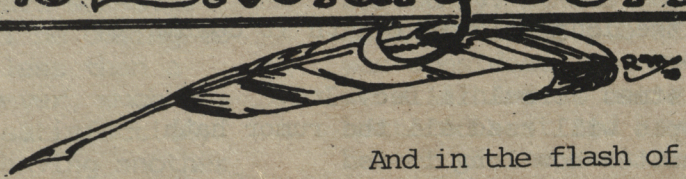


The Literary Corner



LITERARY

OFFICE JOB

by Lachlan MacQuarrie

It was the inconsistency of it that rankled him. One expected battle to be glorious or horrendous, depending on who brought you up. Jake quite believed it was going to be a horrendous mess of slaughter and fire, as his father had told him of his war. But this quiet air-conditioned room, full of blinding lights and soft voices was not war at all - it was just an office job.

Why couldn't war be like the descriptions, he thought. At least we would be prepared for it. Expecting excitement, I almost fell asleep during our first engagement! Why not? After all, all one does is line up those lines on the screen, and press the blue button when the Commander says, and then the dot disappears.

"My commander says I've just killed three thousand people, but I might as well be having afternoon tea for all that is happening in this control room. I wonder if the enemy Weapons Officer (if there is an enemy, a question on which I have no proof one way or another) thought the same before the dot of his ship disappeared from my screen. I've never seen the enemy, I wonder what they look like," he mused.

That's interesting. That little dial is over into the red. I wonder what it sig.....

And in the flash of energy he was no more.

TAG! YOU'RE IT

by Lachlan MacQuarrie

I flicked on the com-screen and answered the alien spaceship's challenge in my heavily-accented Verrokhan, "This is the Terran Space Forces battlecruiser Fury and we're going to blow you mothers out of the sky!"

The Verrokh commander did a pretty good job of spluttering (considering his lack of a lower mandible or tongue as we know it) in amazement. "That's impossible! We exterminated the...."

"...Terrans three hundred years ago" I finished for him. "In the thousand years of the Verrokh Empire, your lords made only one mistake. They ordered the attack on Mother Terra, and on the human race. And now we're coming to kill you!"

I snapped off the com-screen and relayed word of the contact to HQ. The destruction of the Verrokh Fleet took seventeen seconds.

The bombardment of the Verrokh planets took three days. We completely exterminated the vermin.

Funny, that's what the captured Verrokh reports of the attack on the human race three hundred years ago say...



POEMS BY DIXIE LEE MacDONALD

*Narcissus spoke to me
when I opened the closet one day,
he was sitting in my shabby shoes,
and muttering, sputtering,
I closed the door.*

*Worse was when he followed me
to school one day, between the pages
of my math, he laughed at my studied
lines of brow and how I fooled him,
he thinks he got to me, but I
I hate him.*

*Mothers rock your babies
croon and swing them high
wrap them round your bodies
when they chance to cry.
Mothers dance your darlings
lift them to the sky.
Tell them of God and great things
before you tuck them beddy-bye
'cus time is a terrible teacher,
soon enough your darlings dance alone,
with the body of a stranger,
to the sorrow of the music moan
learning to stay out of danger,
by creeping into bed alone.*

*Free of death, at last,
passed into the sodden grave,
I laugh.
At the nodding faces, saying yes
it's true, I'm through.
So long in coming, that final
numbing
there was no decision, deaths
in living.*

Avenge, but how, the German Jew
whose bones are burned or rotted through.
Avenge - revenge, the echo resounds
off my tongue with the same brutal sound
that the rat-at-tat-tat of the machine guns rattle
to the ones rounded up, in a herd like cattle
made as they ripped through the silent slain
effortless, like empty carcasses or stone
they fell to their fate like baited game.
And the legacy they left is hating shame.
Avenge - revenge, oh rat-at-tat-tat.
Yes, Hitler died, the slimy rat.
We wanted to kill him, he should have paid.



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Education

We are each others homework:
And I learn the lesson of your lips.