

PAGE ONE of OOH 92: So I thought, why put the title at the Top anyway, today of all days? Especially when in receipt of the following, which came in (or on) a recycled and resealable bag:

W Marcus Arnold ((for it is he)): ... *DEHYDRATED SPAGHETTI A LA CARBONAFOOTPRINT* ... produced by Cross & Blackballed. Do not microwave. Consume within 3 Daze of opening. Heat until hot. List of ingredients(not excl): *Hyperbole; Smugness; Miss Information; Astute Analysis; Sillyness Monsters; Bad Grandmas; Poor Spelling; Artificial Sweetening; Allergens; Anthrax; and hopefully Entertainment, possibly Eyestrain.*

NK: Well, I found all of that within (and probably echoed it), except mercifully the Anthrax. Somewhere around here I have an e.p by that band, actually not that bad as I recall. But you were saying/declaiming...

*Marcus: BRETHREN. SISTEREN. Nay, SIBLINGHEN. Heed my Words. Consider my Words. Nay, inwardly digest them. As ALL HALLOWS EVE approaches, remember the Faith of our Fathers and cast off from this sacred day the profane traipses and travesty, all Commercialisation, Americanisation and Christianisation of our Ancient festival. Let us feast in the grave yards and commune with our dear departed. NEWS reaches us from our friends, nay, **close compatriots** in the worship of NYARLATHOTEP and the other Old Gods who are not dead but waiting...*

NK: Or Dead but Dreaming as Mr McCoy would have it. Aha, saved! Instead of trying that Anthrax e.p (to see if indeed it wasn't that bad), I've stuck on something much more appropriate to the occasion, to wit, Fields of the Nephilim. Trees are Coming Down. I contemplate moonrise from the Dust of my Dark Cell (here at the top of The Tower). I shall Celebrate my Love Under Will afore taking the Last Exit for the Lost. For I remain the PSYCHONAUT, in my mind's eye I walk the plains of Sumerland, and There Will Be Your Heart Also...

...sorry, got a bit carried away. For anybody wondering WHAT THE DEVIL (if you'll pardon the allusion) IS GOING ON, this is the Halloween-cum-November issue of

Outbreak of Heresy 92

Halloween-into-November 2021

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NK: And having demonstrated that I can match Marcus' flights when the mood takes me, I might add that on this topic I'm more of the Clube/Napier school than an H.P.Lovecraft persuasion. As part of their theory on Recurrent Cosmic Input, C/N noted the worldwide frequency of fire festivals or equivalent (including Halloween and the equally hijacked Bonfire Night) around this period, and suggested that the concurrent coincidence of the Earth's orbit intercepting that of the Beta Taurid meteor stream is in fact no coincidence. The resulting annual shower, thought like many such to be the remnants of a short period comet that has long since (though in this case not that long since) broken up and slowly spread its remnants in a torus about the Sun, was presumably more significant (and so spectacular) in times not-so-distantly past. // In fact the Earth passes through the Beta Taurid torus twice, the other currently happening around the end of June, and for technical orbital mechanism reasons less noticeable – except when a relatively large bit happens to get in the way (e.g the presumed Tunguska object of 1908). On which cheerful note, I may just have room for the CONTENTS:

One: inverted Intro. **Two:** lettercol proper begins with 'Lang' and segues into "Take it Back" errata game. **Three:** Nick's months-delayed musical indulgence. **Four-Five:** more letters, music/films/'Lit') and so **Six-Seven:** the "Quicksilver" and "See Emily Play" Lit games. **Eight-Nine:** gets Out & About +Midcon. **Ten-Eleven:** more serious stuff, not without heresy. **Twelve-Thirteen:** footie "Pigs/W", "Us&Them" etc. **Fourteen:** Colin E on the state of Collectable Card Games. **Fifteen:** Dip mode so "One Slip" SLID, then **Sixteen-Seventeen:** David N on Dip conundrum & etc. **Eighteen:** recent history inc "Run Like Hell".

PAGE TWO

W Marcus Arnold: *YEA, lo and behold and hold your horses. News reaches us from the Fiends of the Urth on the re-wilding of Whitby. The invasive species of Red Vampyres has been nearly eradicated and new forests of Chestnut have been planted to replace those trees cut down to make stakes. And to provide a natural habitat for the five breeding pairs of Grey Ghouls imported at great expense from Scandinavia...*

...Right, that's done, bludgeoned to death, buried and resurrected. I must state categorically and duodecimally that I shall not in any way, no wise, no how, no way TRY, attempt or by any other subtil (sic) usage thematically, theatrically or operatically take advantage of the COMING OF HALLOWEEN to unleash my self-satisfied, ideosyncratic World View on your poor (give 'em a fiver) unsuspecting readership.

NK: Aw, go on...

...but, musing further on the usage of words, Marcus wryly notes the *multi-valency of language* and thus that DaveB's objection lastish to journalistic use of "exponential" as at least (ho ho) mathematically inept might constitute another over-harsh view. As he says, one dictionary definition of the term is "more and more rapid", which perhaps sums up what the journalists are trying to express anyway. However, Marcus later concedes that Dave may have a point, as when some journalists bandy pseudo-stats like "107%" of a population being something-or-other. Swinging about to address ColinE's point, Marcus even more wryly observes that by "the correct use of words" Colin presumably meant "the accurate use of words". Miaow! Anyway, that brings us neatly to our first game:

"TAKE IT BACK" (Take it Back)

Turn 3

(GM NickK)

W Marcus Arnold: *Apologies dear Nick, I know that thou like I didst suffer grievously under Thatcher but the Dole I was thinking of in "Doleway Road" was of Dolorous or Doleful...*

NK [smiles]: I know, it was just my cheapshot way of getting to the first of several deliberate(?) mistakes. Score 1 victory point anyway and see on for more.

Paul Regan: I'm guessing "dhole"... ((I'm giving you 1vp))

Karen Day: *Easy, easy...dhole. Got to be a reference to The Jungle Book (or rather **Second Jungle Book**) where Mowgli and his wolf pack take on the "Red Dog". And now I have this indelible image of you as a young and we have to assume minimally clad Man-Cub swinging from tree to tree...*

NK: Better for my ego than last issue's Old Geezer Revived From Trauma in "Quicksilver". So score 1vp plus another 2vp for the literary reference (incidentally my favourite Mowgli tale). If not for sheer cheek. (NB AlexR, that's singular not plural.)

Marcus: *And so bagsy deliberate mistake of £223 instead of £23 for my rail tickets ((+1vp)). But later in The Invention of Science discussion (who knew a review could be so controversial?) I have visions of Mexican peons performing dances where you meant songs of praise i.e PAEAN (thanks OED, though it might be Spellcheck) whereas PAEON (thanks again OED) is a metrical foot of one long syllable and three short ones.*

NK: Useful enough to score an extra v.p on top of the one for identifying the error. Now for ColinD, who inevitably also got *paeon* and *dhole* (though without further explication so only 1vp apiece) but adds...

Colin Day: *...the only other mistake I can spot this time is in your first reply to SteveJ where you keyed in "his" when presumably you meant "this"...*

NK: ...which I had to read twice and then go back to the original to see what Colin meant. Correct, though a genuine typo, score +1vp anyway. I must say this is a lot more entertaining way of listing the ERRATA than your customary fare, Col [smiles wider]...

...SCORES ON DOORS: KarenD 8, ColinD 5, PaulRg 4, Marcus 4, AndrewF 3. Everyone else 0.

Music Old, Music New, Music Old & New: For the first time in Covid ages I've made it to the central store, masked and girded as befits the era. And so indulged myself just a little, with gratifying results...

Transmissions 1969 is a double album of **Pink Floyd** out-takes and live / live-in-studio performances from that year or very end of the previous one. Includes a few rarities ("Embryo", "Baby Blue Shuffle", "Moonhead") that never made it to official album releases, plus a few rougher but sometimes weirder (and so to me better, opening example "Point Me at the Sky") of the material they were presumably featuring in their sets (think *More* and *Ummagumma* here, though to my ear the latter's versions are still definitive). Best taster example is probably the pastoral "Green is the Colour" segueing into what the listing terms "Beset by the Creatures of the Deep" (basically the lovely lingering finale of "Careful With That Axe Eugene"). Rather muffled in places but seriously Floyd, both for its time and still now, so call it 7 out of 10 (or 14/20).

I came across the previous while seeking **Nick Mason's Saucerful of Secrets / Live at the Roundhouse**. Sheer loony joy: it's as if Mason & co (and we'll get to the co) took nearly all my favourite Floyd tracks pre-*Dark Side* (which, to be frank, is nearly all of them anyway) and put them into one marvellous live set, almost what you imagine Mason and the rest of Floyd themselves should have been doing circa 1972. Thus tracks rollicking (from "Lucifer Sam" to "One of These Days"), pastoral ("Fearless" to the sublime "Remember a Day"), whimsical (singles "Arnold Layne" and "See Emily Play"), complex compositional ("Set the Controls" needless to say but also a welcome extract from "Atom Heart Mother") and dramatic filmscore ("Obscured by Clouds"/ "When You're In" to "The Nile Song" from *More*). Plus again "Green is the Colour", "Astronomy Domine", "Interstellar Overdrive", "Let There Be More Light" etc, over 20 titles in all including of course "A Saucerful of Secrets" itself. And I say pure loony joy because not only has Mason (at 76 going on 78) rediscovered his drumming mojo but, as is even more evident from the DVD, the performance was thoroughly enjoyed and brilliantly executed by his "co" – the long-time Floyd collaborator Guy Pratt (bass/vocal), maestro producer Dom Beken (keyboards/backing vox), and ex-Spandau Gary Kemp (guitars/vocal) needfully doubling up with ex-Blockhead Lee Harris (guitars/ backing vox). Superb! 19/20.

Lockdown/Covid had already prompted **Hawkwind** to produce one album (*Carnivorous*) in their "Light" incarnation (just Brock, Chadwick & Magnus Martin), well the trio have done another – *Somnia* – as an official Hawks release. As with *Carnivorous*, another remarkable example of "working from home", all three musicians recording their individual contributions at their own premises, electronically forwarding the basic runs/ideas to each other before the lot came back to Brock for final mixing. The result is a surprisingly effective baker's dozen of songs or instrumentals underpinned by Brock's sheer experience (NB even older than Mason...) and Martin's virtuosity – some of which (even the too-obviously Brocky solo ones) would fit nicely into the Hawkwind canon anyway and so (one imagines) into future live sets. Highlights for me: opening track "Unsomnia" (written by Martin), the relentless "China Blues" (Brock), the genuine collaboration "Meditation" and the closing "Cave of Phantom Dreams" (Martin again). 15/20.

And just as you can't keep Hawkwind quiet, so too with Jerry Richards' **Hawklords**. Who follow up their superlative *Alive in Concert* with *Time*, complete with a version of the 1947 *Time* magazine cover featuring the X1 and Chuck Yaeger. Which is certainly the underlying theme of fast opening track "Speed of Sound", in which we re-discover the 'additional' lyrics that Jerry inveigled into the *AiC* rendition of Bob Calvert's (and so staple of both Hawklords and Hawkwind) "Aerospace Age Inferno". The rest of the album follows at much the same hurtling pace/weirdness, interlaced with the keyboard brilliance of Dead Fred Reeves. Highlights here "Lighthouse at the Edge of the World", "To the New Age" and "Take Off Your Mask" (latter not a Covid reference; guest appearance by ex-Hawkwind and first Hawklords bassist Adrian Shaw). Frequent sax & flute this time comes courtesy of Chris Aldridge. Very good indeed, 17/20.

Finally, **Mogwai** doing what Mogwai do best, an hour's worth of driving, haunting or sinister instrumentals (mainly), entitled with customary irony *As The Love Continues*. Slightly derivative of what they've done before but hitting the right note at once with "To the Bin My Friend, Tonight We Vacate Earth". To say nothing of "Supposedly, We Were Nightmares", the mere suggestiveness of which hints at the overall mood. There are a couple of rather more scurrilously-titled tracks, though they're just as sinister, plus a couple actually more upbeat by comparison. And, in "Ritchie Sacramento", one genuine song! Loved it, 18/20.

PAGE FOUR

((lettercol resumes)) NK: One further indulgence I obtained in town was something brought to my attention by Alex Richardson, a new-ish (-ish because he actually mentioned it a year back) Hawkwind biography by Joe Banks that covers chiefly their “underground” years, and so entitled ***DAYS OF THE UNDERGROUND (Radical Escapism in the Age of Paranoia)***. I’m still wading through it, Alex, and thanks – full of interesting (to Hawks enthusiasts) detail that oft escaped the earlier Carol Clerk bio, and in spirit not so far removed from many of the things that our Marcus mentions.

W Marcus Arnold: *As you know I too have worn specs from the year dot and I sing the praises of plastic lenses that do not weigh down on the nose and leave an inverted V on the bridge. Attend not many gigs do I, mainly live music in pubs, but I do now find that if available on DVD I’ll use subtitles as I can miss bits of mumbling. As for Science Fiction’s promise, isn’t it realised in laser eye surgery for them that can afford it?*

NK: I suspect that even if I could I’d be reluctant, the minor inconvenience of myopia is as nothing compared to the (admittedly even more minor) chance of something going irreversibly wrong with my most precious asset (save, arguably, my mind itself). Subtitles for DVD gigs? Rather leave them incoherent, but you know how I feel (*feel* for once as opposed to *think*) about cadence as distinct from meaning of lyrics.

Marcus: *God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen... As said, the comma changes the whole meaning of the carol. I imagine that like me you thought Good King Wenchless (not Wen ces las) last looked out on the Feast of Stephen. ((The thought never crossed my mind, honest.)) Never got why it was sung at Christmas except for it mentioning snow. ((Er, isn’t it Boxing Day or thereabouts anyway?)) But then Slade are composers of a now ‘traditional carol’, I suppose traditional is just what we have always known.*

NK: He mentioned the C-word, *he mentioned the C-word*, and we’re not quite in November as I type... Actually, the general hopefulness and/or generally upbeat tone of carols (as distinct from hymns) reflects the perfect blend of Christian, pagan and non-aligned elements that were gathered about the approx ending of the civil calendar year or Winter Solstice. The latter more than the former, before the two were brought into rough sync, which is why – see later Diplomacy discussion – Westerners still confusedly think in terms of a Spring-Summer-Autumn-Winter order rather than a now more logical Winter-Spring-Summer-Autumn one. (But go talk to a brick wall, Nick.)

Marcus: *Robert Wyatt’s version of The Red Flag and Stalin wasn’t Stalin’ are not to be missed, nor for that matter Tom Lehrer’s Sodomasochism Tango...*

NK: With endorsements from viewpoints as... distinct... as Marcus and ColinE, how can anyone resist?

Steve Borndale: *Trust you got the new Hawklords album. And the new Hawkwind. And the new Mogwai.*

NK: As you see previous page, Yes. Your email arriving on the day I had off Work for this very purpose (amongst yet others), I had no further grounds for procrastination. However, I haven’t yet made it to...

Steve B: **...Dune: Part One.** *Seen, that is, but can hardly wait for the DVD anyway. Great adaptation, beats the (pretty good) TV series, consigns the old film version to the bin of cinematic history (sorry Col). As I’m sure you already agree or will shortly do so. (It gets the atmosphere right, right?)*

NK: Afraid I had too much else to do on that day off! While this week (as of typing) has the additional hazard of being school half-term, meaning greater risk of in-house pestilence. Instead Lorraine persuaded me into the final and so almost-deserted showing of ***The Last Duel***, which portrayed medieval combat and *mores* in what one can readily imagine was all their brutal actuality. Good acting by principals Damon, Driver and Comer (and Affleck) but certainly not comfortable viewing – although, as Lorraine remarked, probably not that far from how the neo-medievalism of ***Dune*** might be portrayed (we too re-watched the TV series relatively recently). Thanks anyway for the broad hint that we won’t be disappointed. There’s also a glowing report from Simon Langley-Evans in the most recent issue of *Last Orders*, neatly done so that there are no spoilers as such for those familiar or unfamiliar with the tale.

still NK: But speaking of the actual tale:

***W Marcus Arnold:** Dune Time... Bene Gesserit may not be "The Roman Catholic Church". But they certainly remind me of Abbesses and Brides of Christ and weird mystic nuns with stigmata. If der Pope wer a woman?!*

NK: [patiently] But surely this is superficial, as with SteveJ's impression of the Bene Gesserit being misguided mystics. Misguided their programme arguably is (this in terms of the fiction), given amongst other things the backdrop of several such competing movements. But mystic it ultimately is not, being firmly grounded in the text's underlying science-fiction assumption, i.e that Men (and of course Women!) can be and herein are honed/trained/genetically engineered to be various kinds of 'super-Men' (and, in the BG case especially, 'super-Women'). Albeit terribly flawed and so thoroughly human super-Men/Women. Which is precisely why *Dune*, for all its medieval trappings, remains a thoroughly futuristic novel. I gather from both Simon's and SteveB's remarks, as well as a couple of other encouraging reports, that this aspect very much comes over in the new film version.

[Semi-relevant aside: One thing that may discomfort determinedly modernistic/agnostic (and even naively atheist) SF fans about *Dune* is that it isn't similarly agnostic (and certainly isn't naively atheist). It achieves this stance without making definitive claims or statements, we only encounter religious beliefs (or any other kind of belief) through the eyes and thoughts and putative writings of the characters themselves, never the author (there are no author mouth-pieces as such). Which is exactly as it should be.]

***Marcus:** As to those three Clarke/Baxter collaborations: once I started on them I could not put them down, compulsive reading, I certainly must keep my eye out for more Stephen Baxter. Now Rendezvous with Rama was I remember full of interesting ideas but rather turgid, so I suspect Mr Baxter at the very least gives the books Va Va Voom straight into the stratosphere.*

NK: Horses/Courses and all that. I'm possibly in a minority in preferring less (often a lot less) 'action' and more 'detail', provided that detail can be conveyed in a sufficiently engaging manner. Arthur Clarke was a master of this in short story format; but for me the real doyen, both short and long, remains Stanislaw Lem (although Aldiss, paraphrasing Wells, once described Lem's intellect as "vast and cool and unsympathetic"). A surprising amount does happen in his detail-heavy classic *Fiasco*, and just enough in *His Master's Voice* and others (especially *Solaris* and the Pirx tales), but he rarely allows the almost incidental action to get in the way of the all-important detail. I find that too much supposedly 'Science' Fiction does it the other way around. Also too much Fantasy – often set in supposedly exotic locations so still more remiss. To me these are opportunities missed! But maybe Baxter, who I haven't really tried that much, will be the exception that demonstrates the rule.

***Marcus:** Divertisement. This comes straight off the top of my head. Barclay James Harvest, masters of mellotronic mood music, were they progressive or did the Mellotron (note Mellow) really fulfill the same function as a string section and when does mellow become syrupy and schmaltz. Are rock ballads a contradiction in terms. If Einstein had played guitar would he be more Grappelli than Clapton ((perhaps more TS McPhee?)). I think it's time for a brain transplant on the NHS...*

NK: I can't even begin to describe what the rest of this paragraph evolves into. Marcus backs it up with a newspaper cutting that plausibly demonstrates how in the final *The Lord of the Rings* movie the mask for chief baddie Gothmog (the orc-general in the assault upon Gondor) was modelled on the now-disgraced Harvey Weinstein. I thought that Weinstein (whose image I'd naturally never seen prior to his arraignment) looked disturbingly familiar...

...and that looks about it for the usual staples of 'Lang'/music/films/'Lit' for this issue. Apart of course (in respect of the 'Lit') from the "Quicksilver" and "See Emily Play" games, which'll follow hard overleaf (NB you'll note that for once I've been trying to number the zine's pages, let's see how far I can keep it up.) Lot more on actual games, plus Reality harsh and not-so-harsh, when the lettercol again resumes.

...one more down and The Connection revealed...

Steve Borndale: *I dunno, out for an issue and nearly everything passes me by. But I think I've now got the character connection in “Quicksilver”: they all suffer a KIND of death only to go on affecting the story.*

NK: More or less, score +3vps! The way I'd actually expressed it to myself (the only way I could without it being a massive Spoiler) was that they all undergo a variety of death (seeming, actual or one of personality) only to be revived/restored or for their legacy to continue. Some of them more than once, incidentally.

Steve B: *If this is right then I'll jump in on Col's Mote character and nominate... ((wait for it, wait for it))*

Colin Day: *If Staley could have been right then I reckon I'm still on the right track so 'my' character must be one of the other Midshipmen. I'll go for the more story-prominent one... ((wait for it, wait for it))*

Steve B & Colin D ((again in effective chorus)): *...Jonathan Whitbread...*

Colin D ((slightly peeved mode)): *...though if so I'm not sure how flattered I should be.*

NK: [grins: Colin was and presumably still is more an angular Staley than the 'slightly rounded everywhere' Whitbread, sorry Col couldn't resist it] ...Colin 2vps (as 'his' character), Steve 3 (as not).

...With Steve nailing the connection between the characters it will be evident to anyone familiar with **TLotR** why Boromir (indeed Faramir, Gandalf, Frodo and arguably a fair few others) might have qualified instead of Theoden. So, not forgetting the additional clue that had Boromir been correct there would have been another though incidental connection with another character, we're now left with the one I tailored around ColinE from *A Game of Thrones* (NB1 as observed by ColinD if we're insisting on the definite article for Tolkien's extravaganza then Martin's should surely have its indefinite one. NB2 see AlanO's entry below). Plus the purely bonus Phil Dick character that would have *better fitted the actual connection*, to which Marcus now obliquely refers:

W Marcus Arnold: *Well then, I'm the character played by Arnie in the ((very loose)) film version, the protagonist who saves the world (story) from being destroyed by mice-like aliens using a similar device to his earlier novel Eye in the Sky – where various layers of unreality are presented to the reader and the last peeled back and shown as dubious. What people don't seem to get in film version 1 is that the whole Alien Air Plant on Mars is itself so silly that the discovery of him being a mind-wiped special agent is part of his implanted memories, or is it?? A bit of the And He Woke Up And It Was All A Dream...*

NK: I think +1 vp for expanding on this and another for eliminating the otherwise plausible *Eye in the Sky* as the source for the 'bonus' Dick character. (Clue for all: may need to ask yourselves, in what Dick work is at least one of the major characters held to be dead almost throughout?) // Marcus goes on to decline guessing the **AGoT** character (as unfamiliar) or have another shot at the **Mote** one (moot anyway, if you'll pardon the pun). He speculates that the Connection is a “lifetrack changing revelation” (No, likewise moot).

so SCORES ON THE DOORS Marcus 13, DaveB 12, SteveB 10, KarenD 10, ColinD 9, PaulRt 4, AlanO 3, PaulRg 2, SteveJ 1, ColinE 1, NeilD 1, everyone else 0. Two targets + entertainment left! Being the aforesaid **AGoT** character, the bonus Dick character, plus anything towards these targets including of course the entertainment. As an example of the latter we have Alan now moved up to 3 points because (and despite knowing the **AGoT** target character was male) he couldn't resist:

Alan Osborne: *(with flourish) DAENERYS STORMBORN of the House Targaryen, FIRST of her Name and The UNBURNT, being QUEEN of the Andals and the First Men, KHALEESI of the Great Grass Sea, BREAKER of Chains and MOTHER of DRAGONS. ((Pointed in right direction, I had to quote this in full.))*

“SEE EMILY PLAY” (Who, of Whom[+ this turn What], Whence) Turn 3 (GM NickK)

Steve Borndale(SB) and Dave Berry(DB) join the Days (CD/KD), Neil Carson(NC), Paul Regan(PR) and Lorraine(LT), with just about everyone remarking that this turn was a lot harder despite the extra clues. (Where characters are intermittently underlined you got or would have got one point total for getting either.)

Ten: E.R.Eddison / Mistress of Mistresses – as hinted by opening quote, so not *The Worm Ouroboros* but nice guessing anyway (especially Steve). Evidently none of you are familiar, as the characters **10a** Anthea the were-lynx, **10b** Lessingham the twixt-worlds principal (who features in other Eddison novels inc *Worm*) and **10c** fateful young Queen Antiope all remained beyond guessing. SB2, CD1, NC1, PR1 (max: 4).

Eleven: Robert Hardy / “For Conscience’ Sake” from *Life’s Little Ironies*, I gave a point for the collection because even those who guessed (from the style) that it was Hardy were struggling to nail the tale and so the characters **11a** Mr Millborne and **11b** Mrs Frankland (though Neil got the lot). NC4, KD2, LT2, PR1.

Twelve: Frank Herbert / Dune Messiah, not for the first time Nick sneaks in the sequel just to confound those seizing upon the topic-of-the-moment. So **12a** was Alia not her mother Jessica, though still in effect **12b** Bene Gesserit and **12c** was the planet Ix. CD5, SB5, DB3, KD2, LT2, PR2, NC1 (last min guess).

Thirteen: Shirley Jackson / The Haunting of Hill House, with Hill House itself being **13b** and the neurotic central character **10a** Eleanor, with **10c** Dr Montague – whose name was changed for the famous original film version, sorry ladies. KD4, LT4, CD2, NC2, PR2, SB2 (max: 5).

Fourteen: Joan Lindsay / Picnic at Hanging Rock, **14a** is Appleyard Mrs and College. “Know this one!” exclaims Dave in relief, while Steve comments “..late Summer in February, has to be Antipodean, prob Aus. I remember the film if it’s that, but not the book.” (Presumably nobly eschewing Wiki & past *OoHs*...) DB4, LT4, KD2, NC2, SB1. Now add 3 for this turn’s participation bonus (to again make total max = 25)...

Total scores for Turn 3: Lorraine 15, Karen 13, NeilC 13, SteveB 13, ColinD 11, DaveB 10, PaulRg 9.

Lorraine thus joins each of the **Days** on a round win apiece.

Cumulative scores: Karen 52, ColinD 50, NeilC 49, Lorraine 43, PaulRg 34 (divide by 4 for skewed av); SteveB 13, DaveB 10, ColinE 8 (divide by 2 for skewed av); everyone else 0 (and skewed average 0).

Set up for Turn 4:

Fifteen: “Behold a fine sample of your indulgence of others, by marrying a great fortune! After all, though,” **15a** reflected, philosophically, “I would not change shoes with her. For it is not wholesome, my friend, to be your wife. But it has been eminently pleasant to be your playfellow.” // **15b** smiled. And **15b** somewhat altered his position. ((Bonus point for naming the series as well as the specific work.))

Sixteen: *But even as she ((16a)) was about to speak the change went through her, the brief shuddering, the sudden whitening of her face which Mr 16b had witnessed just the day before. It was what he had been waiting for and he leaned forward, curiously and anxiously. The possession of the girl, for possession is what he imagined this to be, disturbed him no less than it had before, and yet he was helpless to intervene.*

Seventeen: *We all looked, and then understood that this was what we were doing, at her hands: those knots of thin bones that had once been so large and capable, tending so well the small, the weak, the vulnerable. // And she ((17a)) was looking at 17b. And that was a look not so easily described. For one thing, there was nothing in it of suppliance. Or even of need. What there was, and most strongly, was the recognition of him, of 17c. ((This last is the culture 17b represents and a clue as to the overall answer.))*

Eighteen: *Day upon day 18a 18a, in her beauty and her dignity, her wisdom and her power, conducts the business of the State according to the high ideals of Chivalry; night upon night upon night she seeks that satisfaction, that final abandonment, that release which sometimes she has almost reached, only to fall back from the brink of fulfilment, back into an agony of frustration, of misery, of self-hatred, of conscience...*

((see over))

Nineteen: *This speech calmed me ((19a)). I was firmly convinced that 19b, and indeed every human being, was guiltless of this murder. I had no fear; therefore, that any circumstantial evidence could be brought forward strong enough to convict her. My tale was not one to announce publicly... Did any one indeed exist except I, the creator ((of 19c)), who would believe, unless his senses convinced him, in the existence of the living monument of presumption and rash ignorance which I had let loose upon the world?*

Clues: three male authors, here all in [non-Heroic] Fantasy mode, and mixed with two female, here both SF. All have featured in "Keep Talking", ranges A-C, G-J, K-L, M-Q, R-W respectively.

NK: Back to lettercol, high time to get Out & About:

Marcus: *Tomorrow as I write I intend to walk in and around Hereford and pay worship to its statue of a Hereford bull and the River Wye which flows from Wales. With discount by rail, Cov to Worcester £8.50 and Worcester to Hereford £7.50, both off-peak returns.*

NK: Still better than last issue's £23 (and much MUCH better than my mistyped £223, see "Take it Back"). Marcus has since sent me photographic results and again I regret etc etc. Still more regrettably, even on my days off (eg today as I type) I've not been able to do much roving at all, strained tendons in foot apparently. At least I can get on with drafting *OoH*. Bit more on Herefordshire later (when we get more serious).

Marcus: *Netherlands... Whilst I agree with Mr Reader I cannot rule out that plentiful cycle paths and educated drivers might be because of the sheer number of cyclists. I have visited Utrecht on a few occasions helping to sell classic British Motorcycle spares and suchlike at what was (and may still be) a massive annual Classic Bike and Autojumble Show at its large exhibition centre. I only ever met one person who spoketh not good English – and one pub which had records sung in Dutch on its juke box. No litter, people only crossing at designated crossings when the lights for pedestrians were green even with no cars in sight...*

NK: We remarked the general Dutch lack of litter (except occasionally in Amsterdam itself). Which begs the question that if the overwhelming majority of Netherlanders can do it, why the heck can't the Brits? But while we're still in the Hollow Land and in Bill Bailey mode:

Marcus: *Here instead of Indian takeaways there were Indonesian takeaways, most usually featuring MAYONNAISE and chips. This was in the daze when I still smoked magic parsley: one of the chaps I worked with insisted on visiting a café where you could buy joints but had to smoke them outside. Recklessly he ordered a "Sputnik" and true to its name after one blast you were in Orbit. Trying to then navigate by foot on Automatic Sky Pilot back to Hotel Mercedes across an unfamiliar city was quite challenging...*

...NB Hotel Mercedes was the back of the van which carried the stall and goods. Once emptied, two inches of foam & a doss bag was "luxury accommodation" for three people. ENUFF NOSTY ALGAE ar yeh it was FRAYZING.

NK: And while still on litter:

Marcus: *Discarded face-masks are getting fewer ((I had not noticed)) but a new scourge is littering the streets. Yes, lost or discarded **e-cigarettes**. Yet they do have some potential afterlife: carefully dissected, the padding containing scent and nicotine can be used to scent washing or as a refresher for po'pourri. If there is life in the battery it can power an LED to make a torch. But the electronic gubbins and the case adds to the unusable electronica gathering dust waiting to be taken to a recycling centre. Rather awkward when you don't have access to a car – my pile in the porch seems to be in danger of growing into a small and evil terminator.*

NK: Perhaps an opportunity for some 'arty' sculpture? After all, at this point in your letter you were working yourself up to offering GaryL a cut-price Banksy... Which reminds me, I did promise Gary that I'd get around to listing Coventry equivalents, a number of which have appeared as part of the City of Culture initiative. The best of these is very local, in Earlsdon village, where a marvellous depiction of a *Blue Whale* (he said in best Alan Davies mode) fairly leaps across a wall near the central traffic island. The really nice touch is at the bottom left corner, where for no logical reason there's a neat little arched hole with a mouse peering out of it (apparently at the whale).

Gary Lyon: *After 18 months of exile finally getting out and about a bit. Games Expo of course, then recently to Tankfest at Bovington museum and then a meet up in Bristol. And guess what? Caught Covid. No idea where and how it came from – still being careful, drinking at an outside table and ordering remotely on the app, eating at separate table in restaurant, mixing only in a limited group (who have, thankfully, stayed clear). Very minor case, have had worse colds, but had to isolate for the required 10 days. Caught up on my reading though. My recommendation is to have the jabs – must have been the difference?*

NK: Definitely agree about having the jabs (having my booster next week). I've been busy conducting a guerrilla campaign against local anti-vaxxers who've taken to sticking disinformation on local bus-shelters. My counter-attack is to add riders in red ink putting an alternative view and suggesting that the stickers are, just perhaps, a menace to society.

Gary L: *Still planning on getting out more – next event is a gaming meet up in Edgbaston – expect will go for a curry. Wonder what Imrans is like now? Not been for (too many) years but used to be very enjoyable – hope it still is. Is it mistake to go back to old haunts after many years?*

NK: You risk disappointment, it's true (it's been years for me too). Afraid I still haven't hazarded any sort of games meet, including the relative locals, and won't make MidCon (details follow).

MIDCON: rather last-minute I fear (*Queen's Lane Advertiser* appeared more or less simultaneously with the transmission of *OoH 91*) but maybe of use if I do get this issue out on Halloween. The event has been transferred to the **Derby Mickleover Hotel**, dates **5-7 November**. Strongly suggest you check the website for cost details (and in case of anything arising even more last-minute), but about as Covid-precautioned as the organizers can contrive, I gather. Sorry I can't be there – impossible weekend for me (even if I could guarantee the accommodation), not least because I'm having the aforesaid Covid booster shot.

NK: big space filler needed! A couple of things I couldn't fit in earlier...

Purely polemical aside re the "Quicksilver" Connection: the habit of making meaningful their characters' demise (seeming, actual or one of personality) is surely another reason that *TLotR*, *Dune* et al enduringly rise above the morass of SF&F and adventure fiction in general, including thrillers so-called. Which thus too often (presumably from a misplaced sense of pseudo-realism) feature a string of meaningless deaths/disappearances, leaving the would-be reader wondering what was the point of the story as story at all. (This may also help explain why *TLotR*, *Dune* etc can be and indeed are endlessly re-read. End of polemic.)

W Marcus Arnold: *Here's a quiz our language enthusiasts might enjoy... Which of these are Appropriate / Archaic / Correct English / Correct American / Good or Stylish English ways to describe a Ford Cortina? ...*

... (a) Self Propelled Vehicle (SPV); (b) vehicle; (c) motor vehicle; (d) motorised vehicle; (e) automobile; (f) autocar; (g) motor carriage; (h) motorcar; (i) jalopy; (j) car; (k) rust bucket ... Damn my britches them Yankees 'ave forced us to use their favourite automobiles instead of our English autocars, of course only vulgar people call motor carriages 'cars'... (More needle work needless to say.)

NK: Oh I think we get the point.

Dane Maslen: *Just a quick comment on the issue of whether a small working population can support a large retired population. This is always presented in terms of monetary cost, but that's not the real issue, which is whether sufficient food can be grown, resources mined, products made, and care (medical and otherwise) provided by the available working population to support the whole population. With a world of ever increasing automation it ought to be possible, though there might not be sufficient excess working population to do the really important jobs like estate agent, advertising executive, telephone sanitiser, insurance salesman, personnel officer, public relations executive and management consultant.*

NK: Thank you, Douglas... // Within this little banter there's the key second sentence, which is spot on apart from the suggestion that the issue is always presented in terms of monetary cost, as I personally am Not Guilty on that particular count. Towards this, I note that both Dane's serious point and his ironic one highlight further corollaries. Suppose that our needs (measured not in monetary terms but as a far broader abstract) can be attained by a proportion of the available working population, what then is to be done for (or about) those 'available' who for one reason or another do not so attain? Of course to an extent our supposedly advanced modern societies have already answered this question, viz the invention of so many of the roles that Dane listed (and more). Which brings us to a second thought. Suppose that needs can be attained but are not realized, i.e do not in due measure reach many who do so need? This then is evidence that somewhere along the line, perhaps quite a way along that line, economic power (access to resources) is being abused, quite possibly in undue favour of those who *do not so attain*. This image strikes me as not a million miles from the situation currently obtaining in this Vale of Tears.

Of course, what ColinE was on about was something else again: the supposition that the available working population might not be able to support the whole population anyway, particularly as they get older and become increasingly less available. And here his instinct was sound, for the apparent ameliorative advice to *have larger families* was not only wrong-headed but in the longer run self-defeating. Such a policy at best only postpones the Evil Day, because no macro-lifeform can increase population indefinitely. There is certainly some upper if incalculable limit as to how much of a planet's biosphere can be converted into its dominant species' protoplasm (plus ancillaries), and long *long* before that said species is going to hit difficulties of a more pressing nature (if you'll pardon the pun). This too strikes me as a situation currently obtaining, etc.

In brief, it's arguably already too late for even this bad advice to have even a momentary mitigating effect. Not just in this country, but everywhere. Colin is (and Dane is) therefore correct: the way around the issue is to modify your economic arrangements, not revert to outmoded demographic ones.

((NB the next serious section is not really linked, e.g Marcus is certainly not referring to Dane.))

W Marcus Arnold: *I have now come back and can report that in Herefordshire the potatoes grown in thick clayey soil have been lifted, but had I lived locally I could have had a field day gleaning. Lots of orchards, though I partook of no cider.*

NK: What now follows has in my view some justice/validity, not unmixed with (some) overstatement.

Marcus: *Organic food sucks as an environmentally friendly option as the poor yield needs more land to be used instead of being left to go wild. It is a luxury. Varmers is quite happy to use cow shit to fertilise wheat fields anyhow, but if all the cows are made extinct by vegans... (Vegan milk, well almonds don't seem to grow well in Britain and as for oat milk there would be no land left.)*

...If people want to be Vegan or only eat Organic that's fine by me but I object to the cultural fascism of some Talibanic fanatics that want to impose it on everybody. I say get rid of acres of plastic polytunnels of soft fruit and make strawberries a luxury again (remember Pick Your Own). I am not happy to live in a nation that, Decadent Roman-like, requires 3rd class non-citizens (as not-that-distinct from slaves) to do all the menial work cleaning toilets, working in fields, killing insects in those fields by hand. Neither do I want to live in the past of a Golden Age of environmental friendliness that never existed, gathering my own dung to spread on my small plot and being eaten by wolves...

Marcus still pursues his theme: *I'm afraid 100% insulated houses as espoused by WASPish privileged middle-classed and -aged protesters ain't gonna happen. If you look at it logically it needs a fascist government to demolish all the houses in existence and put people in well-insulated but hellish tower blocks RANT RANT. No more Mr Nice Guy sang Alice Cooper and what he was on about was hypocritical moral fascism.*

Oh yeah I forgot. Temporary immigrants, legal or not, employed as low paid field or factory workers don't vote, can't vote. Any nation that depends on them to drive lorries, pick food and work in warehouses ain't democratic!

NK: And is seriously unbalanced in socio-economic terms because it fosters its own under-employed (and increasingly unemployable) underclass, potentially the disenfranchised low-paid for neighbouring regions. Which in turn (and I'm here going to temporarily relax my house-policy on the subject) is why the UK's recent severance from the EU wasn't (and isn't) quite the Right Wing Conspiracy that some imagine. While it's true that Brexit has made the local situation worse (partly due to the Powers That Be not thinking things through), it could not in any case have gone on forever without real trouble ahead (and I mean real trouble, Plutocracy and neo-Fascism indeed) in our increasingly precarious world. Any economy that has become over-dependent upon external resources, especially the human ones, has become an unhealthy economy vulnerable to a knock-out blow and thence political extremism.

((One of my fellow-eds may have already kindly re-quoted the immediately preceding slice of heresy, which I couldn't resist using as correspondence, apologies to mutual readers if the repetition appears redundant.))

Marcus, summing up: *So I say in reverse Antoinette fashion that as the people are Revolting because they have NO AVOCADOES... LET THEM EAT APPLES.*

NK: Yet despite that last brave try at relieving the mood with levity (and I recall that my own attempts have at least once led to a reader regretfully quitting the zine), we do have one final serious subject to cover:

Colin Evans: *Was the fuel crisis created by sensational headlines in the media? Predictions of shortages seem to be self-fulfilling prophecies. A lot of people buying just a little extra can cause a shortage and there are always a few selfish idiots who buy a lot extra. The media does love its dramatic headlines but it does seem to have transformed a mere slight shortage into a crisis.*

...Do such headlines increase sales? I don't think so. People normally buy the same newspaper every time –they have found one they like or possibly can afford, and stick to it wherever possible. I think only a tiny minority buy a newspaper based on the front page headlines that day, other factors such as price may take a part in that decision. Some people do not buy a paper every day so this alone would account for variations in sales, no matter the headlines.

NK: Colin actually sent this just in advance of the last issue but by then I'd already done its 24 pages, still it remains topical. Agree that this was largely self-fulfilling prophecy, and a particularly stupid one given the circumstances, though I've long since given up on the good sense of most national news-outlets anyway (*Private Eye* remains an honorable exception). This is not to excuse the even less sensible behaviour of some of those at the pumps, but of course this is what you get when you allow *HomSap* to have unrestricted access to what (for the moment) is a key commodity. Part of the answer to which is, take more steps in making it slightly less of a key commodity.

Need another spacefiller, this later email from Marcus + odd sculpture photos isn't entirely unconnected:

W Marcus Arnold: *The giant squid from the Planet Zog have invaded Birmingham. Perhaps that's why the trains ((presumably back to Coventry)) were cancelled.*

NK: As long as the Soccer Special was still on (oh yes, City are back in the city now). Time for the footie!

NK ((purely personal note as wryly amused editor)): Fairly disastrous month for Ireteam, in fact with last month's results on top I've now gone five games without a win. Two of them McCone Cup with weakened teams, so own fault. Playing some decidedly system-astute managers in the league might not have helped, but had to be faced sooner or later. Heralding the table plunge / relegation battle I'd originally envisaged?

"...Division One. Hermits **five**, Ireteam of Overham... two. New World Order **five**, Mankcaster Ltd... one. Nottingham Forest SBC **three**, Middle Piddling Rovers.. one. Perfidious Albion one, Pinewood Old Boys **TWO**. Saffron Walden **four**, Brentford Bees.. three. Shaddongate United one, Burton Swifts **TWO**. Swaythlings Old Boys one, Barrow Infirmities **THREE**. Wookey Wanderers **three**, Newcastle Utd.. one."

<u>Table after ten games:</u>		W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nttm Forest SBC	(Paul Ratcliff)	9	1	0	30	12	28
Barrow Infirmities	(Steve Titterrell)	7	2	1	33	22	23
New World Order	(Mike Parnaby)	6	2	2	40	22	20
Saffron Walden	(Brian Henstock)	5	5	0	29	22	20
Ireteam of Overham	(Nick Kinzett)	5	2	3	29	25	17
Pinewood Old Boys	(Andy East)	4	4	2	37	30	16
Brentford Bees	(Richard Breese)	4	2	4	29	28	14
Burton Swifts	(Simon Drew)	4	2	4	19	22	14
Shaddongate Utd	(Ian Wilson)	4	2	4	26	31	14
Hermits	(Dave Harriman)	3	3	4	22	24	12
Wookey Wandrs	(Andrew Harding)	3	1	6	26	30	10
Swaythlings OB	(Graham Staplehurst)	3	0	7	18	28	9
Perfidious Albion	("Sam Rollderdyce")	2	2	6	14	20	8
Mankcaster Ltd	("Ginger Solcounty")	2	1	7	13	21	7
Middle Piddling Rvrs	("Ecks the Unknown")	2	1	7	20	32	7
Newcastle Utd	("Ken Bruce")	1	2	7	14	30	5

...bare pause (well, a week or so) and we're turning on the radio again...

"Barrow Infirmities **four**, Shaddongate United... three. Brentford Bees **three**, Swaythlings Old Boys **three**. Burton Swifts one, Pinewood Old Boys **FOUR**. Ireteam of Overham one, New World Order **THREE**. Mankcaster Limited one, Wookey Wanderers **TWO**. Middle Piddling Rovers nil, Hermits **ONE**. Newcastle Utd **one**, Saffron Walden **one**. Nottingham Forest SBC **three**, Perfidious Albion... one."

<u>Table after eleven games:</u>		W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nttm Forest SBC	(Paul Ratcliff)	10	1	0	33	13	31
Barrow Infirmities	(Steve Titterrell)	9	2	1	37	25	26
New World Order	(Mike Parnaby)	7	2	2	43	23	23
Saffron Walden	(Brian Henstock)	5	6	0	30	23	21
Pinewood Old Boys	(Andy East)	5	4	2	41	31	19
Ireteam of Overham	(Nick Kinzett)	5	2	4	30	28	17
Brentford Bees	(Richard Breese)	4	3	4	32	31	15
Hermits	(Dave Harriman)	4	3	4	23	24	15
Shaddongate Utd	(Ian Wilson)	4	2	5	29	35	14
Burton Swifts	(Simon Drew)	4	2	5	20	26	14
Wookey Wandrs	(Andrew Harding)	4	1	6	28	31	13
Swaythlings OB	(Graham Staplehurst)	3	1	7	21	31	10
Perfidious Albion	("Sam Rollderdyce")	2	2	7	15	23	8
Mankcaster Ltd	("Ginger Solcounty")	2	1	8	14	23	7
Middle Piddling Rvrs	("Ecks the Unknown")	2	1	8	20	33	7
Newcastle Utd	("Ken Bruce")	1	3	7	15	31	6

NB league tables erratum. For all preceding tables published in *OoH* I discovered I'd consistently missed one goal against for Perfidious Albion, happily this didn't alter any table position.

"PIGS ON THE WING" (*Aquarius Football*)

McCone Cup game 3

(GM Tony Ross)

Nottingham For S&BC 5 Pinewood OB 2; Barrow Inf 2 Saffron Walden 2; Shaddongate Utd 4 Ireteam 2; Swaythlings OB 2 Brentford Bees 2; Perfidious Albion 1 Middle Piddling Rovers 1; Hermits 3 Wookey 3; New World Order 2 Burton Swifts 1; Newcastle Utd 2 Mankcaster Ltd 2.

Mini-table order: NttmF, Shaddongate, Barrow, Pinewood, SaffronW, Hermits, Swaythlings, Perfidious A, Brentford B, NWO, MPR, Ireteam of Ov, Newcastle, Burton Sw, Wookey W, Mankcaster Ltd. Yielding ties in that order of pairings except Swaythlings vs NWO and Perfidious vs Brentford due to previous meetings. Yes, I (NK) definitely understand it now!

Tony Ross: *Thanks Nick... & thanks for the contents on page 1. I do read ALL the OoH, but this time charged on to page 17+ for the footie. And very entertaining Paul R((atcliff)) made it! // I do want to scotch any rumours that that the dice rolls are anything other than random. Even if I have rolled three consecutive 93's...*

...You did a very modern thing to play "reserves" in the Cup. It was purely dice rolls that followed, although it seems to have provided Paul with a topic of conversation. I think one can design a team and then play to its strengths in this football game. Lotsa captaincy factors means that the manager with them and the time to work out what the opposition might do could change his team enough to change the odds in his favour...

...More please on game theory.

NK: It might have to be general as per last time (see penultimate page, I'm guessing), don't think I could claim to be any great shakes on this specific game – or not after getting stuffed by a revived Hermits and their incoming new manager (hi Dave), to say nothing of Ireteam's losing streak since.

"US AND THEM"

(*The World Cup Game* potential by-email...)

Shaun Derrick: *I would, of course, be interested in playing **The World Cup Game**. Vague suggestions on how to deal with the cards could be...*

1. Open-handed play: The three cards held are open for all to see and therefore you might want to react to what your opponents might play against you. Each player sends in the order of play for those three cards with instruction as to what they wish to do with it. Each order would have to contain caveats depending on what others play. This may be a bit awkward to adjudicate though.

2. Multi-card hand: Every player has their own deck of exactly the same cards each. Orders for play may be 6 cards at a time to start with when there are a lot of spaces to play on but then each turn may need to have fewer plays as you get toward the end of the round. Each player will know what everyone else has left. You could remove the 3 Goal cards in this scenario. For the KO rounds remove the multi-goal cards and in the SF/F remove the 2 goal cards so no more than 1 goal can be scored in any one play.

NK: I was thinking along the lines of the latter (identical fixed mini-decks), which has the advantage that the GM wouldn't have to keep reporting what everyone has left. But perhaps playing to mini-deadlines only one card at a time and on a Last-shall-go-First basis (whoever finishes a round starts the next), the players permitted to submit orders conditional on preceding play. Shouldn't prove intolerably complex to GM but might prove a bit bothersome for the players (being called to do two/three rounds per calendar month).

Colin Evans ((on diverse collectable card games))

Lightseekers game. Recently purchased in One Below discount store in Gloucester. £1 for a pack of two decks (one for each player) for the Storm and Tech factions, which includes a booster (of 9 cards) and other bits. Good components are a folded flat box for each deck when unsealed. The play mats (one for each player) however are poor; they are only of paper and will probably not lie flat enough for the health markers (cardboard standees). In addition they are too large with much wasted space. Alternative health trackers can be easily made or obtained from other games.

It is a game akin to Magic The Gathering with slightly different mechanisms. In particular it does not require Land cards or similar which dilute a deck. See www.boardgamegeek.com for details. The game will work for more than two players.

I obtained two packs for four decks. Though that provides two identical decks for each of the two factions the two boosters can be used to vary them. Hopefully I will be able to obtain some more cards, starters for the other four factions in particular, for a reasonable price.

Epic the Card Game.

This is another alternative to Magic The Gathering. The starter set is non-random and contains 4 decks, one for each faction. Expansions are also non-random and each for a specific faction. It has no Land or similar cards, a player can cast one major spell a turn and any number of minor spells.

Again see www.boardgamegeek.com for details.

Magic The Gathering game.

Essentially a good game but with two serious flaws, 'mana screw' and undercosting.

Casting spells in the game (playing the cards) requires the right Land cards to be already in play. However these also have to be drawn from a player's deck so one may not have the right Land cards yet or may be drawing only Land cards but no spell cards. Thus the Land cards dilute the player's carefully designed deck.

Certain cards are Rare, only a few appear in starter decks and only one in each booster pack of about ten random cards. These cards are powerful but the cost in Land to cast them is lower than one would expect from their effect. Although a player is limited to only 4 of each rare card, they can fill their deck with these cards, provided they buy enough boosters and decks to obtain them.

I think it is astonishing that so many large serious competitions are held for such a flawed product, all down to the publisher's promotion I think. Still, it was the very first Collectable Card Game, much imitated, and game mechanisms have improved since then (dispensing with Land cards for example). Epic the Card Game does not have these flaws and is thus a superior and less expensive product.

I played MTG a bit, for fun only, quite a few years ago and still have my modest collection, a lot of it purchased second hand (or pre-owned etc), enough for a few decks and some other cards. Ready made decks are useful but it is fun to design one's own deck from the cards owned.

NK: Thanks for that, Colin: a useful refresher for those of us to whom Collectable Card games in general (and *Magic: The Gathering* in particular) remained something of an unrevealed mystery. Incidentally, do you know if *The Big Bang Theory's* spoof *Warlords of Ka'a* was supposed to be one and has it, as I suspect, since become an actual game-on-the-market anyway?

...There are of course card games that are [by contrast?] quasi-boardgames, because in effect the play of the cards builds into a playing surface or 'tableau' as in *Race for the Galaxy*. And thus my heretical variant *Stroll through the Galaxy*, where the boardgame analogue is more explicit. Another project for my probably-now-only-two-year-distant retirement is to design such a game from scratch, though I may be fast running out of themes (or a habitable planet) given the pace of things these days. Ah yes:

Karen & Colin Day (in unison): ♪ Will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I'm sixty-four? ♪

NK: Thank you my friends (twelve days hence as I type this spacefiller). Same to you for last month, Col.

“ONE SLIP” (*Still Less Intimate Diplomacy*)

(GM: NickK)

Bul & Ser fall at last, Rum still holds out...

Turkey (neutral) has F(Smy) in Civil Disorder.

FRANCE (Tony Hedges) A(Edi)-Yor [*stand off with*] F(Lon)-Yor, A(Pic)sA(Par)-Bur [*fails as dislodged**], A(Par)-Bur [*stood off*], A(Mar)sA(Par)-Bur [*cut*], F(Spa/sc)sA(Mar), F(Gas)holds annoyed!, A(Boh)-Mun [*fails*], A(Tun)-Alb.

...Russia... F(ION)cFreA(Tun)-Alb.

GERMANY (Neil Carson) A(Yor)-Wal, F(NTH)-ENC, A(Bel)sA(Bur)-Pic, A(Bur)-Pic, A(Ruh)-Bur [*stood off*], A(Mun)sA(Ruh)-Bur [*cut*], A(Kie)-Ber [*stood off*], A(Sil)sA(War)-Gal, A(War)-Gal, A(Mos)-Sev [*fails*].

AUSTRIA-H (Paul Regan) A(Pru)-Ber [*stood off*], A(Sev)-Mos [*fails*], A(Bul) holds, A(Tri)-Ser, A(Vie)-Gal [*stood off*], A(Tyl)-Vie [*fails*], A(Ven)-Tyl [*fails*], A(Pie)-Mar [*fails*], F(GOL)sA(Pie)-Mar, A(Nap)holds.

*retreat phase: French A(Pic) to Bre.

Adjustments

FRANCE:	Bre Par Mar Por Spa Lon Edi	(-Tun)	(8 but 9un) disbands F(Gas)
England:	<i>in exile but a proposed revival</i>		(--)
GERMANY:	Kie Mun Ber Hol Swe War Den Mos Stp Bel Nwy		(11 but 10un) builds A(Ber)
Russia:	(Tun)		(1 and 1 un) no adjustment
Turkey:	Smy		(1 and 1 un) no adjustment
AUSTRIA-H:	Tri Vie Bud Ven Gre Ank Sev Rom Nap Con + Bul,Ser		(12 but 10un) bds A(Bud), F(Tri)
Italy:	<i>in exile</i>		(--)
			(1 still neutral: Rum)

((Note format of French loss / Russian ownership indicates the Winter04 cession that revived Russia.))

Credits: FRA 13+9=22; Eng 7+1=8; GER 14+12=26; Rus 3+2=5; Tur 5+2=7; AUS 13+13=26; Ita 6+1=7. Italy & England in exile but England is a proposed revival in the Winter...

no **/Press/** ... But once more, thanks for getting back by the provisional earlier deadline, again we can use the main deadline for the next Winter season and include both adjudications in the forthcoming *OoH*.

“ONE SLIP” (*Still Less Intimate Diplomacy*)

Winter 1904

(GM: NickK)

Two minds...

/Press/ first...

Paul – All: One attempted move out of seven succeeded, well that was a great pile of poo.

Nick – Paul: Well, at least you could say that the two hold orders ‘succeeded’...

FRANCE (Tony Hedges).. .. 22 credits: bids Eng 0, **Rus** 20, Tur 2. Controls Russia, 2 credits left.

GERMANY (Neil Carson).. 26 credits: bids **Eng** 1, Rus 1, **Tur** 24. Controls Eng & Tur, 1 credit left.

AUSTRIA-H (Paul Regan).. 26 credits: bids Eng 0, Rus 13, Tur 13. Controls nothing, 26 credits left.
[credits for Mercs: Eng(revived) 8, Rus 23, Tur 29, Ita(exile) 6]

Germany cedes Warsaw to England who **raises A(War)**, again there is no immediate obligation to disband. (Not that it’s optional either...)

PAGE SIXTEEN

NK: While we're still in Dip mode, some response to Mark Nelson's tournament conundrum of last issue, and kindly provided (after a busy *Queen's Lane Advertiser* for **MidCon** in particular) by:

David Norman: *Well at a quick glance, my reaction would be that there is something more amiss with this game. Prior to adjustments, there should have been a centre chart completed, and the total checked to ensure it's 34. So either the centre chart didn't add up, or someone else was also listed as a centre short. So before going any further, I would want to know how that didn't highlight the problem.*

NK: Good point, I must have been tacitly assuming that the centre chart hadn't highlighted the problem; and that because this chart (in the absence of a permanent GM) is the players' collective responsibility we can't reasonably hold any single party to account for it. Most likely the players had neglected, possibly from the word Go, to tot up centres (including those still neutral). Alternatively, they'd simply mis-added them at some stage.

David: *I'll also point out that some of your comments go against the way that Dip is played in other countries...*

NK: Presumably including New Zealand. Mind you, Mark was asking me what I (NK) would do if Tournament Director, and the main thing I'd do is conduct the tournament in a way that seemed reasonable to me! (Otherwise I wouldn't have agreed to be TD.) To which end, interestingly, I would nowadays be even closer to the 1971/76 rulebook than I and others must have been back in the day, as your next bit maybe shows:

David: *"Actually the last phase of Autumn[Fall] in standard Dip rather than 'Winter'," -- while that may be your opinion, far more games are played on online adjudicators than FtF or by post / email with a human GM, and the online adjudicators all use 'Winter' for the adjustments phase.*

NK: Er, not my opinion, it's how the 1971/76 rulebook (and most before and after) actually expresses it. The redundant introduction of otherwise unused "Summer" and "Winter" appellations for the later-in-turn retreat phase or, more often, adjustments phase (in Fall *aka* Autumn) was originally a play-by-mail convenience – especially in US practice where such matters were either a separate postal turn altogether or effectively shifted to the beginning of the next postal turn. And so, as I would now put it, actually an inconvenience, because the practice de-conditioned too many play-by-mail participants (including GMs) in what would have been a more logical approach to conditional orders and conditional order thinking! This, however, remains a fairly minor point (order of play being unaffected), though still not wholly irrelevant when those same play-by-mail bods later came to organize face-to-face sessions or tournaments. Also, it would seem from your remark, when designing or possibly mis-designing the said online adjudicators...

[Purely incidentally: a genuine use for "Summer" and "Winter", or rather "Winter" and "Summer" in that order (for reasons covered elsewhere this issue), arises in the design of certain variants aimed at the control of otherwise uncontrolled Powers – for example, Intimate and the variations featured here in *OoH*.]

A rather more serious deviance from the original design (and back in the day I was as guilty as anyone for weakly acceding to this) was the effective removal of the order-writing phase in face-to-face play and thus from tournaments. Players are "for no more than five minutes" supposed to stop negotiating and actually complete their written orders where they haven't already done so. Now I know WHY this phase disappeared (i.e. was effectively absorbed into the negotiation phase), as difficult if not impossible to police face-to-face (and of course irrelevant in play-by-mail, though later and in theory not quite so irrelevant to play-by-email). So is a good example of an unenforceable rule even in something as fairly well designed as Dip. But it does have bearing on your next observation:

David ((quoting me)): *"I'd rest easy about allowing a board to drop a season behind everyone else" – this ignores that tournament games are played with a central clock, and more time for the Spring ((deadline)) than Fall ((ditto)). So if a game falls a turn behind, then the relative lengths of the seasons would be wrong.*

NK: True, because of the time taken for the adjustments phase, though bear in mind that central clocks are a practice that has evolved to regulate larger tournaments (especially), in an effort to keep things 'fair' across the event as a whole. But it doesn't have to be that way; and even where clocks are the only reasonable tournament solution I'd still rest easy if a board dispute took so long to resolve that the game in question had to fall behind (with hasty decisions we risk being even less 'fair'). Bringing us to your final bit:

David: *Finally, Bridge, Chess, Scrabble – the problem with these games is not the lack of player interaction. It is that they are played to a high enough level that the players can earn significant prize money and the umpires are paid. If Dip was played at that level, you'd have a GM for each board, doing the adjudications.*

NK: [grins] I think you've got my implication t'wrong way around. I wasn't hinting that the problem with Bridge etc is that they lacked player interaction, just that this potential self-regulation was available to Dip to the latter's advantage. But if you're saying that Bridge etc being played to this (money-earning) 'high' level is a if not the problem, then I entirely agree! And thankfully note that Dip never quite got that bad...

For, once again, when a board or card game has become that serious, it has ceased to be fun and, really, scarcely merits the description of 'game' at all. At least at that 'high' level, where the organizers actually have to soberly consider the kind of 'psychic bidder' blacklist that Mark was mentioning for Bridge. Though often enough at far less intense levels. For example, the mere issue of legitimate two-letter words has effectively ruined Scrabble for many.

As for Chess, I used to relish it as an explore-the-possibilities pastime until it became evident that too many of its keenest practitioners hadn't a clue as to why they were so keen, let alone why it might attract those who play for different reasons. Apropos which, I'll never forget the occasion when – both of us reluctantly drafted in at the last minute for an 'extra' board – my opponent and I gently subverted the intensity going on around us by agreeing to play an informal game (*i.e.*, ignoring the clocks). We enjoyed it and, frankly, if anyone noticed and disapproved I will firmly state (now as then) that given the *ad hoc* circumstances it was not really any of their business. (Eventual outcome of our game did not affect the overall Event result, though it would have made for an interesting ten minutes of authentic Kinzett Heresy if it had.)

LAST BIT TO BE TYPED – apart from a We Also Heard From spacefiller at foot of what will be overleaf, plus a bit of judicious editing re Contents (front) and the page numbering. Somewhat to my surprise I have once again been able to do just about everything else in advance, I'm sitting here Halloween morning with no last-minute additional orders or order modifications. E.g the "One Slip" players had already long got their Fall orders adjudicated and have emailed back their subsequent Winter bids; and of course the nature of the word games means I can largely do them as submissions come in and later re-edit at need. Thanks again for early correspondence to likewise key in as individual files. So I was able to spend much of yesterday (Saturday) cheerfully sewing everything together (including of course TonyR's footie results from *RLSG*), though with an eye out for those possible last-minute orders. It works, and barring sudden electronic apocalypse I should be able to transmit most copies of this "Halloween" issue actually on Halloween...

[Oh yes, AlexR also has a Halloween deadline for the **Zine Poll**, so this one last reminder may be of utility: alex.bokmal@googlemail.com, rate zines seen from 10.0 high to 1.0 low.]

What to do in this remaining space? Well re-reading my responses above to David, and remembering that I'd earlier vaguely promised Tony something on games theory (usual slant), maybe it's time to dust off the old Arnold Arnold [no relation] theory of Why People Play Games. Reasons are manifold but boil down to variations on the following:

[A] they like to 'win' by making others 'lose'.

[B] they enjoy being self-sacrificial and masochistic.

[C] because it is a satisfying and cooperative social activity. ((Even when solitaire, I might add.))

[D] they do not know what they are doing.

...not so much our customary Random Comments section as bits on recent history (inc "Run Like Hell").

W Marcus Arnold: *Mark Nelson: there is so much History and so many countries/cultures with it that if we are 'taught' anything from it past Napoleon it is amazing. One of the interesting things about Suez is XXXXX and YYYYYY but if you say that you may be called ZZZZZ. But then I think of Suez as not really history yet, still current affairs...*

NK: Good grief, really? You and I weren't quite born. And, should your outlook be widely shared, that would seem to make Mark's citing of Santayana even more gloomy.

((more on *The Great Escape*))

Colin Evans: *Contrary to the film the escapees were not executed together but largely where they were caught. The commandant of the camp was outraged at this atrocity and paid for a monument to those executed. This was constructed by prisoners on the condition the tools were not used in an escape attempt.*

"RUN LIKE HELL" (Who/What/Where/When/Why) Turn 5 (GM NickK)

...not so many suggestions this time, but still progress...

W Marcus Arnold: *I must admit I'm suffering battle fatigue and Who/What/Why Syndrome, perhaps this is why I am not a Gamer. ARGHH I take that back, I forgot Geography/Asia and 1950 to 1974...*

...Was it IN CHINA? ((Not quite, +1vp!)) Can we rule out POLITICIANS ??

NK: Yes, another vp as I know what you were thinking here: was this "sporting event" a propaganda exercise? I would say not, and to be absolutely clear neither of the two principals (again, one ethnically 'white' and the other not) nor any of their supporting individuals would have considered themselves politicians. Or even acting for politicians other than in the most abstract sense, as in engaged in an enterprise that might bring honour to or reflect favourably upon the countries they happened to hail from. However, it should be added that thereafter the two principals (at least) went on to wield considerable influence, though whether you could say as politicians is a very doubtful point.

Paul Regan: *So "pre-1975" just rules out an alternative answer. Surely meaning that a similar event took place in 1975 itself?*

NK: Yes, two in fact. But one would have been ruled out anyway by Marcus' probing above (being mostly in politically *de facto* (if contentiously not *de jure*) China when the real answer is not quite in China. The other gets ruled out by the fact that the two principals were on that occasion both ethnically 'white'. +1vp.

Steve Borndale ((making essentially the same observation as Paul, so also +1 vp)): *Trouble is, Asia's still too broad a canvas. The over-a-month, less-than-a-year timescale does suggest some sort of tournament. As 'sporting event', probably in one of the larger cities? ((Definitely not in any size of city... +1vp))*

SCORES ON DOORS: PaulRg 10, Marcus 10, DaveB 7, SteveB 4, SteveJ 1, ColinD 1, everyone else 0.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: Steve Jones, Mark Nelson, Paul Ratcliff, Alex Richardson (+*Obsidian* 278), Alan Parr (+*Hops* 348), Simon Langley-Evans (+*LO* 27), Jim Reader (*VPig* 190), John Marsden (*Ode* 423), Neil Duncan (+*TCP* 277, 278 imminent), Paul Evans (*TWJO* 218 but fear I'm having trouble downloading it Paul). Just received *DG* 212, thanks Dane, & of course have reproduced the bare results from *RLSG* 12-14, thanks Tony. There's probably also a *WELCOME* from Marcus but I've temporarily lost track...