Number Two ** April 1981

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* LISTEN TO THE SILENCE by Earl Geier</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* SHIPS by Dave Heath and Jerry Collins</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* WORD PAGE</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* FLYING THE HOLLOW CITY by Earl Geier</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LISTEN TO THE
NEGATIVE. NOT WITH THE SECOND PROBE DISABLED. RETURN TO THE TRUCK--WILL THOUGHTCAST IF NEEDED.
RECEIVED.
SILENCE
STORY AND ART BY EARL GEIER
RECENT DISCOVERIES CONCERNING THE MIND HAVE GIVEN US THE KEY TO DEVELOPING THE BRAIN'S LATENT PSIONIC POWERS. LIMITED EXPERIMENTS WITH TELEPATHY HAVE YIELDED POSITIVE RESULTS...

SO, FOR INSTANCE, A PERSON WITH ESP COULDN'T JUST WALK BY MY HOUSE AND "SPY" INTO MY MIND WITHOUT MY CONSENT?

NO, IT'S A MATTER OF HAVING THE EQUIPMENT TO RECEIVING IT TUNED TO SPEAK...

SO ONE MINDREADER WALKS UP TO ANOTHER ONE ON THE STREET, AND HE SAYS "OH YEAH? WELL, THE SAME TO YOU, FELLA!"

NO VISUAL CONTACT FOR FOUR HOURS. POSSIBILITY OF EVASION, SIR?

POSSIBLE—PROBABLE THAT HE IS STILL RUNNING AHEAD OF US.

HE HAS BEEN ON THE MOVE NOW FOR NEAR TWO DAYS. HE WILL NOT LAST MUCH LONGER IN THIS HEAT.

HE MUST BE A VERY DETERMINED MAN, TO KEEP GOING THIS LONG. IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO SCAN HIM.

IF YOU COULD SCAN HIM WE WOULD NOT BE OUT IN THIS HEAT CHASING HIM.

SIR, YOU HAVE BEEN AROUND NORMS IN THE CAMPS, AND BEFORE... HOW CAN ONE KNOW THEN, WITHOUT SCANNING?

WELL, ORAL SPEECH PROVIDES FACTS, AND SUGGESTS EMOTIONAL CONTENT, WHICH IS SUPPLEMENTED BY PHYSICAL MANNERISMS...
YES SIR, I LEARNED THAT IN SCHOOL. BUT IT SEEMS SO INEFFICIENT A MODE OF COMMUNICATION.

VERY, THAT IS WHY WE ARE HUNTING HIM INSTEAD OF THE OTHER WAY AROUND.

SIR--GREEN SECTION REPORTING.
DISCOVERED BOOTMARKS UP HERE IN THE HILLS.

EXCELLENT. ALL AUXILIARIES MOVE TO BACK UP GREEN. OTHERS CONTINUE RANDOM SEARCH.

YEAR: 1998

THEY'VE BEGUN WORK ON CODING THE ACCESS CHANNELS OF THE MIND... SORT OF A "YELLOW PAGES" OF MENTAL ADDRESSES.

"LET YOUR FRONTAL LOBES DO THE WALKING," RIGHT, BOB?

HA-HA! THAT'S RIGHT, JOAN!

YEAR: 2002

THEN IT'S TRUE, DOCTOR THAT SOME PEOPLE WILL BE UNABLE TO DEVELOP PSI POWERS?

APPARENTLY SO. PERHAPS 70% OF THE POPULATION LACK THE FACILITY.

SEEM LET THE DOCTOR THROUGH!

CANT OUTRUN THEM... IM ABOUT DONE IN...

RAT HAVE TO REST... HIDE... THEY'LL MISS ME...

A CREVICE! LOOKS LIKE ENOUGH ROOM FOR ME!

THIS COULD BE IT! RAT
YEAR: 2003
ATTACKED THREE STUDENTS WHO
REPORTEDLY POSSESSED ESP FACILITY.
APPARENTLY THEY WERE SITTING QUIETLY.
"COMMUNICATING" WHEN A PANIC, SOME SORT
OF CONSPIRACY DELUSION" SWEEP THROUGH
THE NORMAL PEOPLE AROUND THEM IN
THE PARK! THIS IS NOT THE
FIRST REPORTED...

YEAR: 2004

THE FACT REMAINS THERE IS
A FEAR OF ESPS—UNFOUNDED
PERHAPS, BUT THERE! THIS ID
PROGRAM IS ONLY A TEMPORARY
MEASURE, UNTIL A MORE THOROUGH
STUDY CAN BE MADE.

I WAS SIX YEARS OLD
WHEN TRAINING BEGAN
NATIONWIDE. MY BEST
FRIEND LACKED THE
POTENTIAL.

HE IS IN A CAMP, AT
CLINTON. WE STILL
TALK ONE IN A
WHILE.

STILL, I WOULD
LIKE TO HAVE SOME
IDEA OF WHAT
THEY ARE REALLY
LIKE.

HE WAS A BETTER
ATHLETE—BETTER
IN SCHOOL.

NORMS ARE JUST LIKE US
EXCEPT FOR GENETIC CHANCE.
BUT THEY CANNOT FUNCTION
IN SOCIETY AS IT IS NOW,
AND THERE IS NO ROOM FOR
THEM EXCEPT AT THE EDGE,
IN CAMP.

DARWIN'S EVOLUTION--
NOT OVER AEONS,
BUT DECADES.

BUT DARWIN NEVER
KNEW THOSE LEFT
BEHIND.

MY ADVICE IS NOT
THINK ABOUT IT IF
YOU CAN HELP IT.
WE'VE GOT TO FIND A ROCK WE CAN MOVE! WE'LL COVER UP THE HOLE — THEY'LL NEVER SEE US!

HERE! THIS STONE'S LOOSE!
WE'LL REST THEN. I WAS ABOUT FINISHED.
MOST OF US ARE INTERNED, OR HIDING... IT'S HARD TO KEEP GOING ALONE, BUT...

HEY! DON'T SHOOT!
I GIVE UP!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
NO!

Meyer, a normal, was attacked and slain as the thought circulated that he was the sniper who had slain two ESP officials earlier. Later there was evidence that exonerated him. We have eyewitnesses standing by in our studio to thought—cast their view of today's events.

NORMS SHOULD BE INTERNED FOR THEIR OWN PROTECTION. THE FACT THAT THEY CANNOT BE "READ" IS A NUISANCE, A DISRUPTING INFLUENCE, AND A POTENTIAL DANGER TO OUR SOCIETY.

SIR, KIRK HERE. YOUNG WOMAN COMING DOWN FROM THE HILLS.

ANYONE UNDERSTAND HER?
NOT ME.

SIR, REQUEST ASSISTANCE. WOMAN IS VERBALIZING TOO FAST FOR US TO FOLLOW.

ORAL WAS MY WORST SUBJECT!
I'VE HAD IT... I'LL GO WITH YOU...

WHICH DIRECTION DID OVER THOSE ROCKS?

I'VE BEEN HIDING IN THE HILLS... LIVING IN A CAVE... THE MAN YOU'RE AFTER IS UP THERE.

PLEASE—I GIVE UP!

I THOUGHT SUBJECT WAS SOLO.
AFFIRMATIVE TO ALL REPORTS.
LOOKS NOT!
Can anyone down there understand me?

Behind those rocks up there, sir. No visual yet.

All units hold back. Do not spur him.

He must be tired of running by now! He might talk himself down.

I understand you!

Come out! You will not be injured! You will be treated well!

Internment? Is that your idea of good treatment? To lock us away like freaks?

We're not gonna be thrown out like old shoes!

We did pretty well all these years, us freaks!

We demand the abolition of the internment policy! We demand representation in government!

Free access to travel! Equal opportunity of employment!

Fascinating the way the sounds are put together to communicate data... so imprecise though... amazing it ever worked as well as it did.

Would you call this a typical example of speaking, sir?

No, not of normal conversation. This is more like a speech—more formal...

Sir! Reminder: he is armed!

Yes... but he is not up there anymore.
GIVE IT TO ME STRAIGHT DOCTOR, I'M NO ASTRO SCIENTIST...

WELL SENATOR HIS RAMBO'S PROJECT, SO I WON'T SHOOT IT FULL OF HOLES YET...

IN THE SECRET SUB-HANGAR BASE AT THE NORTHAM LIGG DEFENSE SHIPING BUILDING PLANT, LOS ALTOS...

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FIRST ION-DRIVE...

SCRIPT AND INKS: DAVID HEATH PENCILS AND IDEA JERRY COLLINS

BUT A THING THIS SIZE SHOULDN'T BEEN BUILT IN SPACE TOO BIG

YOU KNOW THE SOLVATE IS TOO FRAGILE TO BUILD IT IN SPACE...
WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE NORTHAM STRANGLE-HOLD ON THE FLEET IN SPACE. THEY RUN THE DEFENSE ARM!

AGREED, BUT THE AMERICANS HAVE THE PETRO-DOLLARS, AND THAT BUILDS THE SHIPS... THEY CALL THE SHOTS!

YES, BUT THE SOLVATE WAS FORMED TO PROMOTE WORLD CO-OPERATION. HOW CAN WE DO THAT WHEN OUR SHIPS ALL FLY AMERICAN FLAGS?

YES IT'S PRETTY BLATANT IF WE ONLY HAD SHIP YARDS IN GERMANY OR ENGLAND... WE ARE SO STRAPPED TO NORTHAM...

THIS HAS GOT TO BE BROUGHT TO A HEAD IF WE PUT IT TO A DEBATE, MARS WILL START THE SECESSION MOVE AGAIN!

THESE NATIONALIST POLICIES WILL KILL SPACE EXPLORATION IF WE DON'T SETTLE THEM DOWN...

IF THEY HAVEN'T ALREADY, BE READY FOR ANYTHING IN GENERAL DEBATE.

THIS WAY SENATOR... THERE'S MORE.

THE THING IS HUGE. RAMBARD IS CRAZY!!

MAKE IT QUICK DOC. I GOTTA JET TO THE USS SWISS MEET.

YES SIR, WELL THE ASTRO-LAB IS HERE.

WITH MARS KICKING ABOUT FUNDS, WE'LL NEED FACTS. USS THinks WE'RE BUILDING & SHIPS.

SIR THIS WILL SHOW YOU WHY WE MUST SUCCEED.

HELLO DOCTOR SENATOR... WELL?

JOHN SHOW US WHAT YOU HAVE.

RIGHT SIR I'LL HAVE TO DIM THE LIGHTS.
Deep in space, out system beyond Pluto orbit a secret Solvate 2 ship patrol, consisting of the USS Impulse and Antares, nears its objective...
YOU'RE RIGHT, IT'S THE TWO SHIP PATROL ON SECRET MISSION. GIMME VIS CODE 3

YES SIR

THIS IS INCREDIBLE! THAT CAN'T BE A... SHIP, IT'S...

GOOD GOD!

THERE THEY'VE BEEN BURNED SIR...

USS HEADQUARTERS IN THE SWISS ALPS...

THAT THING JUST BURN'T TWO FRONT LINE CRUISERS. GET SPAC FLEET LUNA ON LINE...

TERMINATE DEEP SPACE MESSAGE RE ANTIPAR

SEND ROGER

IN GENERAL DEBATE...

GENTLEMEN, THE MARZ DELAEGATION ZUZZIEZ, NORTHAM OF THE GRANZZ COLLUZION! AND IF TRUE, MARZ WILL ZECEED FROM THE ZOLVATE!!

NORTHAM OBJECTS... THEY...

SENATOR, SIT DOWN!

HELL, MARZ KNOWS SO WHAT?

NORTHAM
SENATOR, IT WOULD BE BETTER IF THEY KNEW, ALL OF THIS SECRECY IS DESTROYING...

LISTEN, IF THEY WERE TO KNOW THE TRUTH, THEY'D GET MAD AND CUT THE FUNDS THEN YOUR PRECIOUS PROJECT WOULD GO DOWN THE DRAIN!

I'M FINISHED ANYWAY.

NORTHAM ALREADY.

THE FOOL...

WE'LL HAVE ORDER! NOW NORTHAM HAS THE FLOOR TO ANSWER THE CHARGES OF AN AKIN OF MARS...

YES SIR, I'M SENATOR, BAKER OF WASHINGTON AND I'LL ANSWER...

WHY...? WE'RE NOT READY YET.

THIS CAN'T GO ON, SENATOR, OUR DECEIT IS KILLING THE SOLVATE!

I'LL KILL YOU RAMDAR!

STOP HIM!

SIR, YOU'LL HAVE TO DROP THE WAFFLE... DON'T LET HIM BE STOPPED, THE DISGRACE TO NORTHAM... WHAT IS THE MEANING OF ALL THIS?!

MR. CHAIRMAN, I'M DR. RAMDAR, I WISH TO MAKE A REPORT ON A PROJECT UNDER MY CONTROL AT THE NORTHAM DEFENSE BASE.

IF IT WILL SHED ANY LIGHT ON THIS SITUATION.

I NEED THESE VISUALS PUT IN THE BANK.
AHH... ALL IS IN READINESS THERE...

IM DRAMAR OF THE NORTHAM SHIP YARDS RESEARCH SECTION. SHIP DESIGNS...

I'VE HEARD OF HIM...

WHAT?

CONSPIRACY...

GENTLEMEN!! LADIES!! PLEASE, IT IS TRUE THE DISCOVERY BY NORTHAM SCOUTS WAS KEPT SECRET. BUT OUR INTENT WAS HONEST; WE HAD TO KNOW WHAT WE HAD BEFORE RELEASING INFO.

THE POSSIBILITIES WERE UNLIMITED OF COURSE, THE SIZE OF THE SHIP WAS SMALL... THE SIZE OF A TRAIN. BUT IT CONTAINED TECHNOLOGICAL MARVELS BEYOND COMPREHENSION...

TESTS AT YUMA PLAT'S ARIZONA REVEALED THE CREW, DEAD FOR SOME THOUSANDS OF YEARS, WAS HUMAN-LIKE IN SOME ASPECTS, SMALL AND THERE WERE THREE OF THEM...

THE CONTROLS ON THE SHIP WERE WAY TOO SMALL AND COMPLEX TOO UNRAVEL...

BUT THE PROPULSION SYSTEM, THAT WAS FOUND TO BE VERY UNUSUAL...

BASED ON THE CONVERSION OF IONS CAPTURED IN SPACE TO ANTI-MATTER TACIONS, THEY HAD UNLIMITED POWER AND TRANS-LIGHT SPEED.

COLLECTOR CELLS

ANTI-MATTER CONVERTERS

TACIONS

TRANS-LIGHT SPEED

GAINED BY THE PRODUCTION OF TACIONS WHICH SLOW TO C IN THEIR NATURAL STATE, THEORIZED TO MOVE UP TO 10^9C.
IT WAS NOT MY DECISION AS THE PROJECT HEAD. THE SECRET ORDERS CAME FROM THE US CONGRESS AFTER A DISTURBING REPORT WAS ISSUED.

IT WAS SOON FOUND THAT THE "ION CRUSH" ENGINE, AS WE CALL IT, COULD PULSE REARWARD AS AN ENGINE...

WHY WERE WE SURE, BUT FOR SOME REASON, THE ALIENS HAD A SHIP THAT WAS BOTH AN EFFECTIVE TRANSPORT AND A PLANET-WRECKING WEAPON. WE THEORIZED THAT IF SCALABLE TO ITS MAXIMUM SIZE, THE ION CRUSH EFFECT COULD ARM A LARGE USS FLEET UNMATCHED BY ANYTHING IN HISTORY.

FASTER THAN OUR FRONT LINE DESTROYER, IT WAS OUR DREAM TO BUILD A HUGE ION CRUSH SHIP 3 TO 5 TIMES THE SIZE OF A DESTROYER. IF WE COULD PRESENT THE USS WITH A WORKING PROTOTYPE, WE KNEW THE SOLLITE WOULD ACCEPT IT OUTRIGHT. THE SECRET PROJECT "LOS ANGELES" STARTED IN JUNE.

TO ACCOMPLISH THIS, WE DIVERTED THE USS DEFENSE FUNDS FOR THE LAST EIGHT CURISERS... THE USS LOS ANGELES, THE FIRST ION CRUSH SHIP IS NARROW COMPLETE...
BOSS OF DEFENSE RESEARCH: TALK TO ME ABOUT LOS ALTOS, NORTHAM.

SIR, THE CREW OF 1000 PERSONNEL ARE GLEN IN ALIEN SPACE. NOT ONE PERSONNEL COULD EVER RETURN TO EARTH.

BOS: DR. RAND, VENGEANCE.

DO YOU HAVE THE WEAPONS READY? THE WEAPON IS NOT YET PROGRAMMED FULLY.

SIR: WE MEASURED THE ORBIT.

BOS: WE MEASURED THE ORBIT. THE SHIP WILL BE DESTROYED.

SIR: I SAY WE PROTEST.

BOS: YOU ARE RIGHT.

BOS: PROTEST OUT OF THE LADIES.

BOS: MEDAL A SCIENCE GENIUS!

SIR: THE MOTHER OF ALIENSHIP IS ONE OF OUR Defenses.

BOS: WE MUST REPORT THIS NOW.

SIR: WE MUST REPORT THIS NOW.

BOS: I HAVE REFERRED THE MESSAGE TO THE LOS ANGELES DEFENSE LINE.

SIR: WE MUST TAKE RESPONSIBILITY.

SIR: WE MUST TAKE RESPONSIBILITY.

BOS: THIS MIGHT BE THE END OF NORTHAM.
IN SPACE...

AS WE APPROACH... WE WILL FIRE THE ANTI-MATTER DEVICE. THEN TWO WILL REPLY...

TARGET

OKAY, BREAK INTO YOUR TWO WAVES

GOT MY TARGET CAL IS ON... PINE... GO

NO EFFECT SIR!

R.O.G. Evasive action, all ships stand by for...

BACK ON EARTH... But I CAN DO IT. IT'S MERELY AN EXTENDED YOGA MEDITATION WITH...

LOOK BILL, I'M BEGINNING WITH MY SPECIAL TRAINING. THIS IS MY LAST CHANCE TO GET INTO SPACE... IT'S DRIVING ME CRAZY. YOU'RE...

JOHN, COL. HARMON, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE... THE CAPTAIN HAS BEEN FIXED AS THE TWO AND COMPUTER THING IS FIXED...

DON'T YOU SEE SIR, BY DIRECT IMPLANT... I WON'T NEED A COMPUTER...

I SEE THAT JOHN! DAMMIT! BUT YOU DON'T HAVE ANY LEGS!!
SO IT'S THAT AGAIN...

I'M SORRY JOHN BUT THIS CALLS FOR A MAN OF EXTRAORDINARY STRENGTH. A WHOLE MAN, THE ARTIFICIAL LEGS ARE GOOD BUT.

GENERAL RAND, THE CRAFT DESTROYED THE WHOLE TASK FORCE, NOT A SHIP SURVIVED. IT'S TO THE BELT NOW!

GENERAL! COULD I HAVE THE LOS ANGELES UP IN TWO DAYS OR LESS!

How?

WHEN I'M IN COMMAND OF THE SHIP WITH AUTHORITY TO USE MY DIRECT INFLIGHT PROCESS, I'LL TELL YOU HOW SIR!

GENERAL! IT'LL TAKE A WEEK TO REACH THE ALIEN AND SAVE MARS

ORDER OF SPACE MARINES

WELL NOW... COL. HARMON, YOU LEAVE ME VERY LITTLE CHOICE EH? YOU HAVE ALL ASSETS AT YOUR DISPOSAL OF COURSE. DON'T FAIL...

YES SIR!

COMMON DOC. I'M GONNA NEED TO FIND SOME BUMPS AND A BRAIN SURGEON.

WHAT THE UH YES SIR AS YOU WISH.

SEE DOC. I'LL BE HOOKED DIRECTLY TO THE SHIP. I WON'T NEED LEGS!!

TWO DAYS LATER...

THIS IS INCREDIBLE. HE'S ACTUALLY DOING IT!

HE'LL NEVER GET IT INTO ORBIT! TOO HEAVY...

CODE RED: CERNOS
DR. HARMON! WHY AREN'T YOU MOVING THE ENEMY? COME ON! WHAT THE HELL! NO RESPONSE.

SOME KIND OF MALFUNCTION...

YOU FOOLS!

THIS SHIP IS ME! I HAVE THE BODY OF A GOD! AND I CAN DESTROY!!!

HARMON HAS GONE INSANE. IT WAS TOO MUCH FOR HIS MIND. HE CONTROLS ALL FUNCTIONS ON THAT SHIP TOO...

The crew will have to disconnect him. I'll radio the maintenance section to cut Harmon out of the circuit...

AND THAT'S HOW IT MUST BE DONE. UNDERSTAND?

DONT REPEAT! HARMON MIGHT OVERHEAR, DO IT!

YES SIR, COMON, ZEKE WE GOT WORK!

ROGER SARG.

A WEEK LATER...

962 DEEP PROBE 1 MARS R2

THAT TEARS IT. WE HAVE NOT HEARD FROM THE LOS ANGELES IN 5 DAYS. THE ALIEN SHIP IS IN MARS ORBIT NOW!

LURING HARMON OUT MUST HAVE DISABED THE SHIP. WE'RE DEFENSELESS.
BUT IN SPACE

ON BOARD...

HE'S CRAZY... WE'RE MOVIN' FAST MARS AT WARP-5!

HE ALWAYS CRAZY MAJOR.

SO WHY'D YOU HOOK HARMON BACK UP THEN?

OKAY... GET READY... THE ALIENSHIP IS MOVING IN... I DON'T KNOW THE COMMANDERS' PLAN...

NO! NO! NOT MY SHIP... NO!

DEFLECTORS!!

NOW MY CHILDREN, I'M REVERSING THRUST... WE GIVE THEM OUR ENGINE AT FULL REVERSE.

YES SIR.

HE'S GONE MAD AGAIN!

WE'RE TAKING A DIRECT HIT!

ON EARTH...

WHAT IS IT?!

SOME KIND OF NOVA?
Look! The alien ship is gone! Could it be... yes! The Los Angeles is on station. She did it... destroyed the alien with a reverse pulse.

Somehow that crew did it... we'll fire 'em home for full honors. They're bloody heroes.

One week later in transit and Earth orbit.

What lak Refuless to let me board? You've got a mission hooked up again right?

Correct sir.

He says, you can't come on board till you get your 'space legs' sir...

This is the USS Defense Flag Network. General Rand requests permission to board Los Angeles.

Names that have become household words. USS Texas, USS New Jersey, USS American Valhalla, and the USS Country Doctor. And 250 more make up the now legendary Solvateion Crush fleet. There is no known defense against a reverse pulse. Of its guns, giving it free run from NC-27 to Trocyon. Its captains are a special breed. Very unstable prone to go any minute.

The Los Angeles was lost in battle over Earth during the Cyborg Wars 2145.

The End.
Welcome to the second issue of BALD EGO CARTOON STORIES. Thanks to all who bought the first issue and shame on those who didn’t (you can still redeem yourself; see below).

***

I had hoped to keep close to a schedule of three issues a year. Thanks to printer foulups and later apathy and despair this issue, which was ready last October, is finally being printed eleven months after the first issue by a new printer. Hopefully I will get one or two more issues done this year.

***

I had also hoped to vary the contributors to this issue more, but a quick glance at the contents page will show the magazine is still mostly me, with another good story by Dave Heath, this time around in collaboration with the pencils of Jerry Collins (you can catch more of Jerry’s work on the strip “Trufan Adventures” in the Buyers Guide, as well as in Dave’s No-Sex magazine).

***

Letters of comment are welcome, especially those overflowing with praise. Constructive criticism will be tolerated as long as you say something nice, too. Helpful hint: postcards are twelve cents to send, and if you write small or type you can fit a lot in.

***

Contributions for future issues are wanted. Bald Ego is always looking for good cartoon stories. Subject matter is open; science fiction, fantasy, superhero, humor, crime, horror—anything. One unshakable qualification is that the story must have DEPTH! It should not just be an excuse for pretty artwork. I’ll be glad to explain further if you drop me a line. If you send any unsolicited art or samples that need to be returned you must send return postage. Bald ego pays a big $2 for each page, which is more than most fanzines and a bit less than Heavy Metal or Epic.

***

Bald Ego number three will emerge this summer, depending not so much on money as on the availability of good material. August/September is a good target date.

***

Send all money, stories, samples, money, inquiries, letters and money to: Earl Geier, 2114 North Hamlin Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60647. Phone: (312) 227-6318
IT'S A GOOD THING I GOT UP HERE EARLY. I'LL HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO REST AFTER CLIMBING ALL THOSE STAIRS. SHAME THERE AIN'T A WAY TO GET THE ELEVATORS WORKING AGAIN.

VINCE'LL PROBABLY GET TO HIS PLACE LATE. HE'LL BE TIRED. THAT'LL HELP ME SOME.

HE'LL'VE HAD A COUPLE OF DRAGS OUT OF ONE OF DEAN'S JUSS TOO, IF I KNOW VINCE. THAT'S GOOD AND BAD FOR ME. GOOD THAT HE'LL BE STUPID TO TRY SOME CRAZY STUNTS... BAD 'CAUSE HE MIGHT GET LUCKY WITH ONE.

MAYBE I SHOULD CHECK MY EQUIPMENT AGAIN. NO GOOD SITTING HERE THINKING ABOUT...

A NOISE...

WHAAAA... WHO'S THERE?!

SHELIA!

GUS?
FIRST THOUGHT THAT CROSSED MY MIND WAS
AMBUSH! BUT NOT HER... SHE WOULDN'T...

MY SECOND WAS I WAS GLAD TO SEE HER.

HOW DID YOU FIND ME?

I SAW YOU LEAVE YOUR FAMILY AND
FOLLOWED YOU HERE. I'VE BEEN GOING
FROM FLOOR TO FLOOR.

VINCE'LL BEAT THE CRAP OUTA YOU IF HE FINDS
OUT YOU WERE HERE.

HE WON'T.

AND I DON'T CARE IF HE DOES...

MY FIGHT WITH VINCE SEEMED
FURTHER AND FURTHER AWAY...

ANYWAY, I'M GLAD YOU CAME.

I COULDN'T HELP IT.

I LIKE YOU.
YOU'RE DIFFERENT
FROM THE OTHERS.

NOT THAT DIFFERENT...
Laying here... it all seems so distant... like a story about someone else.

Hard to realize that in awhile Vince... or me, will be dead.

Sheila and me had just kinda fallen in together. We were both loners, the odd ones... we had screwed around a bit—no one thought much of that kinda thing. But we figured out there was more between us than fooling around. That’s when Vince started burning...

Who did this to you? Who?

That bastard! I’ll kill him! I’ll...

Don’t, it doesn’t matter...

Vince... he told me not to come near you.

Vince and me had hung around together as kids... played together, hunted for food. I always tried to be like him. Somewhere I don’t know when, things went sour between us... we picked at each other... did a lot of growling... it all blew up yesterday.

I said keep your stinking hands off her!

You go to hell! In my family things go my way!

Don’t worry. We’ll figure something out.

Vince was from a different family than me. He was the closest of us not counting the few adults left. He never noticed Sheila till we got it on. It was me that ticked him off—nothing to do with her. We went at it right there but Sid spoke up.

What minute! You guys want to do each other.

Yeah.

You’re both flies about a duel.

Aight.

Sid?

Right! You got it!

Yeah!

Anytime sucker!

Good as shit.

That seemed real popular with everyone but Vince ‘n me! I’d seen a fight like that once. My stomach knotted at the thought, and Vince’s face went white! But there was no way to back out, and Vince looked worse than I felt. So...

Sid is okay, but it sure wasn’t my health he was tokin’ about. When he spoke up since the city fell all here was to do was to stay alive and fight boredom, and the best way to fight boredom was to spike things up abit. Sid sure did that.

Tomorrow?

Right?

Aight!
MY "HOUSE" WAS A WAREHOUSE OUTSIDE THE OLD CITY. MY "FAMILY" WAS JUST A BUNCH OF FOLKS WHO DRIFTED TOGETHER DURING THE TROUBLES. SOME OF US ARE RELATED...

WHERE'RE YOU GOING?
OUT.

YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO LOOK FOR FOOD TODAY!
I'LL LOOK...

YOU STAY AWAY FROM THAT CITY!
SO, WHERE'RE YOU GOING?
OUT!

MY DAD HAD BEEN IN THE ARMY. HE DESERTED THE DAY BEFORE HIS COMPANY WAS SHIPPED UP TO THE ATOMIC WARS. I SAW THE LION ON ONE OF THE POWER SATELLITES.

YOU LISTEN TO ME, YOUNG FOLKS. AND THERE'S A BUNCH OF SOLDIERS FROM THE TOWERS. I'LL GRAVE YOU TO LOOK FOR FOOD OR THE FACTORIES!

AND THERE'S A BUNCH OF SOLDIERS IN THAT CITY! YOU'LL GET SICK IF YOU GO THERE!

DON'T SMART TALK ME! I'M TELLING YOU AFTER YOUR OWN GOOD!

AREN'T MANY AROUND MY DAD'S AGE NOT AFTER THE WARS AND TROUBLES. MOSTLY KIDS... SOME OLDER FOLKS, LIKE GRAMPA.

GRAMPA WAS DIFFERENT. HE'S OLD... OLDER. HE'LL ADMIT IT. I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE MADE IT THROUGH THE TROUBLES. HE AIN'T THE TYPE TO BACK AWAY FROM ANYTHING!

WHERE'RE YOU GOING, GUS?
OUT... TO THE CITY.

GRAMPA HAS A WAY OF MAKIN' IT EASY TO TALK TO HIM. I SUPPOSE IT'S OKAY TO HEAR MORE THAT WAY.

YOUR PA MEANS WELL, GUS. YOU GONNA BE CAREFUL WHERE YOU STEP!

GRAMPA WAS DIFFERENT, HE'S OLD... OLDER. HE'LL ADMIT IT. I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE MADE IT THROUGH THE TROUBLES. HE AIN'T THE TYPE TO BACK AWAY FROM ANYTHING!

WHAT IS IT, GUS?
NOTHING... MUCH... IT'S THAT GARSON KID, VINCE, AIN'T IT?

YOUR EARS ARE STILL REAL GOOD GRAMPA. I'LL BE CAREFUL...

HE WATCHES THINGS ALL THE TIME. IT'S LIKE HE CAN READ MINDS. HE DON'T MISS MUCH.

YEAH... A LITTLE TROUBLE.

UNH-HUNH, OKAY. BUT WATCH HIM. HE AIN'T MUCH OF A PERSON.

AND YOU'RE JUST STARTIN' TO BE A SHAME TA CUT THAT SHORT.

DON'T WORRY, I'LL BE BACK...

YOU TWO'VE BEEN BURNING HOUSES IN EACH OTHER FOR SOME TIME NOW.

I CAN HANDLE IT.
Do you need any help?

No, I'll manage. I usually have to do it myself.

She stopped to stare out the windows at the towers, to look at them. They don't seem special—just bigger than most.

It's what they are that matters.

What kind of people do you think they are?

Lousy! The bastards who caused the troubles and were the first to run.

That's what Grampa says, anyway.

While the city got worse, they shifted everything they needed into the towers. And when the world started going to hell, they went in and locked up, taking in only those that met their standards. Only choices for everyone left was the army, the factories, or scratchin' in the city.

I wonder what they think when they look out their windows.

A few blocks over I could see the smoke rising over Mart Street. It was about time.

You'd better get going; they'll be looking for you down there.

Okay.

Gus...

What about afterwards?

They think it's a shame the riots and the plagues didn't kill us all cause we louse up their view.

Afterwards? Well, if I lose, it won't be my problem. Don't talk that way, just kidding.

I don't know...

Maybe just take Vince's place?

I don't know.

I always thought of you as different, like you were looking for something better.

Yeah...? That's what Grampa thinks, too.
Oh MAN! There ain't NOTHIN' like this.

I PULLED AT THE WIRE LINES TO BRING THE ROPE DOWN AND LEVEL OFF.

There's Vince-he'll start circling now... enter Mart Street from the far end.

Mart Street might've been MADE for flying. Three blocks straight with buildings cutting off either side between the sunlight on one side, the shade on the other and the three fires they built, they'll be enough air currents for any stunt?

Funny... with the fight so close... I remember Vince when we were friends... the good things... the crazy things we used to do...

A HELLUVA WAY to think about someone you're trying to kill.

That's no good... have to remember all the stuff the Vince who lies and cheat, the one that beat Sheila.

That's who I'm fighting... Vince now!
Funny... Vince should've seen here by now. I'd better...

What are they waving at...?

-Shadow!

Dive!

Damn!

I should've figured it! Vince will take an edge whenever he can get it. Looked like he was wearing spikes on his boots, too.

Vince is riding up on the heat from the fire below him, too. We're both picking up speed.

The object of the duel is simple—send the other guy to the ground. Smash the frame of his kite or put a rip in the skin, or just knock him off.
IT LOOKS LIKE VINE HAS STRAPPED HIMSELF ON. HE WAS SCARED ENOUGH TO DO THAT AT LEAST.

HAVE TO FIND SOMEWAY TO GET ABOVE HIM!

WHEN I CAME BY HERE BEFORE I FELT A CROSSWIND COMING THROUGH THE WINDOWS. IF I CATCH THAT...

NO GOOD. TOO SOON... VINE HAS TIME TO TURN... CAN'T GET A GOOD SOLID KICK IN. BUT IF I CAN...

--- CATCH THE EDGE

DID IT!

Yaaaaaaa

HE'S SPINNING DOWN!

DAMN! VINE GOTT CONTROL. HE'S SPINNING UP ON THE FIRE — AND I'M GOING SLACK!

HE'S DOWN!

HE'S GONNA HIT TH' BUILDING!

NO, HE'S NOT!
DON'T KNOW HOW WE'LL DECIDE THE DUEL.

HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT LATER.

MY PROBLEM NOW IS GETTING DOWN INTACT.

WHUMP

APRACH

UHH!

AND I'M HEADING SMACK INTO THE WALL.

CHRIST!

IT'LL RIP WIDE OPEN IN A MINUTE...

AND HERE COMES VINCE TO SEE ME PERSONALLY!
ONLY ONE CHANCE...
I LET GO...

HIT THE WALL...
CAUGHT MY HEELS ON THE LEDGE...
PUSHED AWAY HARD...

WHOA-?! LET GO!!

I GOT HOLD OF ONE OF THE RIG'S BRACES AND PULLED MYSELF UP BEHIND HIM...

HAD TO GRAB HIS OTHER LEG QUICK!

YOU CRAZY! YOU'LL KILL US BOTH!

HAVE TO GET RID OF THAT STRAP BEFORE HE CAN SHAKE ME OFF...

VINCE WAS THOROUGH, THE SPIKE WAS VERY SHARP!

GOT ONE OF HIS LEGS AND PULLED IT UP!
GUS DON'T!
I HIT HIM HARD. HE STARTED TO SLIP FORWARD...

SOMEONE'S HANGING DOWN!
WHO IS IT?!

NO!
NOO!
GUS...

HE WAS HANGING ON BY ONE ARM. I STARTED TO REACH FOR HIM...

YAH HHHHHH...

IT'S OVER!
I'VE WON...

WHAAAAA?
WHAT'S THAT BELOW?

MILITARY!
ROUNDING EVERYONE UP! PROBABLY SAW THE FIRES.

I'VE HAD ENOUGH EXCITEMENT FOR TODAY... I'M SPLITTING BEFORE--

SHEILIA!

DON'T FEEL LIKE I'VE WON...
IT WAS STUPID TO TRY AND SAVE HIM... STUPID TO FEEL GUILTY NOW...
MADE IT!

BLAM BLAM

LOVE TO REST—IF I STOP I WOULDN'T WANT TO GO AGAIN... I DON'T KNOW IF THEY WANT US BAD ENOUGH TO CHASE...

GET ON! ON MY BACK!

OFF AGAIN! WE SHOULD BE OKAY NOW... EVEN IF THEY TRY TO FOLLOW WE CAN LOSE THEM OVER THE BUILDINGS...

EASY GOING NOW... TOO MUCH HAS HAPPENED... VINECE LYING DEAD IN THE STREET... HARD TO HATE HIM NOW...

DON'T BLAME YOURSELF... THERE WAS NOTHING YOU COULD DO ABOUT IT.

SHE AIN'T BAD AT READING ME, EITHER.

VINCE IS DEAD MOST OF THE KIDS ROUND UP. I'M GONNA CATCH HELL BACK HOME....

MMM... SHELIA'S RUBBING MY SHOULDERS... CONSIDERING HOW LOUSY I FEEL, I FEEL GREAT!