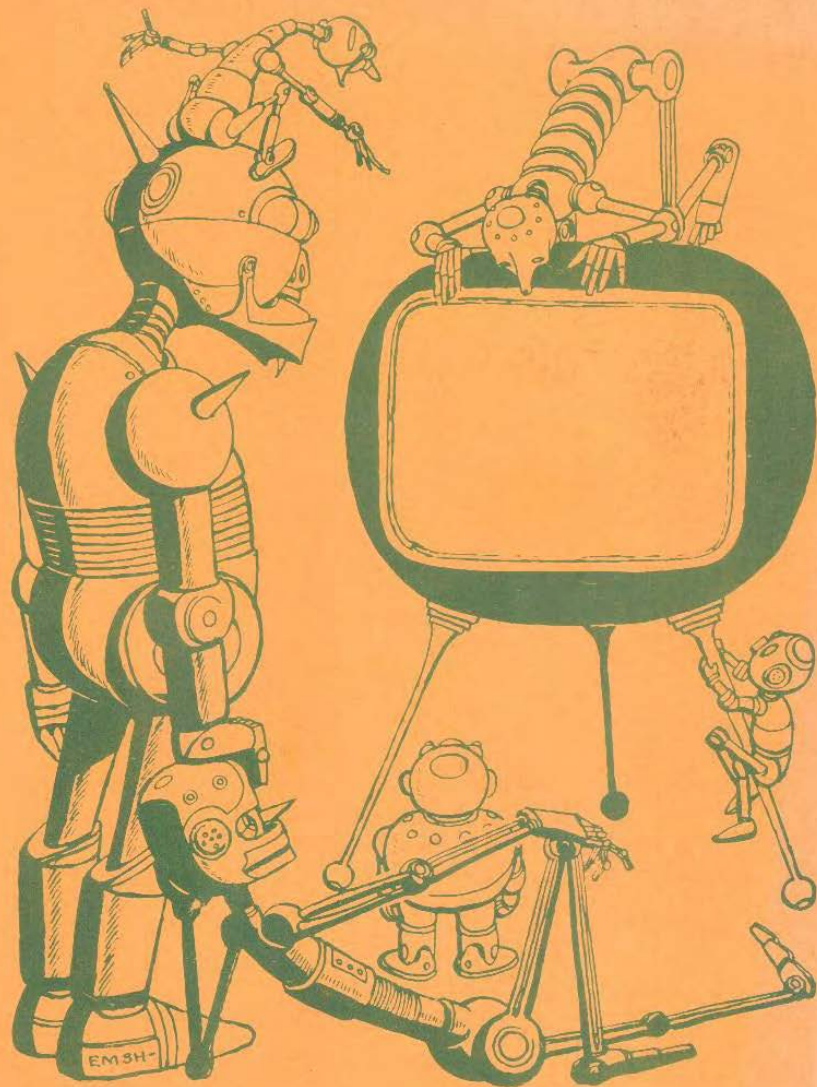


LEER

February

1956

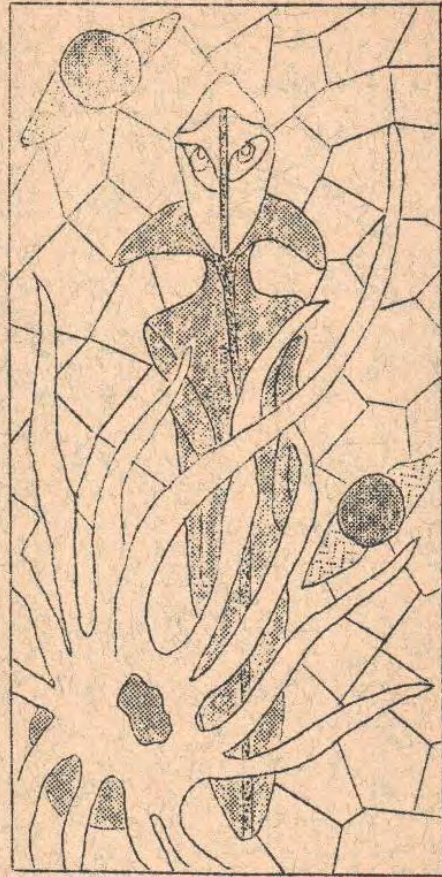


THE ODDS AGAINST YOU

—RONALD SMITH

Miss Lillian Odds was a very pretty and very descriptively named young woman.. she was a gambler, which wasn't odd in the least. Half the population of the Universe were gamblers. It was the life blood of the whole Earth civilization, which stretched from the Sol system throughout the Milky Way. The human race had expanded to all parts of the known Universe--beyond the frontiers was only the blackness of space and the other galaxies, which were, as far as most people were concerned, unreachable. The race was sated. They had seen everything, experienced everything that in the immeasurable past the science fiction writers had imagined. As a consequence, people's imaginations were no longer imaginative. Everybody was bored.

So, naturally, they turned to gambling--and here, at least, their imaginations



ILLUSTRATED BY DEA

did not fail them. They invented thousands of new games and variations on old games. There was Trill and Blowing Wild and Galaxy Roulette and Nebula Roulette. The list was endless. Especially were the games popular during interstellar travel. Such trips were particularly boring, people having grown inured to the wonders of space and the stars. In fact, they had no sense of wonder at all for now everything seemed commonplace.

"Fifty credits on Saturn," said Lillian Odds, placing a richly decorated cube on the proper space on the long green table. The croupier pressed a lever which rotated the five wheels simultaneously. They spun, each stopping within seconds of each other. The croupier calculated the tangents on a large blackboard and then announced the winner loudly.

Miss Odds watched her cube disappear behind the croupier's stick and sighed an almost inaudible sigh of regret.

"Bad luck, eh?" said the young man who was standing alongside and watching her.

"Oh, hello, Mr. Johnson," said Miss Odds. The young man was the son of a rich uranium tycoon, who owned mines all over the Adonis arm of the galaxy. She'd met him casually during dinner the wake-period before, but they had exchanged a few words only. "Yes, I'm afraid so. I haven't had any luck all night."

"That's too bad," he said.

She shrugged. "Here goes the last." She placed the 25¹ credit cube on one of the bright squares. Four minutes later it was gone and the wheels were spinning again.

"Oh, dear" she squealed, as she suddenly realized the extent of her losses. It was all the money she had had, and now she was broke. She

didn't even have a return ticket to her home planet. She was lost!

"Oh, dear."

"Don't worry about it," the young man smiled cheerfully. "Your luck is bound to change. Here." He shoved a small pile of credit cubes toward her.

"Oh, no--" Miss Odds began, and then stopped herself. After all, she would pay it back as soon as she had won enough for her return ticket.

She reached out and took the stack of cubes. "Thank you," she said.

Thirty minutes later, she turned to the young man, still standing beside her. "Would you mind," she began slowly. "That is, you don't know me very well, but would you loan me a thousand credits until I can win some of my money back? I've simply got to get it back."

The young man smiled agreeably. "Of course, Miss Odds. My pleasure." He walked over to the cashier, bought some cubes and brought them back to her. "Here you are," he said.

"Oh, thank you," said Miss Odds, smiling. "I really do appreciate it. And I will pay you back, of course."

"Of course," said the young man.

The wheels continued spinning and Miss Odds continued betting. And losing. In an amazing short time she had lost the thousand credits, too. When the last cube had disappeared into the bank, she turned miserably to the young man.

"Oh! Oh!" was all she could say.

"Don't worry about it," said the young man, putting his arm about her waist reassuringly. "Come on, you've had enough of this. I'll walk you to your cabin."

They walked across the gambling hall to the stateroom corridor. At last, after various twistings and turnings they arrived in front of Miss Odds' cabin.

She turned to him, not knowing what to do, what to say.

"Oh, what am I going to do, Mr. Johnson?" she whispered. She suddenly buried her face in his chest, sobbing.

The young man looked at her helplessly. She continued to cry. He pried the key out of her clenched fist and fumbled for the lock. Opening the door, he helped her inside and seated her gently on the bed. He sat down beside her.

"You mustn't let it get you down," he assured her.

"Oh, Mr. Johnson," she cried, "I'll never be able to pay you back. I don't know how I'll ever be able, and it makes me feel awful. I'll never been in debt to anyone before." Her shoulders heaved with her sobs.

She turned tear-stained eyes toward him. "But that's not the worst of it," she said. "I'm broke. Completely and terribly broke. I didn't have a lot of money to begin with--just enough to get me to Deneb. I was planning on living there, I had enough money for a few months, time enough, to find myself a job. But now," she began crying again, "but now," she

continued between sobs, "I have nothing--no job, no money, no way to go back home. Oh, Mr. Johnson."

The young man patted her on her left thigh. "Now, Miss Odds, don't fret so, you can pay me back. And I'll be glad to advance you enough to get started on Deneb."

"No, Mr. Johnson," she cried, "it's impossible. I'll never be able to. I'm lost. There's no place left for me but the Poverty Control. And you know what that means to people with no money and no support--indenture. That's what!" She looked at him miserably. "Under the circumstances, Mr. Johnson, how could I ever pay you back?" She hesitated for a fraction of a second and then shook her lovely head. "No, Mr. Johnson, there's no way that I can. I'll never be able to pay you back."

The young man smiled at her agreeably and leaned closer to her, quietly placing his arm about her shoulders.

"I'll lay you odds," he said.

A brilliant young Doctor, McKnight
Could travel much faster than light.
He set out one day -- in a relative way --
And returned on the previous night.

FROM PEON #23 JULY 1952

GALAXY AND THE FAN FATALE

H. L. Gold

In less than two years, Galaxy has acquired the second largest circulation in science fiction and is pushing hard toward first place.

I'm proud of the achievement, of course. Who wouldn't be? But it was a long, bitter, tense trip toward the top. There were enough problems to be overcome--personal health, internal warfare in our first organization, external pressure from rival publishers--and, as if those weren't as much as a struggling magazine could carry, unreasonable demands, carpings and campaigns among a number of unfortunately very active fans.

Well, the pretty grave problems have been overcome. Galaxy is now in the hands of perhaps the most intelligent, ethical, businesslike publisher it could ever have found; if it had begun with him, I'm sure Galaxy would have been far ahead of the market now. The external business pressure has been removed. Personal health isn't as good as I would like it to be, but greatly improved and improving.

That leaves the smaller, less worrisome difficulties that one expects in any enterprise. They're no trouble to handle, but some of them should not have to be handled.

Heading that list are the aforementioned hostile or demanding fans.

There are several reasons for their attitudes that I had to discover for myself in order to cope with them; before I did, they came very close to being the last straw several times. Lee Riddle wants to know how the fans and I feel about each other, and I don't see any reason not to explain my position and my understanding of fans.

All right, here they are:

[a] Paradoxically, in spite of--or, perhaps because of--the fact that Galaxy doesn't cover fan activities or have a letter column, I have good grounds for believing that I like fans and am more tolerant toward them than most editors who cater to them.

[b] On the other hand, I use statistics instead of responding to pressure that can't properly be evaluated and may be--and has been--deadly to a magazine.

[c] I know almost every editor, most of the writers and a great number of fans, and the surprising fact is that we're all people. We share about the same hopes, fears, worries, ambitions, gratifications. But some of us are overcommitted to science fiction while others are undercommitted.

[d] Magazine publishing is an intricate business and fans can't be expected--or expect--to understand it from the outside. The issue you pick up off the stands is like the familiar iceberg, with much more beneath the surface that projects above.

[e] A magazine, unless endowed, must make a profit to exist.

Now, let's take those points apart, keeping in mind the limits of space and the time I have available.

[a] Editors who cater to fans have an exportable surplus of reasons to be annoyed with them; practically all the letters they get are from fans, which, you'll admit, can become three or four cloys too much. Galaxy, though, because it does not print letters, draws far more mail from non-fans. I don't have a chance to get fed up. It's as simple as that. So I can retain my liking for fans, which I do.

[b] If you were to sit at an editorial desk and study the letters to the average science fiction magazine, you'd naturally assume that fandom forms the majority of your circulation. It's an illusion, of course. The most absurdly optimistic estimate would give fandom no more than 5% of Galaxy's sales. We don't want to lose that 5%, but neither can we afford to alienate the other 95% of our readership. Covering fan activities and running a letter department would do exactly that. But those are only two of fandom's demands, potentially damaging, I've discovered, but not necessarily fatal. Others are demonstrably deadly.

Haven't you ever wondered why science fiction magazines die? Contrast the long row of corpses with the success of Galaxy and you may have the answer. Many of the defunct titles were old, established ones; some were new and outwardly healthy. They all had one thing in common--they misjudged the reactions and demands of fans as those of the general audience and followed them faithfully...right to the publishing grave.

[c] Having written science fiction off and on since 1934, I was too deeply involved--overcommitted--to it while Galaxy was growing up. That excessive involvement hurt me more than the magazine, but it wasn't the best thing for the magazine, either. In contrast, several editors and a number of writers are undercommitted--science fiction is only a living to them. Neither attitude is healthy. I believe my degree of commitment now is a good one and I wish fans could share it with me. The single and hurtful denominator is their disproportionate devotion to science fiction; any attack on it is an attack against them and any deviation from what they

judge to be science fiction is to be repulsed with the heaviest artillery they have.

Now that statement can be easily taken out of context to mean what I don't intend it to mean, and I've got dough that says it will be. So I'll clarify:

Science fiction is, to me, a legitimate form of literature. It is not a substitute for life. Nothing is. I want it to be as good as I'm capable of making it, taking into consideration my human limitations, holes in the head, errors of judgment--whatever you care to call my willing confessed fallibility. But living it instead of life is asking for drastic trouble.

Galaxy is a magazine. It's the best I'm capable of producing right now. But it is not me nor am I it, except insofar as my man's work and himself are interchangeable or identifiable. When I make errors, as I'm bound to do, fans can have the same tolerant attitude as our other readers do--all right, I've made a mistake, but the rest of the issue more or less compensates for it. Galaxy, our readers and I can survive such occasional bloopers. To listen to the shrieks of fans, though, you'd think they couldn't.

This, friends, is overcommitment. It ain't healthy. Like it, love it, push it on everyone you meet as something they shouldn't miss...but don't eat, sleep and live science fiction.

[d] Editing any magazine is a constant process of compromise. I buy types of stories that I personally don't like, because I know there aren't enough people who share my likes to support Galaxy. To get them as well as those categories I do vibrate to (and, you'll never drag out of me what they are), I have to slog through hundreds of manuscripts a month. These have to be rewritten in some cases, which means long correspondence with

the authors, or conferences, telephone calls, etc., and then painstaking editing. Then comes composition, art, layouts, proofing, printing, binding, distribution, subs, readers' letters and God knows what else, in addition to deadlines and engraving.

Leaving out the business end of it, it would astonish you to see the mountains of copy and proofs and metal that eventually show up on the news stands as a slim, shapely, attractive little magazine. Add the whole thing together and you'd have about 25 or 30 tons of assorted materials. Maybe more, I don't know. All I can tell you is that we have a feeling of wonder and dazed relief when the slim and attractive little issue winds up in our hands .. and we can throw out the gigantic mounds of stuff that went into it. All, of course, to make room for the next and the next and the next, for I hope you realize that an editor always works a minimum of two or three issues ahead of the current one.

The miracle is that Galaxy is as good as it is, not that it isn't better. If you don't mind, I'd rather not think about that--I feel slightly intimidated, as if the whole process were impossible.

Now throw in the production end and the distribution and you may see what any editor and publisher are contending with. I don't want to explain it. If you have any interest, you can undoubtedly find a number of moderately fulsome books describing the problems. But take my word that reading about them and butting your head against them are very positively not the same thing.

e I don't know why I should bother elaborating on my statement that a magazine, unless endowed, must make a profit. It seems obvious to me. Here again, however, the difference between overcommitted fans and appropriately committed readers is clear. Our readers were delighted when I told them editorially that we were in the black. (Incidentally, we've

stayed there consistently ever since. The sale of Galaxy was the result of the internal warfare I mentioned earlier...and was the best thing that could have happened to it.) But how did fans react? As if we were peddling our honor for dirty dollars. It never occurred to them, I suppose, that one can make a profit and keep one's honor.

There's a lot more that can be said, but I've run out of room and time. About the only thing that can be appended is a personal note regarding myself.

Editing a magazine like Galaxy isn't pure enjoyment--what is?--but there are pleasures that more than make up for the anxieties and disappointments. I'm just an honest craftsman with almost two decades of experience behind me, a pretty good mind, enough knowledge of how a story should be constructed to make more good decisions than bad. The fact that Galaxy is in second place in so short a time is proof enough of that to me. I don't think of myself as any sort of supernormal being; Homo Sapien is my tribe, not Homo Superier, and I can make as many mistakes as anybody with one brain lobe tied behind my back.

I also like people with a profound fondness and respect. Like Will Rogers, whose comment has often been misquoted, I never met a man I could not like. Most of them, it tickles me to say, also like me.

Fans are people. I like them. I could kick their fannies out of exasperation now and then. But I sometimes feel like kicking my own, so the occasional feeling is mutual.

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LEERINGS —FROM LEE

Perhaps if I would quit taking people at face value, I wouldn't fall for so many fan-type hoaxes. I'm a very gullible sort of a person, regardless of the fact that I've been knocking around in the U. S. Navy for almost fourteen years. I like people and hate to look behind their actions and words for different meanings and motives. And being the type of person I am, I've fallen hard for several hoaxes in my fanish career. I remember when I read about Tucker's second death (yes, I also fell for the first one) in KAYMAR TRADER. At the time, I was living in Alameda, California, and was attending meetings of the Elves, Gnomes, and Little Men's Science Fiction, Marching, and Chowder-Society. At one particular meeting, I got up and explained who Tucker was and what he had meant to fandom. I further requested a moment of silence in his honor. At the next meeting, I got up and explained who Tucker was and what he had meant to fandom. I further explained how I had been taken in by the fake death announcement. After that, I didn't attend a few meetings, and you can well guess why.

I was one of the many fans who were duped, intentionally or not, by Lee Hoffman, and none was more surprised than I to learn that she was not a he. However, I had the satisfaction that I hadn't fallen as hard as some of the other fans, who, believing that Lee was a boy, had written boyish



types of letters. Lee and I had been corresponding, but nothing to a great extent.

Okay, you say, what does this all mean? Well, dear friends, it means that once again I have been fooled! Yep, I'm referring to the Joan Carr deal. This time, I have really been taken. I've been corresponding with Joan ever since she first appeared on the scene. I had wonders at times about the closeness of her and Sandy's writings, but didn't worry too much about it. Joan even sent Christmas Cards to Rosella, my wife, and bought her a spoon for Rosella's collection from Cairo. Rosella had started to write her several times, but something always happened and she never got around to it. (I wonder what she will think about the whole thing when I tell her?). At one time, it was believed that I would be posted over to the area in which Joan and Sandy were stationed, and all sorts of plans were made for we three to hold a small style convention at some mutually convenient place. What would have happened, had I been able to get there?

At any rate, this, I believe, was one of the best hoaxes in fannish history--and believe me, there have been quite a few. Sandy is to be congratulated on his wonderful job, and also, at the gracious way in which he was able to withdraw. Although a little bit envious of him, I'm not mad but I wonder what will be the next one that I fall for?

Frankly, I don't know if I am still a member of the OMPA or not. When I received the June mailing with a notation that I'd better get busy and get some eight pages published or I'd be left out in the cold, I immediately wrote our dear president to try to get an extension for me until I could get this issue of LEER in the mails. At the time I received that mailing, our ship was operating (and still is) out in the Med, and I didn't know when I could get an issue into the mails.

I haven't heard from her as yet, but since then, I have received a letter from John Hitchcock who said he was trying to get some extra pages credit-

ed to me from various other faneds. This was a very unexpected and also heart-warming gesture on his part. But then, John has always been ready to pitch in and help someone like myself.

So....whether or not I am still a member of the OMPA, this issue of LEER is being mailed out to you all. If I am still a member, then I can get credit for it...if not, then you have an unexpected gift. Mail service out here being as bad as it is, no telling when I will learn myself.

Incidentally, you can see by the cover, how long I've been planning this issue. I had had plans of having about a 50-page issue, and started to work on it last December. But, as was the case in PEON, I had to give up all the plans due to the pressure of my official duties.

Please note the new address elsewhere in this issue. After thirteen years in the Navy, I've finally been posted to a ship. During the past service I've had in the Navy, I've been aboard a ship of the line for a grand total of 42 days, and that was as a passenger! Oh sure, I have a few medals for my service during the Second World War and the Korean Police Action, but they were for overseas duty stations and landing parties, etc.

Now that I'm finally on a ship, I find that life is quite different from what I had expected. I'm on a repair ship that tends faltering destroyers and am in charge of the Personnel Office. I've been working almost 12-18 hours a day keeping up with the paper work and what-have-you, but I love every minute of it. Up to a few days ago, I couldn't even begin to think about publishing LEER, or even PEON. So I decided to suspend PEON for the rest of the year, and even sent out a circular letter telling my readers of my decision. I no sooner had sent out the letter than things changed so much that I now find that I have not only time enough for publishing PEON #37 (which is in the mails now), but can go on a bi-monthly schedule. If I still am in OMPA, LEER will be more or less on a regular-basis, also.

By the way, one of my many-odd jobs aboard ship is being editor of the ship's newspaper, THE CASCADER. If you'd like to see what a ship's paper looks like, let me know, and I'll be happy to send you a copy. I had thought at one time of sending out an issue to every OMPA member, but decided to just send it out to those who requested it.

PEON #37, as I said before, is in the mails now. It is not as good a issue as I'd like, but considering what duplicating equipment I have on board, it's better than could be expected. Once I get back to the states, late this year, I have plans of improving both the quality and appearance of each issue. New subscription rates for you British fans also--eight issues for seven shillings. Send your subs to Ken Slater if you'd like to receive the next eight issues. Sample copies of request.

Now that the huckstering is out of the way, let me compliment the members of the OMPA for the fine showing in the June bundle. I've had a good time reading all the fine 'zines appearing in that mailing. They all show many hours of hard work and I hope some of these days that LEER will be counted as good as they appear.

I've been having quite a time touring some of the ports we've called on so far out here in the Med. We are operating quite a bit out of Cannes, France, but I've managed to tour Nice, Monte Carlo, Pisa, Florence, Genoa so far. We are going to visit Palma and Barcelona, Spain, in the near future, and hope to get over to Athens before we sail back to the states. I believe that there are two or three fans in Athens--anyone know their addresses? I hope to get up to visit Jean Linard in October when we come back this way.

Well, you have probably read the rest of this issue of LEER by now. Hope you like it and I am always glad to receive your comments. *lee*

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