

# science fiction news

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Selectors: Kingsley Amis, John Carnell, Dr J. G. Porter

## IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

SF MEMBERS are, we've discovered, less hardboiled than their tastes in reading suggest. Some boggled at *Leibowitz* because it was slightly larger than previous volumes; others rose in protest at our issuing Amis's *New Maps of Hell*. What will the reaction be to the grim tidings that the price is going up 3d from next month?

Please allow us to explain before you bring down and repaint your old 'Ban the Bomb' posters with new slogans such as 'SFBC must go' or 'To the gallows with Carnell' and set off for Bedford Street armed with atomic blasters and brickbats. The reason for this increase is quite simply old-fashioned capitalist economics. We can't produce a full-length book, pay our staff and selectors, pay our advertising bills and make a profit if we continue to sell at 5s 6d. At 5s 9d we just about can.

For years SFBC has held its price down, lower than any club in our group (RU and Sportsman's Book Club are 5s 9d; CF, CBC and JBC are 6s), and these clubs have subsidized it. They can no longer afford to do so. So there's nothing for it. Sorry.

Oh yes, before writing your resignation, there's one more point you should remember. Next year's programme is simply smashing: you'll be getting full details in our October issue but here's a hint: the next six months contain Simak, Pohl, Budrys and Anderson plus a superb Extra. And beyond that—a classic out of print for nearly twenty years!

So bear with us and, if you can, help us by enrolling a friend (and winning a valuable prize for yourself). Thanks. O.C.

## WANTED . . .

LAST AND FIRST MEN by Olaf Stapledon. If any member is prepared to sell a copy to Mrs C. Williams, P.O. Box 1532, Salisbury, S. Rhodesia, please will they get in touch with her.

THIS MONTH'S CHOICE IS

**SLAVE SHIP**

by **Frederik Pohl**

(Dobson 11s 6d; SFBC 5s 6d)

NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE IS

**NEEDLE**

by **Hal Clement**

(Gollancz 12s 6d; SFBC 5s 9d)

NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE

**NEEDLE**

by Hal Clement

(Gollancz 13s 6d; SFBC 5s 9d)

THE creatures from outer space come hurtling into the earth's atmosphere and crash into the Pacific. So far this is a conventional enough beginning for any sf tale—but not for long. 'Hunter' and 'Killer' are both symbiotes, jelly-like entities depending for life on the existence of other organisms whom they enter and make their 'hosts', using their food and oxygen, and in return protecting the host from a number of injuries and diseases. And, as is suggested by their names, one is in deadly pursuit of the other.

Once having found and entered his host, fifteen-year-old Robert Kinnaird, 'Hunter' must begin in earnest his search for the enemy, but on alien ground and in strange circumstances, and, to add to his difficulties, his instruments of detection have gone down with his space-ship.

First anyway he must warn his host that he is inside him and, by explaining his reasons, if possible gain his assistance. Matters are certainly not made any easier by the fact that Bob is just due back at his boarding-school in Massachusetts.

The story of how he and 'Hunter' find a way of returning from school to the island and of carefully spreading their net to catch the killer who must in turn have entered a host, involves all Robert's friends in suspicion and provides not only some very good sf but an excellent story of suspense and excitement from first to last.

Ingenious scientific ideas are put over by the author with a high degree of plausibility, and the whole novel is tense, dramatic and humorous in turn.

'A brilliantly written story of Hunter and Quarry . . . already a classic in the genre, this edition should win many new converts to science fiction.' *New Worlds*.

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Below we publish the fourth contribution by an SFBC member in the present series, and they continue to roll in.

## Venus Probe

by Bennett Shan

4th September 1978: Caravelle Lunar. Ref. TB/V.Probe.

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

For the attention of J. D. C. McWhirter.

Extract from Ejector Tape, homed on Caravelle Lunar and picked up by Earth Freighter *South Star*, twenty miles from the surface of the Moon, 3rd September 1978. *Verbatim*.

Tape 21

Tom Bellamy to Base, and I don't know how I'm going to get this down sanely, Jamie. I've been fighting panic for the last five minutes—God, it seems like five hours—but I'm in control of myself now and am putting this on to the Ejector Tape, just in case there is an even chance of it getting back to the Moon, Caravelle Lunar and the team.

Those scientific johnnies who told us that space is empty want their heads examined. Tell Paul that he should be out here where I am, strapped in a bucketing silver bullet; he should be looking at the dials above my head, the dials that are going mad; let him and his cronies say that long-distance control of a Venus probe is a scientific fact; they should be focusing, as I am, on the Directo-gauge, that, according to them, infallible instrument which would take me to Venus and back; they should—but I better explain.

As per my last call, I was on route, on target, five days past the Moon, well on course, on time and all set for the turn round Venus, and that only five minutes ago. You came over loud and clear from Control. 'Delighted, excellent job, third reports all clear. Strap yourself in, we're speeding her up. Will call you again in twenty minutes. Over and out.' 'Check,' I said. 'Now for a nice snooze.' There was a click from your end and I relaxed in my harness.