

CLEAR ETHER!

Commentzine of Samuel Edward Konkin III for APA-NYU. Address all correspondence to
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ALONGSIDE PROBABILITY

The ex-science-fiction writer looked up at the alien. "Why me? Why not a hard-science pro?"

The quite-human alien acquired a quite-human look of puzzlement. "There's some other kind? This Probability Line is stranger than I thought. I sought an SF writer because you have no Broach technicians in this Line."

"Why not a *scientist*, schmuck?"

"I require an imaginative scientist to accept my reality . . . and my portable Broach." He held up a black box with white lettering. The only part comprehensible to the writer was "© L. Neil Smith 5 Anno Mises" and "On/Off."

"Hey, look, we got plenty of imaginative scientists at this Worldcon. You came to the right place. How about Jerry? He can introduce you to Feynman or Dyson or . . . Forward! That's who you need! Got a black hole in that box?"

The alien, probably male but with a David-Bowie like androgyny, appeared perplexed again. "Black hole? Aren't all holes black in your Line?"

"You better believe it, kid; especially producers. Ha, ha. Jeez, don't tell me you don't have producers where you come from? Must be paradise. How about agents?"

"Everyone must produce to eat and all need others to act as their agent in certain circumstance . . . but I note by your nuance and expression that your statements are intended for humour and not meaningful content. I will be glad to . . . reward? satisfy? remunerate? . . . you for your . . . energy? trouble? expense?"

"You're real! Hey, how does this brooch work?"

"Broach. The usual way; construct the universe you wish to enter in your mind and touch the contact *here*. Then throw the switch."

The writer noticed a door opening and several drunken pros and fans pouring into the suite. "Hey, this is a *private* party . . . damn! Look, if it works, why not shift into another Probability Line where they have Broach technicians? Or is it broken?"

"No, but it did malfunction. We are forbidden to

enter Lines which do not themselves have Broaches."

"Over here to my balcony. We'll avoid these yahoos and then I'll introduce you to . . . say, who's forbidding you? Cops? Interdimensional fuzz? Who makes your laws?"

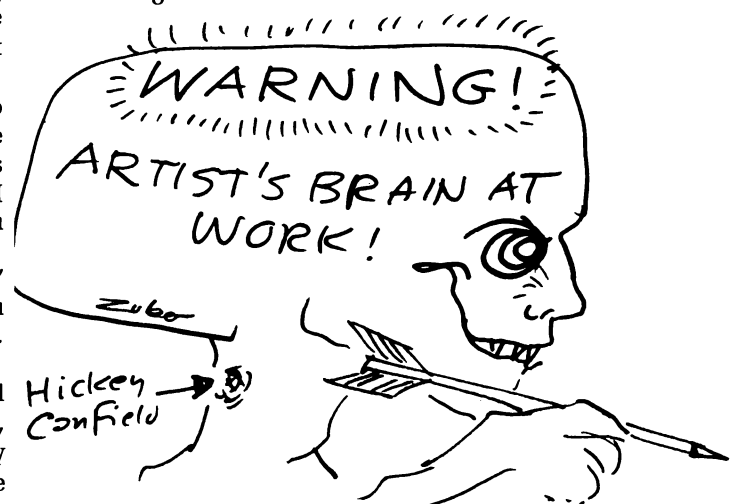
"Who makes law? Nature, of course. What else? What are you doing?"

The ex-SF writer grabbed the box and flipped the switch. The alien looked utterly dumbfounded as it was wrested from his grasp. "You . . . you violated my property?" He looked at the writer as if he were a freak.

Then the Demon had him. The writer looked at the balconies surrounding the courtyard and saw the worshippers and heard the whimper of whipped dogs. He exulted.

The alien refused to scream or call for help or even panic or pray. The last words the writer heard from him were, "Boy, did you blow it!" A moment later, the alien vanished.

The writer wondered how the alien had done that. Suddenly he realized that his demon was still there, hungry . . . and approaching his balcony. He touched the contact and briefly panicked as he couldn't decide where to go.



All artwork this issue by Bernie Zuber.

The demon was upon him.

The last place he wanted to go, he realized, was anyplace he had invented. He didn't want to be in a pancreas with a Howdy Doody button or screaming love...especially with no mouth! Where *could* he go safely?

And he was about to be irrevocably devoured. He flipped the switch.

The demon had transported with him! It was all over. "No," he screamed. "I'm too short to die!"

Something tickled the writer's mind, as if it were a passing thought. The demon was gone and he saw the galactic patrolman concentrating at his Lens, which probably was the instrument of exorcism. The writer moved to take a closer look at the Lens; from a distance it looked like a calculator watch but translucent and larger.

The Lensman looked up at him.

"My God, he's reading my thoughts!" thought the writer; and of course his most guilty ones, concerning his acquisition and recent attempt to dispose of its owner, surfaced. He prepared to transfer again—and was paralyzed by his choice: worlds like his with no justice or worlds with justice...which was the last thing he wanted.

The Lensman looked spaceward and the writer felt the upward tug of a laser-thin tractor beam yank the Broach. He had presence of mind to hold onto it for dear life, with both hands, eyes shut.

Inspiration finally hit him. He would create a perfect world for himself, one which would be safe yet not boring, just yet he could get away with anything, where everything worked...save him.

The tractor beam released having failed to reclaim the stolen property selectively and the writer plummeted to the ground. He realized that the world he wanted was impossible; the contradictions so obvious even to him that he couldn't project it seriously. His last hope was to create a nice, goody-two shoes universe where all was peace and love and happy except maybe him...

And found he could not write a story like that to save his life.

THE END

WORLDCON GREETINGS

It occurs to me that it's been a long time since I've written anything like the above for APA-v. This seemed like a good way to start off a new volume of **CLEAR ETHER!** and our potential new members here at Noreascon II would probably not be too interested in the mailing comments which begin immediately below. So there's something for everyone. In fact, I may run it through some other APAs.

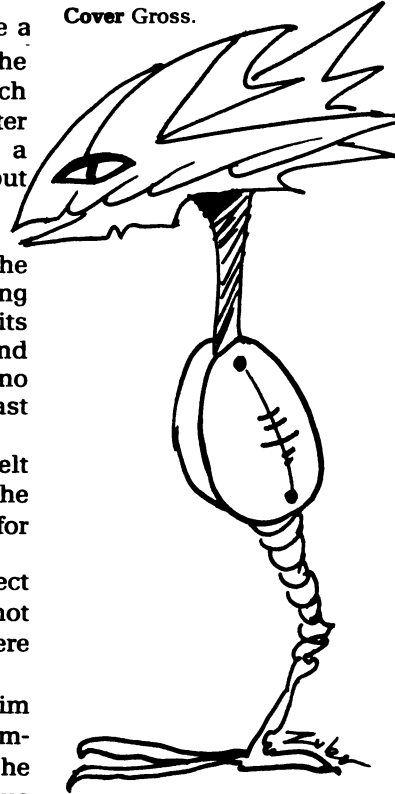


EN GARDE AT THE RIPOSTE OFFICE

APA-NYU 56

I can't believe it; I could have sworn I was six months behind only last month, caught up on three disties, and now I'm nine months behind! Here goes.

Cover Gross.



APA-News Are you making pink a tradition?

Jeff Grimshaw "Albert Fish" is a downer, but verges on the publishable. Consider submitting any more of this in the pro market. ¶ Not my poetry. ¶ Your *Time Enough For Lunch* parody had Neil in stitches and he's still exclaiming, "Hubba! Hubba!" when an endowed female passes in view. I'll never forgive you. ¶ "Surprise Party Problems" sure has. Someday, lo these many years, you'll tell me Why. ¶ (Ct Adam Gittleman) This is the Masterpiece of smart-ass answers, a true classic. Ghod, I'm glad I was never your Leader or in any position of authority over you.

Richard Friedman It seems strange putting that name there after so long. ¶ Can't wait to

split an omelette with Phil again. ¶ Charlie and Myra sound like they met the fate of the protagonists of *American Graffiti*. Hey, I don't remember running into them at SunCon. Any chance at Noreascon II? A "meat toaster oven?" Explain. ¶ You catalyzed Rosemarie's conversion. Shame. Who else do you know who would do something like that? ¶ What? No more NYUSFS aftermeetings at Hammer's?" ¶ Meinshausen sounds as sleazy as ever. ¶ Ira works for the State? No wonder he's too ashamed to keep in touch with me. Tell him I'll talk to him anyways. ¶ What review of Neil's book next issue? (Or any of the following nine.) Neil's waiting. ¶ Curley's moved on to computer-related work, text editors and such. ¶ Silver got out just in time! (In my anarchocircles, I'm used to saying someone got out of silver just in time.) ¶ I ran into Bill Miller (the libertarian one) at the LP's con last year. He re-subscribed to NL. Still living in Manhattan. ¶ Best wishes to all the rest. You left you and me out and the Moved Spirit. Significant? ¶ C.P. Snow is into Yiddish? ¶ Robert L. Forward worked out Time Travel in theory in May's *Omni*. The rest is engineering. ¶ (Ct me!!!) Take time, space, taste and whatever else you need and write. **Judy**, chain the kosher trufan down and make him put out! More!

Marc S. Glasser Great illo; you are the Old Last Year but who's the kid? ¶ Mike Jurist got married? Pass on my congratulations. (It should arrive in time for their anniversary.) ¶ (Ct Fred's ct Mike G.) Ergot rot, perhaps. ¶ (Ct Donna) So what if people kept singing Carldon songs or telling Carldon jokes; if he changed, those that mattered would know and accept him accordingly. The point is that his "behavior" slops over into the fraudulent (coercive) and *that* can get him dead. ¶ Actually, I've seen *faanish* with a few as two as, but three is safest. ¶ (Ct Adam) Holding Philcons outside Philadelphia sounds like almost as much an improvement as holding New York cons outside of OI' NYC.

VOTE FOR NOBODY!