which will slowly destroy the material; b) forget basting and go on to try permanent seams (remembering the morning's work, this inspires a certain amount of chuckling); c) give up completely; or d) call in some quasi-professional help. Since I like to keep my losses to a minimum, I decide on the last option.

That weekend, I head for Toronto (my little home metropolis) to ask my sister, the aforementioned Sharon Gardiner, for help. Upon hearing my tale of woe, she laughs a lot, but is willing to take a look.

"I'm surprised they gave you something this difficult," she said while looking through the patterns. "This is about the hardest design in the package, with all the folds in the bib. Not to mention the cummerbund."

"How long would it take someone like you to sew and seam all the sections together?" My sister makes quite a few of her own clothes using patterns, so I figured this would be an expert opinion.

"It'd take me three or four hours. If it took you over an hour just to baste those two seams you showed me, you shouldn't even bother with it."

She paused. I still had some faint hope that she would help me anyway. Then she continued: "It's a nice pattern. Do you think I could buy the pieces you've cut from these friends of yours?"

If my two bosses ever trust me with another novice article, I'll have to hope it's something easy... like lion-taming... or handling explosives... or anything -- except sewing.

---Ronald M. Green

Mikey Likes It: cooking for the casual consumer

Linda Carson made her zine debut as cooking editor in Steve Hutton's "No Fixed Address". In BST, she continues her campaign to stamp out "fear of frying".

MIKEY LIKES IT

Casseroles: A Formulaic Approach

The casserole has weathered the extremes of public opinion. Once fashionable, it became a notorious disguise for leftovers. The noble casserole went from the "one-dish wonder" to oblivion in a matter of a generation.

Today, of course, we are above that sort of pandering to the whims of culinary fashion.

Today, we recognize the casserole's merits. In emergencies, it can be prepared from ingredients you have sitting in your cupboards. It dirties only one dish in the kitchen. It can be prepared minutes, hours, or days in advance. It freezes. It cooks unattended while you're busy sweeping dust under the carpet and throwing dirty socks under the bed. You can mistake the cooking time by twenty minutes one way or another with little detectable difference!

Shouldn't you learn how to prepare a casserole?

A casserole is usually created by layering a sauce-y thing, a meaty thing, often a cheese thing, a starchy thing, and maybe a veggie thing into a deep, greased, oven-proof dish. Put a little sauce on the bottom (this prevents baking on), starch or cheese on the top (to create a crispy brown crust), no lid (since a lid prevents the crispy brown crust), and bake at about 350 degrees Fahrenheit for an hour or so.

All of these ingredients are pre-cooked. Making a casserole is more of an assembly than a recipe.

Casserole Sauces

A casserole sauce must be thick and wet without too many chunky things in it. Leftover gravy, spaghetti sauce, or Campbell's Cream of Whatever Condensed Soup (leave it thick; do not add water) are good. Tinned gravy will do in a pinch.

Another approach is to prepare a basic white sauce, then add seasonings or cheese to suit your taste. A white sauce begins by melting a couple of teaspoons of butter in a saucepan. Stir in an equal quantity of flour to make a gluey paste that looks nothing like food. Pour in a cup (or a cup and a half) of milk and start stirring gently with a whisk. You heat this unlikely concoction over a low to medium heat and stir constantly. The goal is to distribute the thickener (butter and flour) evenly but non-violently through the milk and to keep the sauce from boiling.

You stir a white sauce for quite some time without making any apparent progress. Then, about the time you dart out to the living room to grab a good book, the whole thing suddenly goes "whomp". It turns into a solid mass with a texture not unlike pudding. Don't panic. Take it off the heat and give it another swish or two. If this is possible, the sauce is still usable. Toss in some spices and/or grated cheese, and stir over low heat to melt the cheese.

The thickness of a white sauce is proportional to the percentage of flour in the butter/flour mixture. For a thinner sauce, use only about half as much flour as butter.

Casserole Starches

The starchy thing in a casserole provides the solid bulk and the mild background flavour. The most popular

starches are pastas (egg noodles, shell macaroni, spaghetti), rice, pasta, and potatoes (mashed, whipped, sliced thin).

Except for pie crusts, pre-cook your starch. You can skimp on the cooking time for noodles (leaving them a little crunchy inside) because they'll have lots of time to finish cooking in the oven. Put the starch next to a layer of sauce. The sauce keeps the starch moist and the flavours travel and blend.

Starches like mashed potatoes and pastry go well on the very top layer because they taste good crisp and browned.

Casserole Meats

Meat is usually pre-cooked and transformed (shredded, cubed, grated) into small pieces. Moisten it slightly with the sauce (or mix it in wholesale) and layer. Suggestions: tinned tuna, shredded chicken, ground beef, shrimp, etc.

Casserole Cheeses

Cheese makes a tasty layer in a casserole, and it is almost indispensable as a topping. A complete covering of grated cheddar or mozzarella melts and bubbles in the oven to form a perfect crisp golden crust.

Now, I don't want to imply that dried grated cheese product (in shaker packages) has no food value, but for casseroles, you need real cheese. There has to be something there to melt. An even coat of grated cheese gives the best result. If you're not into washing graters, thinly sliced slabs of cheese can be laid out like floor tiles.

Specific Casseroles

If you build your casserole with Cream of Mushroom soup, tuna, peas, egg noodles, and shredded cheddar, you have my favourite. Call it that -- Linda's Favourite!

Ground beef and gravy topped with whipped potatoes makes Shepherd's Pie. Tomato sauce, ground beef, lasagna noodles, ricotta cheese (inside) and mozzarella (on top) give you lasagna.

Try cauliflower or broccoli flowerets, cut small, layered in a cheese sauce with noodles or rice. Layer ground beef, stewed tomatoes, niblets corn, and chili seasoning, then spread corn bread batter gently over the top. Even if you lose some batter into the mire below, it will rise to the top to form the most amazing crust! Top chili the same way.

Cooking Casseroles

Bake your casserole, uncovered, at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for about an hour. You want the whole thing to be tender right through: hot in the middle and golden on the top.

Do not put a lid on your casserole. The steam will make it cook faster but it will make the top soggy. You cannot save a soggy top by putting it under the broiler.

But if you want your (uncovered) casserole to have a crispier golden crust, do pop it under the broiler for a few minutes. Don't let it burn!

If you top your casserole with sauce instead of cheese or potatoes, you can give it a bit of a crisp by sprinkling it with bread crumbs, but it's not the same.

A casserole tastes better if it sits for five or ten minutes after baking. It sort of settles and gets dense. This is essential for lasagna.

You can cheat on cooking time with a casserole. Leave it in for less time if you have to make a meeting. Let it cook longer if you're busy entertaining. The longer the casserole cooks, the drier it gets.

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This is a good thing up to a point, because the starch absorbs the sauce and flavour. The whole casserole gets less soggy and less inclined to fall into separate layers when served.

Of course, after about two hours, you reach a point of diminishing returns.

You can freeze a prepared casserole and then pull it out later to cook. You can freeze a cooked casserole too. Cover it to freeze; uncover it again before baking. Defrost it if you like, but you can also put the frozen kit directly into the oven. Allow for lots of extra baking time, of course.

The Carsons have a family secret for lasagna. Rather than wrestle with hot wet lasagna noodles, we build our lasagna with uncooked noodles. Then we either

(1) freeze it and count on the fact that in the freezing, thawing and baking, the noodles get soggy into submission; or

(2) let it cook extra-long (maybe two hours) and use a slightly wetter sauce.

Try fighting the noodles once. Then try it our way.

For Example

Imagine, for a moment, that it is Boxing Day. Now, you may not even celebrate Christmas, but the continent is glutted with cooked turkey and fixings and somebody's gotta do something!

You come to the rescue by inventing Boxing Day Surprise.

You turn on the oven (350 F) to pre-heat while you whip up your masterpiece. You spray a casserole dish or loaf pan with Pam and raid the refrigerator. Great, there's still some gravy left! You chop up about a cup of turkey into fine pieces and glue it together with gravy. A dash of pepper should liven it up.

That goes on the bottom of the dish. You have lots of dressing left over, so you spread it in a neat layer over the meat/gravy. You know no one will eat those peas if you don't do something with them, so you moisten them with gravy and spread them over the dressing.

Oh heck, it was a big turkey, so toss in another cup of gravy-moistened finely chopped turkey.

Yesterday's boiled potatoes look pretty unappetizing, so you chop them into a bowl and add a bit of melted butter, milk, salt, and pepper. You beat them to a pulp with the electric mixer and spread them over the top of your masterpiece. You know to spread them nice and thick, but not too smoothly. Every little peak and valley will become a crispy golden delight after baking.

Oven's ready, and you slide in the casserole. Out to the living room for a few quick rounds of Twister and Ms. Pacman before the meal's done. You serve it piping hot with extra (re-heated) gravy, cranberry sauce, and a salad on the side. Dad is proud, Mom is teary-eyed, and your kid brother asks for seconds. Yay!

In Closing

The casserole formula produces a multitude of dishes (like lasagna or moussaka) that don't look like casseroles. Served at the table from an attractive casserole dish, it can be the centrepiece of a meal. On the other hand, you can build a casserole around yesterday's macaroni and Wednesday's hamburger to produce something you can eat guiltlessly in front of the TV!

---Linda Carson

From The Bleachers: seasonal spectator sport 'specially suits sedentary sorts

Ten seconds after the first Neanderthal thought to throw a stone at something, a second Neanderthal bet two mastodon livers that the first couldn't put the stone through a hoop that some Cro-Magnon had nailed to a tree. Some people will watch any sport (they televise golf, don't they?), some people are more selective (Linda turns up her nose at hockey, but try to pry her away from the tube when they broadcast figure skating), and some people have tastes that can only be called eccentric ("The only sports I watch are Jai Alai, Lacrosse, and Rhythmic Gymnastics"). Nevertheless, most of us are interested in some sports, some of us even play sports, and all of us like to disagree on who will win the Cup. For the record, BST loves the Blue Jays and every other team can go hang. On the subject of baseball, Dave Till suggests a way in which armchair enthusiasts can demonstrate their managerial acumen with minimum investment and maximum return.

ROTISSERIE LEAGUE BASEBALL

Are you:

- (1) A baseball fan?
- (2) A knowledgeable baseball fan?
- (3) A knowledgeable baseball fan who likes having chocolate-flavoured soft drink poured over his or her head?

If the answer to any or all of these questions is "yes", read on: Rotisserie League baseball is for you.

A Rotisserie League is a baseball pool, usually involving ten prospective team "owners". At the start of a baseball season, these owners are given \$260 in funny money to spend on a team of 23 National League players: four pitchers, six infielders, five outfielders, two catchers and one utility player. (The American League can be used if desired; however, it is important to use players from only one league, for reasons described below.) Players are auctioned off one at a time, each going to the highest bidder; bids are in units of \$1.

Once the season starts, drafted players' performance in actual major league games is compiled and measured in ten categories: five for hitters (non-pitchers) and five for pitchers. The hitters' categories are batting average, home runs, stolen bases, runs scored, and runs batted in. The pitching categories are wins, saves, earned run average, ratio of walks plus hits to innings pitched (the so-called "WHIP" ratio), and the ratio of strike-outs to walks. (Some leagues use only eight categories, leaving out runs scored and strike-out to walk ratio.)

The best team totals in each category earn the team 10 points for that category, with the second-best team totals earning nine and so on down to one point for the worst team. A ranking of the teams is obtained by totalling the points earned in each category.

During the season, injured players can be put on a disabled list and replaced by players not owned by another team. In addition, each team is entitled to hold the rights to two minor-league players (drafted at the start of the season). If a minor-leaguer is called up by a major league team, an owner can remove one of the players on his roster and replace him with the minor-leaguer.

Also, for the first three months of the season, owners can trade with their league rivals. Replacing injured players, calling up minor-leaguers, and making trades all cost \$10 in funny money.

The amount of real currency actually invested by each owner will be some amount proportional to the amount of funny money spent. In the league I was in, we played for one-tenth stakes, which meant an initial investment of \$26. Braver or richer souls can play for higher stakes, and impoverished types and cowards can play for no money at all.

At the end of the season, the first four teams divide the money invested (while the other six owners rage against fate). First place gets 50% of the money invested, second gets 25%, third gets 15% and fourth 10%. In addition, the first place finisher receives the dubious privilege of having Yoo-Hoo (the chocolate-flavoured soft drink once endorsed by Yogi Berra) poured over his head.

Sounds easy? Well, maybe. To survive, you must first possess a keen eye for baseball talent. Since only one major league is used for the talent pool, prospective owners can't get away with just knowing about the stars. Sure, Pedro Guerrero can help your team, and so can Dwight Gooden and Dale Murphy; but can Gerald Perry, Eddie Milner, Tim Burke and Larry McWilliams help your team? If you want to succeed in Rotisserie League baseball, you're going to have to find out. (The answers, by the way, are no, yes, yes and absolutely not.)

What's more, you have to be alert. If a player gets injured, you must be quick to replace him, or you'll lose valuable ground.

For many people, Rotisserie League baseball is more than just a pastime -- it's a way of life. Of course, owners name their teams (I call mine the "Waterloo Wombats"). Some owners also design team logos, crank out team newsletters and other publicity flak, and generally go overboard. During the heat of the pennant race, box scores are avidly scanned ("Oh boy! Mike Fitzgerald went 3 for 4!") and obscure players are cheered for on the NBC Game Of The Week ("Come on Floyd, strike him out!").

Leagues often continue from year to year -- there are rules on signing of long-term contracts and maintenance of player rosters. In this way, Rotisserie Baseball can give you a purpose in life, if you need one.

If you are interested in learning more about Rotisserie League baseball, or if you want to form a league of your own, you can find the complete rules in The Official Rotisserie League Rulebook, edited by Glen Waggoner. It is a green paperback selling for \$16.95, available in any bookstore that has a decent sports section. Other useful publications for the serious team owner are: the Sporting News Baseball Register, which gives the major league and minor league records of any player on a major league roster; the Sporting News Baseball Guide, which gives records of all the minor leagues as well as the majors; and the Bill James Baseball Abstract, which provides a well-written alternate perspective.

To close, let me pass on a few tips, miscellaneous facts and other trivia:

(1) The name "Rotisserie League" comes from "La Rotisserie Francaise", the New York restaurant where the first Rotisserie League was formed (in 1980). (Incidentally, the restaurant no longer exists; this may be a bad sign.)

(2) Defense counts for nothing in Rotisserie League baseball. It is better to spend a fortune on outfielders who can hit than to try to get a good player for each position. I spent a grand total of \$9 on my middle infielders, and I finished

fourth (despite having SIX pitchers get hurt or become ineffective).

(3) Allow a full day for your first player auction. It takes time to decide whether Tim Lincecum is worth \$41. (He was this year!)

(4) Don't underestimate the value of a good middle reliever. At the end of the season, I had Ken Dayley, Don Carman and Tim Burke on my roster; they combined for 15 wins and 18 saves for my team.

(5) The worst thing that can happen to you during the player auction is finishing up with money left over. Usually this means that your team is terrible. There ain't no such thing as a free lunch; be prepared to pay for your talent.

(6) Don't get carried away during the player auction. Believe it or not, I spent \$12 on Steve Rogers, who is now out of baseball.

(7) Do not believe what your fellow owners tell you during trade talks. They are not to be trusted.

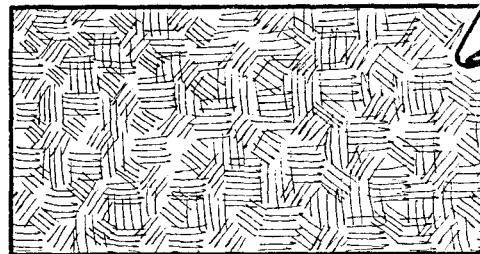
(8) The official rules state that "If Yoo-Hoo... is not available in your part of the country, move." If you wish to follow this advice, the nearest place to move to that I know of is Cooperstown, N.Y., where our league's organizer found a six-pack of the stuff. It looks like river water after a heavy rain, and smells like overly sweetened Nestle's Quik. Clearly, it is meant to be poured and not consumed.

(9) Under no circumstances are you to take the Rotisserie League seriously.

Play ball!

---Dave Till

Bun Mots: cryptic



When we first mentioned that we were going to publish a zine, our pet rabbit Haberdashery suggested that he could run a Puzzle Corner. Since he is an animal who is easily puzzled by the smallest thing (as evidenced by the time we tried to feed him a Spoon-size Shredded Wheat), we wondered what he would come up with. The result is Bun Mots, cryptograms of interesting quotations. I suppose they make as much sense to the rabbit as normal English.

BUN MOTS

All of the following are simple one-to-one substitution cryptograms. For example, in #1 the letter X stands for A. Each puzzle is separate (i.e. has a different substitution scheme).

(1) XCHSCF TWS JXCCSU JSQF TNUV
IXUWFIJUNJZ NZ CSU ADMMH WDXC.
XU RFZU, WF NZ X USMEGXRNI
ZDRZUNUDUF TWS WXZ MFXGCFK U:
TFXG ZWSFZ, RXUWF, XCK CSU IXYI
IFZZFZ NC UWF WSDZF.
-- "UWF" CSUFRSSY SA MXBXGD.
MSCV", GSRFGU X. WFCMFCNC

What A Card: banzai euchre affords thrills, chills, and surprising returns

When someone at a card game asked W.C.Fields, "Is this a game of chance?", he replied, "Not the way I play it." Our attitude is that card games (and any other game you care to mention) should be games of fun. When we play poker, it's always penny ante. When we play bridge, we have more table talk than a family of six eating supper. BST's card column reflects this bias. We don't even expect you to understand every game we discuss. This month, William Hughes begins with a quickie explanation of Euchre, then discusses his strategies for flashy play, summarized by the expression "No guts, no glory."

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF EUCHRE

Euchre is a member of the "trick taking" (Whist) family played by four people divided in two pairs, using a deck of 24 cards (nine through ace of each suit). The trump suit consists of (highest to lowest): the jack of trump (right bower or right); the other jack of the same colour (left bower or left); ace; king; queen; ten; nine. The other suits are ordered normally (with ace high).

Each player is dealt five cards and the top card of the remaining four is turned up. Bidding and play begin at the dealer's left.

In the first bidding round anyone can "order up". Trump becomes the suit of the exposed card. The dealer

discards one card and picks up the exposed card.

If no one "orders up", there is a second bidding round in which each person in turn can name any of the other three suits trump.

The partnership that names trump scores 1 point for taking 3 or 4 tricks and two points for taking 5 tricks. If they take less than 3 tricks their opponents score 2 points. Game is to 10 (sometimes 5 or 7).

---William Hughes

SUPERFICIAL STUDIES OF INFORMAL CARD GAMES: I

My name is William Hughes and cards are my life. Well this is not strictly true [1], but as my mother always says, "Never spoil a good story with facts" [2]. Actually I'm a mathematician [3], and I have never done any serious study of card games. However, many years of informal study of cards have convinced me that I have something worthwhile to say [4].

I will start by defining [4] an informal game to be one that can be played and enjoyed with only a brief acquaintance with its rules and strategies. Most card games fit into this general category, Bridge being the most notable exception. Enjoyment of an informal card game is maximized (fill in the rest of the [4]'s yourself) if played with people who care enough about the outcome to try to win, but not enough to care who actually wins. (I, of course, never get upset when I lose [5].) Adopting a relaxed attitude towards the eventual outcome leads naturally to strategies that, while unsound from a strictly game theoretic point of view, do tend to increase mean satisfaction. Translation: playing scientifically is boring, while playing aggressively, taking chances and quite often getting clobbered is a lot of fun.

In-depth studies [6] have suggested that Euchre is one of the most popular of informal card games; a fact which is blamed for a lot of wasted time [6]. The first question one asks on examining the game of Euchre is "under what conditions should you 'make trump' in order to optimize your scoring rate" [7]. Whatever the correct answer, it is probably not a good idea to call trump on the Queen, ten and an outside ace. Yet when I play Euchre this is what I quite frequently do.

In Euchre an aggressive bidding strategy is not as silly as it may seem. First of all, if you don't make trump your opponents are quite likely to call trump themselves, and score a least one point. Also, to a certain extent, the weaker your hand is the stronger your partner's hand is likely to be. More importantly, however, an aggressive strategy avoids those long stretches of incredibly boring hands that could be played by a chimpanzee trained to draw trump and lead the ace. Aggressive bidding can lead to many problems but boredom is not among them.

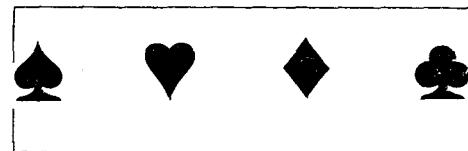
So, just how recklessly should one bid? Well, I have played and en-

joyed games in which my partner and I have agreed not to pass at all, but most rational players [8] would find this a little too extreme. A rule of thumb often given (and it is a good one for "scientific" play) is that you should count on your partner for one trick. Thus you should make trump on two probable tricks in your hand: e.g. a bower and two trump; right, a trump and a void; left, a trump and an outside ace; etc. These hands will take two tricks a very large percentage of the time. My own bidding strategy is best described as making trump on two possible tricks: e.g. left and a trump; any two trump and an outside ace, any three trumps; etc. Hands like these will still take two tricks the majority of times, but they will fairly often fail to take even one trick. In particular, as dealer I will rarely "turn down" the exposed card unless required to by the rules. I have found that the increased interest and uncertainty of the play associated with this strategy more than makes up for any unsoundness [9].

The strategy for ordering up is a bit different. By giving the dealer a trump and a discard, you concede a very strong advantage. In addition, if you order up, you deny yourself and your partner the opportunity to make trump. I usually do not order up without two sure tricks and one probable trick. An exception to this occurs when sitting to the dealer's right facing an partner who also bids aggressively. If I have no strength in any suit but the one turned up, I will order up when holding two very probable tricks. The reasoning is that the dealer will quite likely pass and my partner will then very likely make trump a suit in which my hand will be worthless.

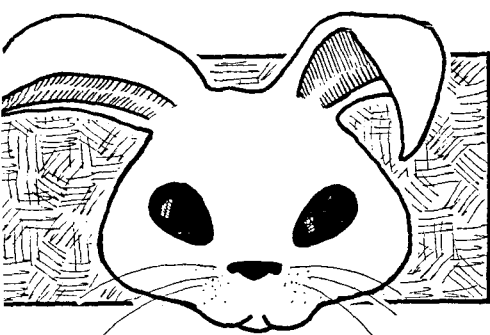
WARNING!! DO NOT ADOPT AN AGGRESSIVE BIDDING STRATEGY WITHOUT DISCUSSING IT WITH YOUR PARTNER FIRST. FAILURE TO DO SO CAN LEAD TO DEATH [11]. However, if proper precautions are taken [12], you too can revel in the joys of unsoundly reckless play. Take another look at your nine, ten, and outside ace, cast caution to the four winds, and announce firmly and proudly "I call it clubs". What the hell, it's only a game.

---William Hughes



- [1] Can you say prevaricate?
[2] Hughes, P. A., Private communication with Author, Innumerable Occasions.
[3] You can tell I'm an academic by my addiction to footnotes.
[4] You can tell I'm an academic ...
[5] What never? Well, hardly ever!
[6] Two and a half hours ago I asked four people if they liked Euchre and three of them said yes.
[7] Whadaya mean "No, not really"?
[8] Rational player: One who makes the optimal play in all circumstances. See SANTA CLAUS and EASTER BUNNY.
[9] An in-depth analysis of Euchre is quite difficult [10]. In certain situations some of the above plays are probably quite sound.
[10] And very boring.
[11] Or more serious injury
[12] With some partners these include a bodyguard or a suit of armour.

hare poses puzzles



- (2) DKEYUD (FKNDCOEQD): PBBK OB DFO
FMK SLBUDABWD OB KEPDAO, FA F
SBXW OB F OBFK, F OBFK OB F
AMFZD, F AMFZD OB F GEP, FMK GEP
OB F WFM, FMK F WFM OB F SBXW.
-- "OLD KDQEU'A KECOEBMFXR",
FWYXBAD YEDXCD
- (3) F GLEUBABGLDX EA F YUEMK WFM EM F
KFXZ XBBW UBBZEMP JBX F YUPCZ CFO
SLECL EAM'O OLDXD. F OLDBUBPEFM
EA OLD WFM SLB JEMKA EO.
-- NBD GXDAUDR
- (4) DJLBRDU HXJ HV IBJ HSSJUI HV
VJUINKRPU CRU BHPZ NXXHYJXIU'
SRZ, SJYJFOJL 28, BHXHGLNWX IBJ
YBNPSLJX HV OJIBPBJBF UPRNX OZ
ENXW BJLHS NX BNU FRS RIJFDI IH
ENPP IBJ NXVRXI YBLNUI. NI GUJS
IH OJ IBJ YGUIHF IH CBND HXJ'U
HCX YBNPSLJX UHGXPZ HX IBNU SRZ
IH LJFNXS IBJF HV IBHUJ DHHL
UPRGWBIJLJS GXVHLIGXRIJU RXS IH
NFDLJUU HX IBJF BHC PGYEZ IBJZ
CJLJ IH BRKJ BRS IBJNL HCX
OHGXINVGZ ZGPJINSJ BHPNSRZ.
- (5) UDJ JYVUUL.
-- F. TBWILF

Answers next issue.

Bedtime Stories: "I'm just a girl who can't say no"

Sex ranks as a very popular modern pastime. In "Bedtime Stories", guest writers will look at various aspects of love, lust, and interpersonal relationships. This month, James Nicoll examines one of the great woes of the unattached male.

THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE NO BUSINESS

I am currently between marriages and like many single men, I find my situation less than optimal. The obvious solution to such singularity is to find a partner, which brings me to my topic: how to recognize when a young lady is trying to say no.

Humans have a cranial capacity of about 1400 cubic centimetres, and one of the largest brain-to-body weight ratios on Earth. Much of our large brain is given over to communication. This gives humans an unrivaled ability to speak with such skill and blinding proficiency that we usually have no idea what the person talking is trying to say.

The word "no" is a case in point. It seems simple enough and easy to understand, yet it is apparently not so easy to say. In my career as a social neutrino, I have been refused in a large number of ways, but a forthright "no" is very rare indeed. Usually some subtler form of "no" is used, possibly in the belief that such subtlety preserves my delicate male ego. Subtlety is not, alas, one of my strong suits, and it often takes several of these no-substitutes ("no-subs") before the concept of "no" drives itself into my dim little mind.

I suspect that there are other men who also suffer from an inability to recognize no-subs. Thus, this article provides a partial list of common no-subs, to help out my fellow no-sub insensitives until such time as the word "no" re-enters the English language.

No-subs fall into a small number of categories. One of the most popular types is the "Missing Phrase" no-sub, in which the woman uses a sentence which would have meant no, had she completed it. Two of my personal favourites are

Later

and

I'll call you

The complete versions of these are

Later, subsequent to the freezing over of hell

and

I'll call you should all of the air molecules in the room simultaneously decide to rush out the door.

Another classic is

I'm not really interested in seeing a movie

which in full reads

I'm not really interested in seeing a movie with you.

Women can also use a breed of no-sub wherein a non-factual reason for turning you down is used instead of a real one. The technical term for this is "lying".

There are many lying no-subs. One of the most popular is

Gee whizz, I'm really busy right now

when in fact she has not had cause to move in such a length of time that fungus has grown to a depth of three inches beneath her body. Another old stand-by is

Gosh my brother has just dropped by

when said sibling was crushed beneath the wheels of a passing motor vehicle some twelve years earlier.

The worst form the lie, the "damned lie", is the word "Yes". The sweet young thing does not want to experience the massive trauma of crushing your feelings in person, but she is more than willing to let you consume stomach lining waiting futilely for her. Damned lies are used by the same women who tell you they are using birth control when they aren't, just so you don't worry (until later). The English language lacks words to adequately describe the moral and ethical level of the malevolent canine females who use Damned Lies.

A "Reverse Standish" is a no-sub used by well-intentioned women who wish to deter a particular man but cannot bring themselves (often for reasonable causes) to deliver the word first-hand. Instead, the message is delivered by a supposedly neutral party. Unfortunately, messages sent via mutual friends have a tendency to mutate on the way. A simple message like

I'm under great personal stress right now and do not want the complication of dealing with another man

can end up as

You are a well-known and dangerous psychopath and I anticipate your sexual harassment of me with great dread.

Using third parties to deliver messages can lead to unnecessary ill will.

These are just a few of the common no-subs in use today. Personally, I would prefer that women who find the word "no" difficult to pronounce should spend several hours in front of a mirror, just saying "no" over and over. If that proves too difficult, perhaps they could purchase a large knobby stick for beating would-be suitors over the head. They will find this approach quicker, more effective, and less painful in the long run than resorting to no-subs.

---James Nicoll

Come Into My Parlour

Parlour games have been with us longer than parlours have. A good parlour game can entertain a room full of people with a minimum of props and preparation. A really good parlour game embarrasses the hell out of friends and casual acquaintances and provides excellent blackmail material...but we'll talk about "Deprivation" and "Mental Strip Poker" some other time. This issue, Linda Carson looks at a simple word game.

COME INTO MY PARLOUR

Parlour games traditionally need no commercial boards or components, so we love having two or three in our repertoire.

We'll be adapting the most entertaining parlour games for our readers to try here. If you enjoy this sample, play the home version that follows.

Fictionary

We have invented some fake definitions for real English words (as defined in our Random House Unabridged Dictionary). Don't worry if you don't know the words; that's the whole point. Guess which meaning is the correct meaning of each word.

kroon

- leather bag for pack animals
- religious standard or banner
- monetary unit of Estonia

motmot

- short word or nickname
- tropical bird with green/blue plumage
- of brightly variegated colours

purlin

- finish with an ornamental border
- rod used to handle glass in glassblowing
- horizontal support for rafter of roof

dudeen

- slang for female dude
- Irish clay pipe for tobacco
- folk instrument related to the zither

Check your answers in your own dictionary at home. We trust you. For each correct answer, you get a point. For each missed guess, we get one. Write us and tell us your score! (We love silly mail.)

If you send us some Fictionary definitions of your own, we'll give them a try and tell you how we fare.

Playing At Home

Fictionary is easy to play at home. Collect enough pens and paper for everyone, and get an unabridged dictionary. Take turns choosing a totally unknown word from the dictionary. The person who selects the word writes down a paraphrase of the correct meaning, while everyone else invents a definition. All the definitions are then read out (by the person who knows the right meaning) and the other players try to guess which definition is the real one.

Players score one point if they guess which is the correct definition. A player also scores a point whenever someone else chooses the player's invented definition instead of the correct one. The person who chose the word in the first place scores a point for each player who chooses an incorrect definition. You should play at least one round for each person in the group, so that everyone has a chance to pick a word from the dictionary.

---Linda Carson

BST announces second fun-filled issue

BST will run at least one play-by-mail Diplomacy game, with Steve Hutton as Game Master. People who are interested in playing should send name, address, and phone number to BST no later than January 10. More details next issue.

Also next issue: more foundlings, Elixir, reviews, recipes, Infocom games, rebuttals, and whatnot. But to see all this, you must get us \$10 before January 25. Send early to avoid disappointment!

The Science Fiction Shelf: Heinlein's "Cat" sadly unfulfilling, incomplete

"A human being should be able to change a diaper, plan an invasion, butcher a hog, conn a ship, design a building, write a sonnet, balance accounts, build a wall, set a bone, comfort the dying, take orders, give orders, co-operate, act alone, solve equations, analyze a new problem, pitch manure, program a computer, cook a tasty meal, fight efficiently, die gallantly. Specialization is for insects." (Robert A. Heinlein) Science fiction is about death rays and spaceships; it's about the things that Heinlein lists. This issue, John W. Bast looks at the grand old man's latest. Readers should be warned that a lot of the plot is discussed in this review; those who hate having surprises spoiled for them should run out to the library or bookstore and read the book before reading the review.

The Cat Who Walks Through Walls

By Robert A. Heinlein, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1985.

Robert Heinlein is among the top five (maybe three...maybe two...) living science fiction authors, and among the top five (maybe three...maybe two...) science fiction writers of all time. He writes good, solid stories that are incidentally science fiction. In the process, he may teach you something about life, human nature, and different ways of looking at things. (Sometimes he even tries hard to persuade you to look at things in certain ways.) This book doesn't change that. It can't; his reputation is just too strong.

He's touched more audiences than most SF writers. He would be noteworthy if the only book he had ever written was Stranger in a Strange Land. Over the years since 1939 (his first published story was Lifeline) he has left no stone of society unturned; his stories have glorified and criticized career diplomats, civil servants, backwoods bumpkins, great and mad scientists, the family, and most philosophies. As Spider Robinson writes in "Rah, Rah, R.A.H.!", Heinlein's been loved and hated by large segments of the reading and critiquing world. He's affected the science-fiction writing world very significantly. Name any story by any SF author and Heinlein probably wrote something like it, first. A number of noteworthy SF writers emulate his style. Many books appear with the words, "In the best tradition of a Heinlein story" emblazoned in reviewer's notes on the book jacket.

I hope, with this book, he doesn't start another trend. Let's just leave it at this: Heinlein is a fantastically successful writer, he always has been, and he covers an incredible depth of human experience. I've read everything by him I can get my hands on, have liked all of it, and loved most of it. Except this latest book.

It's just out: The Cat Who Walks Through Walls. (Silly title -- ignore it. It doesn't matter to the story, unless Heinlein is preparing ground for the next book.) I was excited, I was nearly hypnotized by my anticipation. Everything that happened last week to keep me from reading the book was an itch impossible to scratch and therefore all the more frustrating.

And now I've read it and I'm disappointed...which is something I'm not used to from a Heinlein novel.

There is a good theory to account for the abrupt, totally unsatisfactory, deeply frustrating, and disappointing end to the book: that Cat is the first part of a very long book and some editor said, "Robert, I'm going to publish this book up to this point because you're nearly 80 and in poor health, and you'll want the satisfaction of ending it at this point the way you want to. Then you can go on and write the rest of it. Besides, if we don't publish now, we'll miss the Christmas season..."

I hope that Heinlein had a better reason than this rather banal guess; but the book certainly reads like it's Book One of a two or three book super-novel. What first seems to be a nice, typically Heinlein-esque story (once it truly gets rolling) is chopped off in its prime.

Structurally, Cat may be the slowest of Heinlein's books to reach the point of its story. This trend started in The Number of the Beast, progressed in Job (his second latest, now available in paperback) and is now well advanced. It takes well over half the book before Heinlein feels he has adequately introduced his major characters (let's call them Campbell and Sadie) and can get on with the major action.

(Digression: Why did I say, "Let's call them Campbell and Sadie"? The Major Campbell character uses several names throughout the book, but "Campbell" is the most consistent. Sadie, on the other hand, is an alias; but if I used her real name, I would give away what I quaintly call "something really clever". End of digression.)

This is not to say that the first half of the book is dull and should be left out. As in the last few Heinlein books, a significant murder or marriage is committed within a few pages of the front cover. Literary hooks are sunk in. Meaningful reminiscences are provided. Important actions and anomalies are set before the reader and the unfortunate hero...if "hero" is the right word. Campbell comes as close to an anti-hero as any Heinlein character since All You Zombies (a significant phrase, to those readers who have already read the book). Poor guy; he deserves better.

In the last third of the novel, major background changes are made, Campbell's life and plans are massively disrupted, old Heinlein characters are introduced (a la The Number of the Beast) and a whole set of more important, galaxy-wide, multi-verse-wide plots are revealed.

Gaze in wonder, O reader, on how the Heinlein multiverse is structured, as related in Cat. We have:

- A world in which Neil Armstrong landed on the moon...and later came Friday.
- A world in which the Royal Australian Air Force "Pink Wallaby" landed on the moon...and later came Hilda Corners, Gay Deceiver, and The Number of the Beast.
- A world in which D.D. Harriman's "Pioneer" landed on the moon, from which sprang Lazarus Long, the Howard Families, and many of Heinlein's stories.
- A slight alternative to the above universe, where Free Luna (from The Moon is a Harsh Mistress) came to be.
- A smattering of worlds that are explicitly fictional: codenames

Barroom, Duquesne, Cyrano (that last one is from Glory Road).

Naturally, all these universes are accessible through the Burroughs Time-Space Continua Device (from Beast). As established in the same book, other people have continua devices and evil fictional characters are just as real as the more fun fictional characters.

And remember the Temporal Bureau? It appeared in All You Zombies, one of Heinlein's darker short stories. The Temporal Bureau's task is to save us from ourselves, through time travel, the "correction" of Mistakes (capitalization intentional), and making sure that the right things do indeed happen. Well, the Bureau is back, naturally enough; when you go banging through the multiverse, you have to meet them, right? And naturally, they're going to recruit some of the best brains of the multiverse into their service (or automatically give them the top jobs -- since every old Heinlein character we meet seems to have a top job with the Bureau).

Certainly one thing is true: with all of Heinlein's characters, all of Edward E. Smith's characters, and even a couple of Heinlein's characters' characters running around, someone has to police the whole shootin' match!

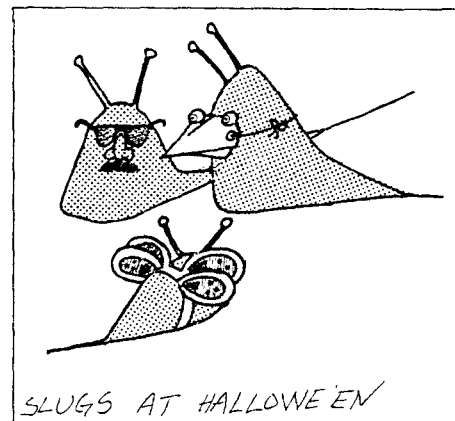
And the job is too big for the people we have. They need the help of a Heinlein character (maybe his best ever; hard to tell) who is "missing, presumed dead". They need Adam Selene, Mike the Computer, the HOLMES IV, who helped run (who actually ran) the Lunar Revolution of 2076. Mike can figure the complex variables arising from slight changes in the multiverse, so the Temporal Bureau can decide just what detail to change, in what way, and how much, so as to arrive at a happy result. (Happy for them, anyway.) Their modern computers can't do this -- so say the experts in Cat, and I have to respect their opinion. A number of people just want to bring Mike back to life (I'm one of them) because in a cosmic sense, he deserves to live.

The Temporal Bureau (now called the Circle of Ouroboros) dispatches a team that penetrates the old Authority Complex, snatches important pieces of hardware and software, and...remember what I said about an abrupt ending?

It's a dirty trick. On the characters and on the reader. Saying more would spoil too much (if I haven't done that already). Maybe the ending is a partial success; but a partial success is not a success.

I hope there is a next book and I hope it comes along soon. The ending is too unsatisfying to leave things as they stand.

--John W. Bast



Comic Relief: "Power Pack" proves comics aren't kidstuff anymore

Comic books aren't strictly kid stuff anymore (if they ever were), nor are they restricted to superheroes, GI Joe, and other traditional schticks. A large number of so-called "alternative" comic companies produce adult-oriented stories with good writing and great art. The two big companies (Marvel and DC) have also matured in many ways over the years. In "Comic Relief", David Welbourne looks at a few of the newer series.

COMIC RELIEF

Power Pack

Marvel Comics Group, monthly, colour, superhero adventure; writer -- Louise Simonson; pencils -- Brent Anderson; 19 issues to date.

Origin story:

A good alien, Alfred Whitemane, a.k.a. Whitey, wants to save the earth from destroying itself with a dangerous new energy generator. The secret of the generator must also be kept from evil aliens (the Snarks) who would only use such power for destruction. But Whitey is dying, so he must transfer his powers to the four young children who have befriended him. Thus is born POWER PACK, the youngest superhero group in the world.

The characters:

POWER PACK is made up of two brothers and two sisters, aged 5 to 9. Alex (Gee) is oldest and has power over gravity. His sister Julie (Lightspeed) can fly, leaving a rainbow trail behind her. Their brother Jack (Massmaster) can expand his body molecules into cloud form or compact himself into the doll-sized "60-pound Jack Hammer". The baby of the family is Katie (Energizer). She can "power up" by disintegrating objects and storing the energy; this energy is later released as power balls. The pack is aided by Friday (Whitey's smart spaceship) and by their recently added fifth member, Franklin Richards (nicknamed Tattletale, son of Reed and Sue Richards of the Fantastic Four).

My opinions:

Don't make the mistake of thinking that because the main characters are kids, only kids should read the magazine. This is a great comic for anyone, thanks to a freshness and innocence that cannot be found in other series. Few comics feature very young children: when children do appear, either they are given very minor roles, or they are not treated as real children. Reading Peanuts, for example, one might think that all kids discuss theology and philosophy.

The POWER PACK kids demand attention, indulge in sibling rivalries, fight, and play like real kids. They will call each other names and get into "Am not! Are too!" quarrels. In one fight, Katie wanted to show an ally how her power worked and called out, "Watch me, Dagger, watch me! Dagger, are you watching me?" And after a hectic Thanksgiving issue, Franklin jokes, "I'm thankful I didn't get killed!"

It's unfortunate that POWER PACK exists within the Marvel Universe, smack in the middle of Manhattan.

This has provided an excuse to bring in oodles of guest heroes that POWER PACK really doesn't need. Considering that the children's powers affect four basic features of physics (gravity, acceleration, mass, and energy), they could easily become the next Fantastic Four. We might also note that none of the Pack has superhuman strength, but working as a group, they can do anything superstrength can do. Of course, they have to work as a group if they want to be effective.

Another nice touch is the continuing influence of Whitey's race and the Snarks. Whitey's relatives now count the Pack as family; consequently, the Snarks figure as the Pack's primary foes. These complications help give richness to the stories, providing a unique reason for the Pack's existence. Because their parents don't know about their powers, their lives can become very awkward indeed!

---David Welbourne

Tin Ear: Fogerty's "Centerfield" worth checking out

How many millions of dollars are spent each year on music tapes, cassettes, LPs, compact disks, turntables, ghetto blasters, woofers, tweeters, amplifiers, guitars, pianos, sheet music, and kazooes? How the hell should I know? I'm not writing a music column here, Dave Till is.

TIN EAR

Welcome to Tin Ear, a semi-regular pop music column (budget and writer's block permitting). In this space, I will review current records, make occasional "best of" and "worst of" lists, and hurl a few brickbats in fun. Any opinions expressed here are, of course, either my own or cribbed from unwary acquaintances.

Review - "Centerfield" by John Fogerty

Records by old rock stars are often like old-timers' games in baseball: although the performers have lost some of their youthful energy and quickness, they still retain the style and mannerisms which remind fans of their lost youth. John Fogerty's new album, "Centerfield", falls into this class.

Fogerty was once the driving force behind Creedence Clearwater Revival, the best band in rock during the years 1969 and 1970. Fogerty's new album, while lacking the intensity of CCR's best work, is a reminder of the (relatively) distant past.

Though this nostalgic quality makes the album listenable, it also shows that Fogerty has not changed much since 1972. Many of the songs on "Centerfield" are similar to songs he wrote for Creedence: "The Old Man Down The Road" sounds a lot like "Run Through The Jungle", "Mr. Greed" is very similar to "Fortunate Son", "I Saw It On TV" reminds me of "Who'll Stop The Rain", and "Big Train" (a good song) sounds like several of the country-based songs that Fogerty used to churn out. The one exception is "Vanz Kant Danz", which uses reggae guitar and electronic drums, neither of which existed in CCR's prime.

The problem, I think, is that John Fogerty needs to find some people he can work with and trust. He wrote all the songs on this album, produced and arranged every track, played most, if not all, of the instruments (there are no musicians given credit), and even helped direct the design of the album cover. No man is an island; poor Mr. Fogerty should not be forced to shoulder the burden alone.

Still, one shouldn't complain. Even at a low level of intensity, John Fogerty can outplay most of the singer-songwriters currently clogging the video channels of pay television companies, so I think this album is worth checking out.

Note that one thing is certain: if you like this album and have not heard of Creedence Clearwater Revival, my advice to you is to run (not walk) to your nearest record store, because you have some catching up to do. Two collections, entitled "1968/69" and "1969", each a repackaging of two CCR albums, are available. In addition, their 1970 album "Cosmo's Factory" is definitely worth picking up.

---Dave Till

Bad Lyrics

One of my minor hobbies is spotting bad lyrics -- pseudo-profundities, forced rhymes, and just plain clunkers. The criterion is a simple one: a song lyric is bad if I wince and wish that I had been listening through headphones instead of embarrassing myself in front of my neighbours.

Here are three of my past favourites (if they can be called that). First, from the song, "And The Tide Rushes In", by the Moody Blues.

Then the tide rushes in,
And washes my castles away
Then I'm really not so sure
which side of the bed I should lay

The first line of this isn't bad, but the second grates horribly. What's more, this is the chorus, so the listener is forced to hear it repeatedly.

If any Moody Blues fans reading this are offended, let me point out in self-defense that I like this song, as long as I don't have to listen to the words too closely.

A more recent example, from "Your Silent Face" by New Order.

A sign that leads the way
A path we cannot take
You caught me at a bad time
So why don't you piss off

The last line spoils the effect completely, as you probably guessed.

No listing of classic turkeys is complete without this all-time favourite from the Steve Miller Band's "Take The Money And Run". (I may not have this one word for word, since I haven't heard it in a while.)

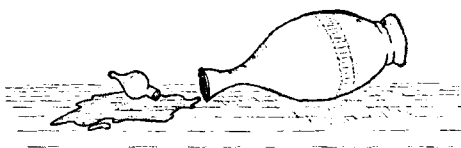
Billy Mac is a detective
Down in Texas
You know he knows exactly
What the facts is

Oof! Grammarians of the world, unite! Well, that's all for now. As Bob and Ray used to say: "Write if you get work, and hang by your thumbs." However, do not attempt to do both at once.

---Dave Till

The Elixir: serial with drama, laughs, intrigue

Serials have a long and noble history. Charles Dickens, for example, wrote most of his novels in weekly installments (and it is obvious that he was paid by the word). "The Elixir" is a novel-length serial that will be appearing in BST for many many issues. Has it really been thought out that far in advance? Only the author, Jim Gardner, knows for sure.



THE ELIXIR

Chapter 1 -- Rude Awakening

Some people are morning people and some are evening people. Morning people have the edge -- they can go to bed early if they feel like it. Evening people have to wake up sometime.

Elizabeth Chelsea Bartholomew wakes with smeary dawn light in her eyes, a bad taste in her mouth, and the 1812 Overture in her skull. For a moment, she wonders why she was stupid enough to leave the blinds open the previous night. Then she remembers something about "love under the stars" and "let the moon be a voyeur", and "don't you love this light on your naked body". She's not sure if she said those words or he did...which handily brings up the subject of the man sleeping soundly beside her. She's pretty sure he mentioned his name sometime last evening, but it made less of an impact on her memory than the vodka martinis he poured down her. Or she poured down herself. Or something.

Blearily, she pulls herself to the washroom, sits for a while and wonders why the tinkling sound has to be so loud, then buries her face in a sink full of cold water. It helps wake her up, which just means the hangover thud in her brain is more pronounced. When she lifts her head and looks at her eyes in the mirror, she wonders why she doesn't bleed to death.

Back into the other room. Her breathing isn't breathing at all, just a succession of sighs. Knowing that it's a mistake, she picks up her watch from the nightstand. Six thirty. In an hour and a half, she has to have fought her way through traffic to work. Between now and then, she must go home, put on new clothes, and freshen up (ha ha). Bloody marvelous.

She manages to fumble on her panty-hose, but says to hell with the bra and stuffs it into her purse. The slinky scarlet dress that this British stranger called a "smashing frock" (she laughed) is now wrinkled to crepe paper. If she didn't need something to wear through the hotel lobby, she'd throw it out right now. Instead, she shrugs it on, jams her feet into shoes, and heads for the door. Conceivably it would be polite to leave a note saying, "Thanks for the lovely evening" or some such, but she's seeing through a fog and probably couldn't hold a pen. Anyway, vanishing like the wind will leave an air of mystery in his mind forever...provided, of course, that he remembers a thing of what happened the previous night.

Out the door, then easing it closed behind her. Down the hall, into the elevator, and thank God the Hotel Carmody is one of those modern institutions that believes its patrons

are intelligent enough to push buttons on their own. The last thing Ms. Bartholomew needs right now is (a) a chat with a cheerful elevator operator who thinks the Blue Jays are really going to take the pennant this year, or (b) a stony silence from some snooty elevator operator who has developed the knack of making people feel like shits for being rumpled and wrinkled on their way home at six thirty in the morning.

Of course, there is certain to be a clerk downstairs in the lobby, and for all she knows, a line of bell-hops waiting for work, all of them racing with pubescent hormones and snickering behind her back. For a moment, she considers the brazen route, winking at them like a wet dream and coming on sultry. But nah, she could never pull it off. Raunch doesn't come easy to her at the best of times, and this is definitely not the best of times. She resolves to walk quickly and quietly out the nearest door, and to worry about giggling teen-age jerks some other day. She tucks up her purse under an arm, strides forth briskly when the elevator opens at the lobby, and she is five paces out the door when she realizes she's left her damned glasses back in the room.

(A part of the evening comes back now. She was standing idly by the buffet table (cheap-looking buffet too, but then, book-launching parties are not noted for cuisine) when this charming hunk with a British accent murmured in her ear, "I'm surprised you wear glasses -- most women as beautiful as you are wear contact lenses these days." She had answered coyly, something about glasses being faster to take off when the situation warranted. Things had carried on from there. When the situation finally warranted, they were somewhere near the shower, so the glasses would be in that neighbourhood too.)

Back into the elevator, back up to the tenth floor, and along to Room 1007 (thank God she remembered that), all the while wondering if she is really going to have the nerve to bang on the door and wake him up. So much for the image of the enigmatic young beauty who briefly entered his life and disappeared without a trace, but the things cost over a hundred dollars. Besides, this guy can think she's a twit if he wants -- he's leaving town today. The people she really has to worry about are her co-workers and what they'll gossip about if she shows up hungover and sans spectacles.

When she arrives at his room, the door is slightly ajar. At first, she thinks she was so out of it when she left that she didn't even close the thing behind her. Score one lucky break -- she can just sneak in and grab them without waking the guy. But as she is easing the door open, she hears an unknown female voice say something and the marginally more familiar male British accent replying.

For a brief moment, she is jealous. She does not consider herself a possessive woman, but a person prefers to think that she leaves behind enough of an afterglow to keep a man happy at least while the sheets are still warm. As the conversation in the room progresses, however, her indignation gives way to curiosity and thence to being intrigued with the possibilities suggested by the interchange.

Woman's voice: "It is necessary, Mr. Bond. You understand the situation."

The man: "Not well."

Woman: "We have contracts to fulfill. Publishing agreements have been signed. Movie rights have been sold."

Man: "Who cares about the movies anyway? They always change things."

Woman: "Don't be petulant, Mr. Bond. Even screenwriters need a small amount of inspiration before

they write. It's up to you to give it to them."

Man: "I won't do it."

Woman: "Why not? It's a trivial assignment -- a defector has managed to steal important enemy codes and hide on a small island in the Caribbean."

Man: "Bloody Caribbean...I hate it. Why can't defectors ever turn up in some place civilized?"

Woman: "All you have to do is contact the defector and escort her to England. Is that not simple?"

Man: "It's a her, is it?" Huge sigh. "Another one of those assignments. She'll get attached to me and I'll get attached to her and she'll get killed and I'll be used for shark bait..."

Woman: "No arguing! You will take this assignment or you will never taste the Elixir again. Decide quickly."

Long silence. Then man's voice filled with horror: "You'd cut me off?"

Woman: "Without a drop."

Man: "You know what would happen to me."

Woman: "I have a strong stomach."

Man: "You wouldn't dare cut me off. I have a public."

Woman: "Only as long as you stay active. If you choose to 'retire', you will have no need of the Elixir, will you?"

Man: "For God's sake, Brigitte, I'm sixty-five years old!"

Woman: "I am counting to three, Mr. Bond. One. Two. Thr..."

Man: "All right, I'll do it." Soft chuckling. Then the woman's voice sounding smug as a pregnant rabbit: "Your Elixir, Mr. Bond."

Guzzling sounds. Smacking lips and sigh.

Woman, briskly: "Now get dressed. You have a plane to catch. I will drive you to the airport."

Man: "I don't even get time to pack?"

Woman: "Your office has already packed for you -- many interesting things. I've heard they have a ball-point pen that not only acts as a long-range geiger counter, but can also spray a stream of highly acidic..."

Ms. Bartholomew hears a door opening somewhere down the hall and quickly slides towards the fire stairs. She waits there for something like ten minutes, holding the stair door open a crack and peeking down the corridor, all the time wondering what the hell she has got herself into. The first one-night-stand of Elizabeth Chelsea Bartholomew's life, and it turns out to be...nahh, forget it.

The door to Room 1007 opens and her previous evening's entertainment shuffles peevishly to the elevators, followed by a blonde for whom the word "sultry" may have been personally invented. The woman wears high high heels and red treader pants, but damned if she doesn't get away with it. Our heroine in the stairwell is properly envious. She amuses herself in fantasies of painful ways to kill the bitch.

The elevator arrives. Man and woman schlep and slink on, respectively. As soon as the door closes, our heroine emerges from the fire stairs and runs down to the room. Naturally, the two have locked the door behind them, her glasses are still inside, and she's going to be blind as bacon all day. She kicks the door, grimaces with pain (the score is door 1, toe 0), and hobbles down to catch another elevator.

NEXT: Elizabeth Chelsea Bartholomew continues her pursuit of the elusive spectacles and manages to get a slurp of the good stuff.

(cont'd from page 1)

Q: Should we give up hoping for an explanation of Buffalo Steak Tartare?
A: Not yet.

Q: What about letters?
A: We will include a letters column as soon as we have letters to print. Right now, the plan is to dedicate a fixed amount of space to letters, so we probably won't be able to print every letter we receive. We may also have to shorten long letters by only printing the juicy parts. Of course, every effort will be made to maintain the author's intent. NOTE: BST will not print feud letters or personal attacks. You're welcome to send in rebuttals to articles ("What do you mean, Dhalgren is the most brilliant book of the 20th century? Gag, oop, ack!!"), but keep it civilized. Ideally, letters should be entertaining too.

Q: What are the annual subscription rates?

A: 10 Canadian dollars for addresses in Canada, 10 U.S. dollars everywhere else. This pays for 10 issues. The issue you're holding is free, but you'll need a subscription to see any more. (Sounds like a kidnap note: "Pay up, or you'll never see Buffalo Steak Tartare again.")

Q: Can I give a gift subscription to someone?

A: Why not? We'll even send the lucky recipient a Christmas card...or a St. Patrick's Day card...or maybe something to commemorate the Feast of the Twelve Chimneys.

Q: Will you trade zine for zine?

A: We're reluctant to do that for a variety of reasons, so here's the general policy: we will not trade with North American zine publishers, but will trade issue for issue with publishers off the continent because the barter system is less complicated than international monetary exchange. Mind you, we're also happy to receive cold hard cash from any port of call...

Q: Should I look up Buffalo Steak Tartare in the dictionary?

A: You won't find it in the dictionary. You will find it at a restaurant in Banff, Alberta (Canada). Steak Tartare is chopped up uncooked filet mignon. Buffalo Steak Tartare is the same, only it uses buffalo meat instead of beef. (Buffaloes are no longer an endangered species in Canada -- they are protected by keeping them in National Parks, but the herds are culled every year to maintain a constant number of animals. The meat is sold to local abattoirs.) We ate at the Banff restaurant on

our honeymoon. Although we did not eat the Buffalo Steak Tartare, the name stuck in Linda's head, and later in the day she spontaneously sang,

Buffalo Steak Tartare are
Buffaloes ground up raw.
Aw!

Jim replied (spontaneously) with

Elephant cherry fizz is
Elephant trunk in red gunk.

This song turned out to be our first creative collaboration. The zine is another creative collaboration. There seems to be some kind of connection. The complete words and music for Buffalo Steak Tartare, our zine anthem, can be found on the back page.

---Linda Carson, Jim Gardner

PEOPLE

Many people have helped us smash the champagne bottle on the maiden issue of Buffalo Steak Tartare.

David Welbourne is a rabid Cosmic Encounter fan and Infocom guru. People who still haven't figured out how to get the Babel Fish in "Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" are invited to send inquiries.

John W. Bast takes three things seriously: beer, in pitchers; food, in quantity; and Robert A. Heinlein, in excess.

John McMullen is a noted Game Master and sadist. He is the only writer we know with the balls to show up at a mortuary and ask for a tour.

Ronald M. Green is one of the most agreeable people we know, and we're really sorry about the pain he suffered over his Greenhorn column. We honestly thought it was an easy assignment.

James Nicoll is co-owner of the games store Imperiums to Order in downtown Kitchener. James is currently "between wives", for which he compensates by taking care of two of the stupidest cats in the world.

Dave Till is the man who involved most of the BST staff in pennant fever as the Toronto Blue Jays marched forward towards the World Series. He is only now emerging from the trauma of their defeat.

William Hughes can best be described as "ordered chaos". A Ph.D. student in Applied Mathematics at the University of Waterloo, William is noted for his lucid prose style, his ability to compose clever song parodies, and his inability to sing same.

Steve Hutton is spiritual father and first subscriber to BST. He likes the game of Diplomacy because he thinks he has an honest face. If you send us enough money, we'll mail you a photograph of him and you can decide for yourself.

Linda Carson is co-founder of Buffalo Steak Tartare. She draws cartoons, lifts weights, and talks a lot about type fonts. As cooking editor of BST, she would be mortified if anyone found out that her favourite food is Kraft Dinner.

Jim Gardner composes and types in most of the editorial copy (like these write-ups). He plays piano, quotes Jung, and acts like a wall-flower at parties. Every now and then, he sends off stories to science fiction magazines to see if they've changed the format of their rejection letters.

Haberdashery is a rabbit who lives under the dining room table. His interests include Weetabix and sunflower seeds. As soon as he finishes chewing his way through the cardboard barrier, he will write an article describing what the living room looks like and what sort of adventures happen there.

buffalo steak tartare

Buffalo Steak Tartare is buffalo chopped up raw, and also a zine devoted to games and other amusements. The zine is published 10 times a year by Linda Carson and Jim Gardner. Subscription rate: \$10.00 per year (Canadian dollars for addresses in Canada, U.S. dollars elsewhere). All books/games are copyright/trademarked by their respective publishers/manufacturers. All material is copyright by the respective authors...and if you have respect for authors, you will not violate their copyright. Readers are cheerfully invited to submit articles, but be warned:

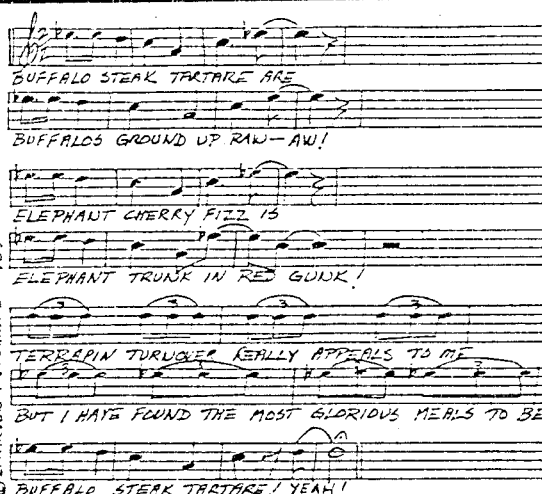
(a) We may not be able to publish everything we receive. Preference will be given to entertaining pieces that do not require "in" knowledge of a particular field. All articles should have character: your character.

(b) We will edit grammar problems, and in nationalistic fervour, will ruthlessly change words to our favoured Canadian spelling.

(c) The ideal manuscript is a clean typewritten double-spaced paginated photocopy (so that you're the only one who has to worry about losing the original).

(d) We will not be party to feuds or isms (sexism, racism, etc.).

(e) Contributions should not violate copyrights or trademarks. In



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reviews, recognition should be given to publishers, manufacturers, etc.

Articles may pertain to any aspect of leisure activity. If you have questions, write or phone us before you submit the piece. Payment will be two free issues of the zine. Frequent contributors will also receive dinner invitations to the BST Test Kitchen, where we promise not to serve Buffalo Steak Tartare. All correspondence should be sent to

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