Issue 27 - September 1997

Fandom is fun, but at times it can turn ugly. Many readers will have been members of fan clubs, university SF societies or conventions which have been torn apart by politics. By "politics" I mean the antagonism, rivalry, smear campaigns and personal agendas that inevitably emerge when a group of heterogenous individuals join together to administer a club, society or convention. Politics is no less prevalent in fan groups - indeed, it often seems more prevalent - than in other voluntary or professional societies, such as Mensa (which has had its own share of troubles at local, national and international levels).

Unpleasant as such conflicts may be it would be simplistic to assert that the issues about which political squabbles develop are always unimportant or that those who engage in such disputes and rivalries are simply trouble-makers. Therefore in my own associations as a fan I always try to remember that like myself those involved in fan politics are volunteers who have given their time and energy for a love of the genre. By keeping this is mind it ought to be possible to raise our tolerences and moderate our expectations to ensure that fandom remains fun despite the occasional and inevitable argument.

This issue's contents include short stories by Ken Goldman and Tony Chandler, who make their debuts in this issue of Ibn Qirtaiba. Keep an eye out for their return to these pages before too long. We also have three regular features in the form of two more Dear Sis letters, the Sci-Fi Corner and a poem. W Gregory Stewart takes a break this issue as we feature the poetry of Keith Allen Daniels, who has been lauded as "one of the foremost science fiction poets of our time" by David Kopaska-Merkel of Dreams & Nightmares magazine.

As a bonus this issue, there is a short quiz on media SF, which you can complete on-line and have marked automatically. If you like this idea, let me know and I'll make sure it returns in the future. Finally, our featured artist for issue 27 is <u>Dawid</u> <u>Michalczyk</u>, a computer graphician from Denmark who specialises in fantasy and science fiction. He is a member of a computer game company named AuroraWorks and intends to become a computer based freelance artist. You may visit his gallery by clicking on any of his 3D images in this issue.

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Short Story: The Cleansing @ 1996 <u>Ken</u> <u>Goldman</u>

Cleanse thou me from secret faults.
The King James Bible
Psalms XTX, 1,7

Abner looked from his pillow over his shoulder through the half opened window to see if he might catch the first purple streaks of the sun spreading across the early morning sky. The familiar colors of the morning were not there yet and that made the old man uneasy. Things were no longer as certain as they once were, and a man who had accumulated the years Abner had never was comfortable when events regarded as consistently predictable proved otherwise.

His wife awoke and sat upright in the bed, her back too stiff against the headboard to appear entirely comfortable. She stared at the faded rose-strewn wallpaper, hesitating before she spoke as if trying to assess her thoughts. The withered flesh that framed the woman's quivering lips suggested that tears would not be very difficult to coax from her.

"A family should not be apart at a time like this. I know Ben and Mary Beth have their own families now, but I just can't seem to get past the disappointment of not having them here at home. Their place is here with us!" The words poured from her like floodwater spilling over a dam too weak to contain it.

Abner reached for his dentures. "Let it rest, Flora. Their place is where they are just like our place is here. This is the way it ought to be."

"Nothing is the way it quant to he!"

The husband nodded in agreement but could no longer look at his wife. When he spoke again it had come his turn to study the wallpaper.

"You ever consider what His purpose might be Thora? Would the Almighty wager so many of his chips 'less he's got some sort of plan?"

The woman looked hard at her husband. Abner rarely was very lucid so early in the morning, especially following the first painful minutes after he had inserted his store bought ivories. Although she never doubted the man's faith she had not been able once in the last forty years to rouse his God-fearing soul from bed for church on a Sunday morning.

"The Lord's plan isn't always for us to know," she offered, paraphrasing Scripture for want of a more original response that might indicate she had any idea of what he was talking

about.

"Sometimes it is, Flora," he protested. "Maybe every so often the Lord feels the need to do some house cleanin'. Just so things flow more natural in the world maybe He has to clean out the gunk to keep the machinery well oiled."

Like most with only a nodding acquaintance of The Good Book, Abner's perception of God was almost childlike in its naive belief that the Lord was a cross father aiming thunderbolts at his wayward children.

"Those dentures must be pinching your gums clear up to your brain. Abner. The world isn't a clogged sink. You're talking just plain nonsense. But I guess I needed to hear a little nonsense to get my feet back on the earth."

"Nonsense eh?" the old man repeated mulling over the term.
"Yeah I 'spose that's what I'd've said a week ago. But after seein' what's in the papers and on the evenin' news I can't say I'm so sure there ain't some plan behind it all. If that seems like some powerful nonsense I'm talkin' 'bout then it's nonsense that maybe has itself a purpose."

The woman reached for the flowered box of Kleenex on her night stand and managed a smile that she hid behind the tissue as she pretended to wipe her nose.

"Hell and damnation, is that what you're preaching now?" she asked. "You're beginning to sound like that young Reverend Whitecastle preaching on his soapbox to our congregation about the coming of Armageddon. I should hope the good Lord is a bit more restrained than that toward His own flock."

TRevenend who?

"Try to talk religion to a man who usually finds God at the bottom of a bottle of corn whiskey," she mumbled. The woman pulled herself from under the covers. "You think maybe I ought to call Ben and Mary Beth, just to check on little Rachel and the baby?"

"Flora, the sun isn't even up yet. I doubt our children will be."

"Well, they should be here with us, Abner. You know they should be here with us."

He did not bother to disagree. Doing so would have been pointless. People this morning were where they wanted to be. This morning, among all other mornings, that much was certain.

Inside the old farm house Abner and Flora prepared themselves for the new day. There was really nothing else they could do. Outside the bedroom window the sun broke free from the eastern horizon. Even on this day the dawn was magnificent.

In the sky, barely visible as anything more than a pinprick

from the couple's kitchen window, a speck of light appeared.

Exactly twenty-four thousand two hundred and fifteen miles from Earth the fiery comet raced toward their back yard.

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Short Story: What Will Never Be © 1997 <u>Tony Chandler</u>

Changra held the words he had carefully prepared these last weeks, now putting off the event even as Renal now did with his somber gaze over the ocean beside them. Long they walked, silent, feeling the cool salty breeze buffeting them amid the calming sound of the breakers.

But time does not stand still, not even for the Krangok.

The coastline they walked was like many others, on many other worlds. Sugar white sand met the never-ending march of waves. Like time itself. And yet it was different.

Under the star filled sky these coastal waters glowed with a purplish sheen from the billions of tiny creatures who lived and died just under the surface.

If not so completely alone, the way they had planned it, the two solitary figures would have presented a picture most unique in this coastal setting. Two graying warriors of the Krangok dressed in old and faded uniforms, as if ready for some ancient ship-board inspection, except for the missing footwear they had left behind where their walk began. So they continued, side by side in an easy familiar gait.

"I never thought this day would come, Changra." Renal's voice faded on the wind as he stared over the dark waters that met the universe somewhere on the distant horizon, kissing the sky. His weathered eyes narrowed, making pronounced his deeply etched wrinkles.

A wave, bigger than the rest, sent the thickly foaming remnants of its strength up around their ankles. Their feet and ankles engulfed, they felt the strong tugging force as the water returned quickly from where it came. Standing still in the swirling foam laced waters, they felt the tingling sensation as the sand under their feet eroded and gave way to the tide's irresistible power. But they stood fast, as if fighting the force of time itself.

Changra laughed silently

"Share your humor," Renal asked, he too wanting to avoid the reason for their really being there.

"Imagine... my building a house within sight of an ocean like this." Changra smiled. "And I would walk on its edge every evening. And swim in it every day." "And you could be happy... living on just one planet?." Renal asked with disbelief.

Changra's eyes narrowed, but he did not answer.

And the pressing matter at hand would not go away

"This pain strikes deeper than a hazor blast. More even than forty strokes by barbed whip." Renal said with feeling. "And you know I have taken both."

Changra chuckled enthusiastically now.

"Yet, recall it was I who nursed you back from that blaster wound all those long, tedious weeks, enduring your endless whining! Tending you like an old mother gahen." Renal raised his hands in mock defense as Changra continued. "I too received the forty strokes... plus one from the Andarian's on Jissus V. And if memory serves, it was your mistake that brought it on our backs!" Changra's words reminded.

"You'll never let me forget that will you, you old Sargus hound!" Renal said.

They laughed again at the shared memories of long ago until the crashing of the waves drowned again all sounds. Renal looked up at the wide star-filled sky.

"We have known each other more years than there are stars in this sky_{π} my friend."

Changra nodded. "Oh yes, and many more. And all of them good!" He added with great sincerity.

It was Renal's turn to burst out with laughter.

Changra's eyes narrowed but the gleam in them belied the firm look on his face now. Renal's uncontrolled laughter grew louder. Changra tried to fight the smile that finally flashed brought on from the contagious sound.

"Well, most of them were good." Changra admitted.

"The exploration of the Tradian system..." Renal raised a

Changra rolled his eyes. "Yes, I had put that deep away and buried it." Changra shuddered. "That was the closest to death

The two old warriors, the two old explorers, looked at each other as if for the first time.

Renal wore, for the first time in recent memory, the uniform in which he had received the Star of Coronium, highest honor of the Brillian's. The blue color had faded with time, but the gold of the emblem still shone under the bright starlight.

Changra too wore something of the past, from one of the early,

great journeys among unknown stars. Oh, so long ago now.

An unseen bird above them squawked in its flight.

Changra drew his body up as if on military parade. His face grew harder at the deed ahead. And then he felt the great emptiness that stabbed his heart.

But Renal spoke quickly, cutting him off. "I do not think I can do this thing."

They stopped together and waited amid the eternal sound of crashing waves.

At this mighty juncture they paused in awkward indecision afraid to go further... but unable not to.

"We have each been given a great mission, my friend. The highest honor, orders from the Supreme Leader himself!" Changra said at last with chin held high.

"We are too old." Renal answered simply.

Changra's eyes narrowed as he hesitated only a moment. "We... are the best!"

Their eyes locked and each smiled in shared amusement.

But Renal's smile quickly evaporated. "That is not what I am afraid to do."

Renal'a eyes again became far off as he looked back to the shimmering seas.

"We shall not say..." (hangra, the accomplished speaker, paused in surprise as his voice cracked and became lost. He fought his burning embarrassment as he coughed, trying to find his voice and speak his carefully chosen words.

"We do not have to say... goodbye. We need only wish the other success... and a great journey."

Renal's words leapt from his mouth. And his old warrior's heart.

"We go to the edge of the known universe and beyond! Each Captain of our own vessel! Each to the opposite ends of space!" Renal's voice sounded angry even to himself. He paused as he raised his hand and stroked his beard. He continued, his voice now subdued. "Even a Krangok dies."

Somewhere deep inside something happened to both. Like a star suddenly going supernova.

Changra suddenly grasped Renal's shoulders in a mighty grip. At first Renal felt puzzlement, for Changra's hands dug so hard into his arms that he felt he was being attacked! Had Changra gone insane?!

The two stood fast before the other, and suddenly they felt that overwhelming power that they could not stop. It began to push them forward. Changra's grip tightened further as Renal now grasped his shoulders in return.

There they held fast, fighting against the impossible.

Only for a moment.

And they both knew it.

Changra, the man of words, had no words now. As they stood there, face to face under the canopy of stars, it was Renal who finally spoke for both.

"No matter where this long journey takes me, no matter what forms of life I meet." He smiled. "I will tell them that I have a friend. Though you are untold quadrants away, I will tell them... of you." He nodded silently to himself. "And they will laugh as I speak of our many adventures together, and they will cringe as I tell of the mighty battles that we have fought together. I will tell of the years, the ages, that we have shared together. And they will know that you... Changra... are my friend."

Renal loosed his grip and raised his hand, pointing heavenward,

"Of all the things that I have lost in this life, of all the things I dearly miss," Renal's pointing hand began to shake ever so slightly, "you will be what I miss most."

Changra stood there silent. Many of his own speeches came to mind, great oratory, moving words. But these few words meant more than all his speeches combined.

Renal looked away from the stars back to his companion.

And Changra gazed at him with eyes that glistened in the starlight.

Renal smiled as he raised his arms wide.

The men hugged each other tightly, thumping each other's shoulders with pounding rhythms. They held each other long.

And finally they released their hold and stood apart, wiping their sleeves quickly across their faces, not looking at the other. Above them the stars twinkled brightly above the turbulence of the crashing surf. Silence marked the passing of their great melancholy.

"We shall see each other again. Sooner than we think," Changra said sincerely, knowing it was a lie even as he uttered it.

Renal smiled at the words, knowing without a doubt it would never be.

And yet it sounded so good.

"And what a grand day that will be." Renal said smiling.

On that twilight beach they walked together again, one last time, side by side in an easy familiar gait.

Renal and Changra, lifelong friends, never saw each other again.

Far, far away their separate journeys led. Wild, wonderful things awaited each; worlds of exquisite beauty, worlds of haunting, fantastic sites.

But despite their lasting separation, their friendship never ended. For in each, their heart and memory, they carried that friendship with them.

Always.

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Sci-Fi Corner © 1997 Fred Noweck

Hi campers! It's that time of month again, and time again to bring you this month's four books for your edification.

The books this month are:

- The Ayes of Texas, by Daniel da Cruz, DelRey Books
- Wishing Season, by Esther Friesner, Baen Books
- The Crafters edited by Christopher Stasheff and Bill
- The Far Edge of Darkness; by Linda Evans; Baen Books

The Ayes of Texas takes place in the near future (well; the near future when it was written; it's a little out of date now) in which the main character; Gwillem Forte; an immensely rich paraplegic; comes up with a scheme to get a friend of his elected president of Texas; (Yes; Texas becomes its own country;) He buys the battleship that he served aboard during WW2; and with the help of other disabled vets and his scientific experts; turns it into an ultra-modern atomic-powered craft the equal of anything afloat. What he didn't count on was the Russians attacking and having only the rebuilt USS Texas being the only thing standing between annihilation and freedom.

This is a very fast read and I thoroughly enjoyed it. This is the first of a series of three (I won't call it a trilogy as each of the books can stand alone). Wishing Season is more fantasy than SciFi but it's fun! It tells the story of a newly graduated genie who when he emerges from the lamp, forgets to tell his new master that he only gets three wishes. Since he didn't make the stipulation of only three wishes, he's stuck with granting unlimited wishes! In that instance, the only thing that will end his service is the death of his master or the voluntary release by that master... and who ever heard of that happening?

I was laughing through most of this story. It makes a very good change of pace for someone who has been reading SciFi and can't find anything to read next, and an excellent story for someone into fantasy.

The Crafters is a series of short stories in a common universed the world of Amer Crafter. Alchemist and student of Nature, he considers himself a scientist of sorts. After he is run out of Salem as a witch (yes, that Salem), he sets up in the wilderness to continue his studies... but the local covens aren't through with him.

This collection deals with Amer and his descendants as they work to wrest understanding from a world just slightly different from our own (or is it the same one...?) . Where Death is a Person and Elementals hobnob with humans, anything can happen....

Far Edge of Darkness is a Time-Travel story in which the main characters have been shanghaied to ancient Rome to get them out of the way. It seems that the inventor of the time machine had gotten in debt to the Mob and they get first crack at using it....

Got an inconvenient witness? Don't kill him, ship him to the last Ice Age. Need some untraceable legitimate income? Plant some ancient artifacts where you can dig them up later and claim sole ownership.

The mobsters are typically stupid in their uses of the greatest invention of the age and it is a little too long for the story line but good triumphs over evil in the end. Pretty good if you like this sort of thing.

Hey! Next month we may have a new look! I'm getting a scanner and I should be able to include cover art with each review. Now for letters:

Mr. Fred the Sci-Fi man

As always, an enlightening and informative column of reviews of Science Fiction books. One word though. It would be helpful if you would concentrate your reviews on books readily available in the sci-fi sections of the major bookstores. I have enjoyed your reviews, wanting to read the books reviewed. Short of taking them from your personal library, I sadly find that I am not able to purchase or obtain the books mentioned in your reviews. I, and I guess your other readers would find it most helpful if your reviews centered on those books readily obtainable. Thanks for your consideration.

Jay W.

Well, Jay, I can only say that you haven't been looking very hard. I go into a book store and take apart those book shelves so that I see what's behind every one of the front books. You find all sorts of gems that way. Of course, you have to put the rejects back on the shelves or the proprietor will get a little peeved with you....

 OK_1 that's it for this month. Keep sending in letters to this column and I'll keep answering them. Remember, this column can't exist without your support! See ya!

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Serial: Dear Sis, part 4 © 1997 <u>Leann</u> Arndt

06-14-2005

Dear Sis:

Ah Lucy, by the way, calling Lucifer by your name, well, it has nothing to do with my feelings for you or mom. Who'd have thought that mom's obsession with Bram Stoker's Dracula would lead to naming her daughters Lucy and Mina. It doesn't matter. I just wanted you to know that I never have and never will regard you as satanic.

Sis I thought I had this dang blurned thing figured out. Right now I'm standing right back in front of my house. This time I hit on the morning before my Zartosian abduction.

I don't know what in tarnation is going on. Besides, I got here and there was old plug ugly Beezle, or a bad ugly substitute, watching my earlier self take a bath. You know, since he is going on Lucy transport and I'm using this thing, well, he can no more see me than the earlier me can. I know, I know, he saw me back on Zartos. Well, back on Zartos my messing around had shut down part of it.

You know, if I figured this out right, I can shut down the invisibility part and have a little fun with old Beezle. I'll leave my Zartosian gadget on and you'll be able to listen in via letter.

"Reezle, Reez spongie ongums, are you looking for me?"

"Woman where are you? Our master requires you now."

"Hey spoiled honey! That is just too bad now. You give Lucy my regards. Oh, and baby bunting, be sure and thank him for this leather catsuit he gave me to wear back in his domain."

Okay sis. I turned invisibility back on. You should see the flames shooting out of Beez's ears. I love it.

I'm going to try this again dear one. If luck is on my side I'll be seeing you. No matter what happens you'll hear from me honey.

Mina

06-15-2005

Dear Sis:

I'm back in the same dang spot and time frame!

All this time, you know, I'd sorta been lurking in the bushes. After all, even with invisibility, you can't take chances. The very moment I pop in I taste shrub in my mouth. It hadda be home. I was right, Dang!

The moment I got the shub out of my mouth, eyes, and annoyingly long blond hair, I saw Beezle spitting the neighbor's shrubs. Yeppydoodles, there he was mirroring my position. One thing, I know that you've called me a big mouth but my mouth isn't two feet across. Also, these blue eyes may sometimes flash red in photos but, day to day, these eyes don't look anything like burning coals. Awww, I don't care about Beez's cover boy looks anyhow. So, I better get over discussing him before I do care. Oh, that will happen, won't it? Oh Lucy, sis, I wish that you could see my face.

You know how I'm always getting you so riled up that you start cussing a blue streak? Well, I gotta get rid of Beez permanently. You think if I get him riled up enough he'll, maybe, start praying, invoking the name of the higher power and all? I bet old Lucy would get so mad he'd never let him near me again. What could get Beez that mad? I have been sweet talking him all along with no holy words spoke. What do you think will work? I know! Hang on!

"Beezle, honey lambkins! I'm over here! Hang on sweet thing! I'm coming over to you!"

"Woman! You infuriate me as well as the master. Yes, you come here now! What our master saw in an alien porno star I'll never

"I suppose not Beezle. Could you stand there while I come a mite closer? Beez, you seem to have a speck of some shrub there, right there at the corner of that generous mouth. Let me

take care of that for you."

"What are you doing woman?"

"Smack!"

"Oh Good God In Heaven! Save me from this infernal woman!"

Well sis, apparently my plan worked. I think asking for help of someone other than Lucy was the big no-no. From the loudness of that sound I suspect that Beezle went from the proverbial frying pan right back into that proverbial fire.

This last time I think I just happened to twist the wrong knob. I should be seeing you soon sis. At least, no matter what, Beez'll be out of my hair. Bye.

Mina

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Poem: The Houri and the Hoplites © 1996 Keith Allen Daniels

As curvy as the space around collapsars, a starlord of a high albedo strain, she is lounging with the languor of iguanas, she is squamous in her crystalline domain.

For long and long
she's drifted here in darkness,
pariah for the violence of her will,
conjecturing stochastic, strange
encounters, and dreaming
of another chance to kill.

Some scales have broken loose and float around her, a torus of detritus -- a tiara bejewelled like the diadems of vore. In time invaders come

to mine her surface, to pry encrusted prisms from within -- a race of armored hoplites, avaricious, enamored of her lapidary skin.

By slow degrees she sheds her wonted torpor, the interlopers wither in her gaze -- a gaze like that of some affronted Gorgon

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3. Wi <u>th</u> whom did the Terrians first establish a bond?
Devon Adair
Julia Heller
Alonzo Solace
John Danziger

Cybermen? IN THE CONTROL OF THE CON	
<u>S</u> ubmit your answers	

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