

Kaleidoscope Magazine



Kaleidoscope Visits The Underworld

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Halloween Requires Creativity

By AMY STEINBERG

As Halloween sneaks up on us, one reminder that summer is past, I'm haunted by memories of childhood Halloweens. They contrast sharply with typical end-of-October celebrations here in Isla Vista.

Halloween was so simple as a child. Mom and Dad just piled us kids into the Country Squire station wagon and headed for Sav-On. They picked out whatever was popular for kids that year, usually a cartoon character or some other TV figure, like the Six Million Dollar Man.

But now that we're all grown up, we're too old to buy plastic E.T. masks and printed polyester bodysuits off the racks of similar ones at Thrifty's. I know, because I tried it last year.

Instead, we students must now learn to exercise our creativity by making our own costumes, in addition to memorizing chemistry formulas and details of the French Revolution. But it's getting harder and harder to be original and stay recognizable. No one wants to dress up as Gilligan, or the Godfather and be asked at every turn who the costume is supposed to represent.

Consequently, there aren't as many original costumes as there used to be. Certain standard costumes are sure to be in surplus this year, such as Storke Towers with little flashing red lights on top, or groups of six guys dressed as Budweiser beer cans.

In fact, the repetitiveness can be quite tiresome. If I see even one more Playboy Bunny or French chambermaid, I may have to spend Halloween at the library to avoid nausea. But if I hit the library this Monday night, I'd surely be all alone there except for a couple of stoned electrical engineering majors.

The cool way to spend the evening, as any San Marcos High School student surely knows, is strolling down Del Playa Drive. Costumes, beers, and drugs are optional, but an arsenal of rude and supposedly witty comments is mandatory.

Since Halloween falls on a Monday night this year, I wonder if those in the Greek system will be able to attend the D.P. festivities. I suppose they could always take their Monday night dinner routine on the road for a change. But how will they costume themselves? All they'd have to do is turn the collars on their polo shirts DOWN and surely no one would recognize them.

Another problem of Halloween costuming is that some of the costumes seem to bear a strong resemblance to the everyday attire of others. For example, a friend of mine dressed as a Catholic schoolgirl last year but was mistaken for a sorority member and thoroughly razed for lacking the proper Halloween spirit.

And with the recent popularization of 50's style clothing, a bobbysoxer outfit is no longer unique, nor even considered a costume at all. Punks are also so in that they're out.

To replace antiquated ideas like these, new ones have emerged. For example, Valley Girl attire — matching pink earrings, ruffled miniskirts and Vuarnets— is now a viable Halloween costume since it's outdated enough to be funny.

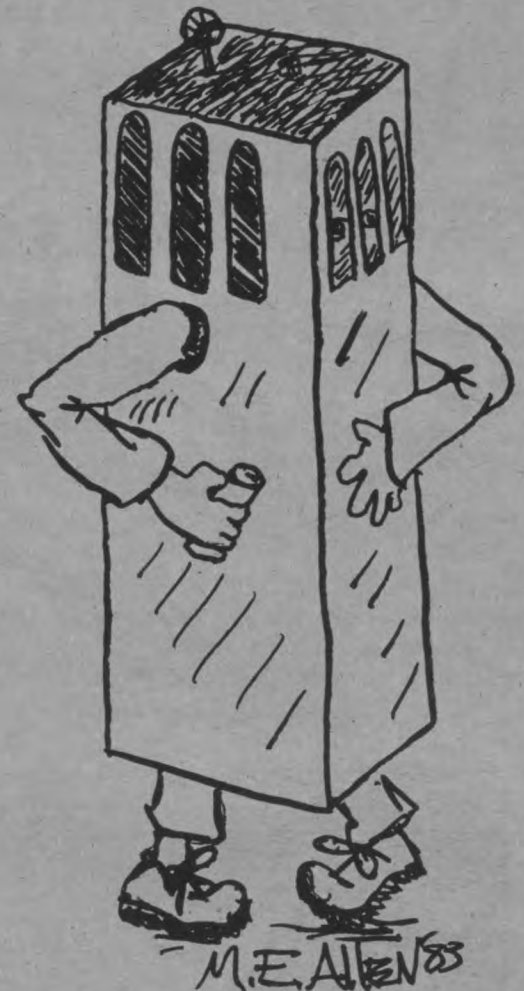
Trick-or-treating, too, seems to be a thing of the past. Instead of candy company executives anticipating mass profits, in Isla Vista it's beer manufacturers who have dollar signs flashing in their eyes. What we lack in chocolate we make up for in malt, barley and hops.

After collecting candy in paper sacks all evening, we'd always have plenty to tide us over until Christmas. Besides providing refreshment for watching Star Trek reruns, Halloween collections always enlivened otherwise dreary school lunches.

Of course I would always get a lot of stuff that I wouldn't have eaten if you paid me. I'm talking Butterfingers, Sweetarts, black licorice, or ANYTHING with coconut. Fortunately, every other kid in the neighborhood had this problem, so we were able to wheel and deal until we were each content with our own ten pounds worth of sugar.

Social philosophers are fond of labelling Halloween activity as mass regression or a return to our more innocent days. They say that Halloween is one of the few times each year that we can step outside of our everyday selves, take on a new identity for one night, and relax all of our normal inhibitions.

But considering the activities of an average I.V. weekend, Halloween doesn't seem at all unusual or special. We act that way every weekend. Admittedly, it isn't every night that thousands of wildly-dressed partiers roam up and down D.P. in drunken or drug-induced stupors. At least, not on a Monday.



I think I prefer Isla Vista Halloweens to ones spent in suburbia. At least here, no one says "Aren't you a little OLD for this?" before unceremoniously dumping a crummy little bag of rancid M&M's into your grocery sack. Instead, they offer you a beer, a treat for which no one ever grows too old.

Kaleidoscope Verse

Running on speed	Monotonous trash
Brain cleaning soap	Exciting hash
Genius turned dope	Sit and space
	Goddamned place.

—Hugh Haggerty

31 People in Sheets
People coming to my door
Always wanting something more.
You've been here twice, now go away,
There are more goblins I must pay.
I paid the fee of conformity,
Twelve Snicker bars, two cups of tea,
A lifetime of stale bubble gum.

Yo Ho Ho's and too much rum.
Can't deal with it another year.
So that night I went to a gig.
I returned, I couldn't hear,
Noises ringing in my ear.
A pirate and a large coke can
Walked by a cardboard frying pan.
Man,
I gotta get home.

—Gabrielle Anne Holley

A haunting image

a reminder

of something forgotten.

But not really.

Your imagination creates.

Spooks emerge

You're being watched.

Over your shoulder

Paranoia.

It knows.

You know what scares you.

Imagination

or is it?

—Cynthia Lindgren

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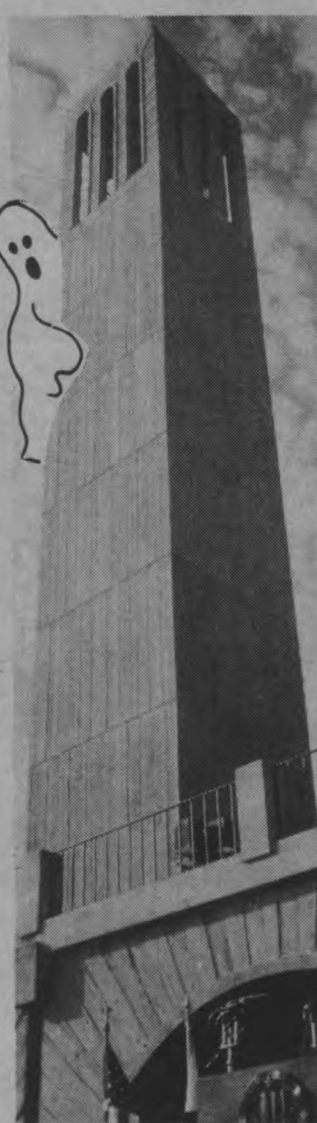
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Kaleidoscope Fiction

The Moon

By JOHNNY GRAHAM

...And most often he found himself staring at lengths into the darkness. As much as he tried to separate himself from it he couldn't completely, only partially, and that was from the shadows, his hat tilted over his eye, smoking a cigarette and wondering when the dame across the street would look over. He usually lit a cigarette then and took a deep breath. He never looked away and he would stare at her straight in the eye for as long as she could stand it and never once did he blink. He kept on staring and smoking and the shadows kept on getting darker. He stared forever into it...

The moon. We kept smoking more and more and the moon became glazed.

"Let's eat it."

"No. It's too far, I think."

"No," he took a drag.

"Let's eat it."

I took the joint back from him. It was a long way up there, to the moon, and the joint felt good.

"Maybe," I said, "Maybe we'll eat it."

"Yeah. With ice cream on it."

"—Or honey. Just dripped all over the top."



BRENTON KELLY/NEXUS

He took the joint from me again and leaned back in his chair. The passion had not yet subsided and I felt my face. I was a bit high.

"Do you have any wine?" I asked.

"Wine?"

"Yes. Red wine."

"I don't know." He handed me the joint and went into the house. I took another hit. More passion.

The breeze came across the yard and I let my face go into it. Across the way someone was having a party. The noise was faint; but noise all the same. He came back out.

"Here." He handed me a glass.

"Assshhh!" I spit it out.

"That's vermouth!"

"Oh..." He looked away

and scrambled for the glass, "I'm sorry. I thought it was wine." He took the glass and went back in the house.

Maybe if we eat it we won't need the wine—or the vermouth—or the gin.

Maybe we would just need the moon. And a little passion. On a summer's night it would be nice. But if we didn't, the gin would be fine. Just fine.

"Here." He came back out. "How's this?" I took the glass. It was different and cool with water condensed on the outside.

"Yes," I thanked him, "that's fine. Just fine." I sipped the cold gin and vermouth and looked at the moon. Maybe we didn't need to eat it after all.



60-Second Interviews

What do you think about a woman running on the presidential ticket?

Ann Rowe, political science junior:

It's about time. With women representing 52 percent of the population, it's time to have the issues affecting women brought into the decision-making process. There's a number of viable women candidates holding offices right now who would be either a good running mate or candidate for the Presidency. Sometimes it's hard for women in positions of power to be taken seriously, but it's time that they were.



Todd Ebitz, political science and environmental studies senior:

I think it's a damn good idea if the reasons behind it aren't merely political. For example, Mondale said he would have a woman running mate, but he's just trying to pick up women's votes. He's playing on the gender gap...and it (the gender gap) is there.



Delerna Harris, English junior:

I think they can run all they want, but it will be a long time before they get elected. It think it's going to take some time before they'll be elected. It's going to take a while for the American population to come around to such a liberal idea. Talk is cheap. Nobody who wants to get elected will have a woman on his ticket.



Brian Duke, liberal studies senior:

I hadn't really thought about it before. I think it's a good idea. But for reasons that are obvious from things happening now, it won't happen for probably 10-20 years. The forces of the powers that be are too strong, and it will take a while for the women's forces to get strong enough to get a woman into office.



Jennifer Frederick, speech and hearing junior:

I think it's fantastic. There should be more women representing the country. Because the country is made up not only of men, women need to be able to express their views, too. I think it's about time that our own views were expressed.



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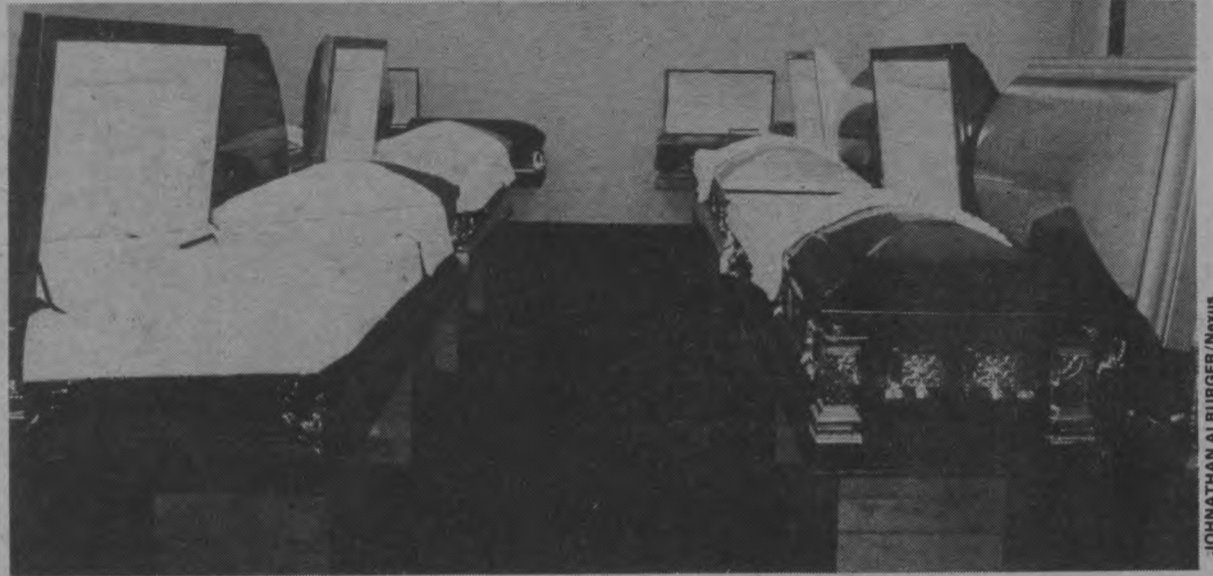
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Myths About Funeral



JOHNATHAN ALBURGER/Nexus

By JONATHAN ALBURGER

Undertakers are not sinister characters out of Caligari's cabinet — pasty skin with dark circles around their eyes, cavernous wrinkles and sunken cheeks — who delight in every eerie facet of necrolatry and light up at the thought of working late into the night in the lugubrious confines of a mortuary. Nor are morticians ghoulish con men who are out to financially bury the grieving family along with the deceased.

At least not the ones I spoke to. The most arduous task funeral directors must tackle these days is not handling a corpse or performing a tricky embalming, but overcoming mythology, negative press, and all those cheap puns and bad jokes. "Undertaker" and "mortician" and "funeral director" are synonymous terms, with only vague historical distinctions. "Funeral director" sounds better than "undertaker," which conjures up impressions of early Basil Rathbone and Bela Lugosi films. Whatever the title, the job performed is basically the same.

Funeral homes are not a tax-supported, governmental service like the post office. Rather, funeral homes are private businesses specializing in caring for the deceased and their families. What used to be known as parlors for funeral services are now called "homes" because the word evokes security, trust, care and comfort. Whether they are individually-owned or controlled by large corporations, these homes are run by licensed morticians, which means a person who is educated and certified to handle, embalm, bury or cremate the dead.

Licensed morticians Roland Jurgens, Jack Hughes, and John Hauschild with Welch-Ryce-Haider Funeral Chapels of Santa Barbara and Goleta brought into focus the services they perform for families and the community.

Three days is the average length of time from death to burial, according to Hughes. During that time, arrangements have to be made for moving the corpse, notifying relatives, placing a notice in the newspaper, and all the major decisions of burial (or cremation), including scheduling viewing times and chapel service time. Finally, graveside "committal" services have to be planned.

Funerals are highly ritualized in America, more so for some religions than others (e.g. — Catholics often request services with the rosary and Mass with a minister in a church), but the format, style and order has changed little over the last three decades, Hughes, who has been a mortician for 37 years, said.

After receiving a clearance certificate from the county coroner, the body is brought to the mortuary for preparation or, if it is already there, preparation for committal is initiated. The corpse is usually refrigerated until decisions about services have been completed. If the deceased is an old veteran, the Social Security Administration may be contacted to check on possible benefits; or, similarly, a dusty old insurance policy may be reviewed for death provisions. If the family opts for cremation, which is quicker and more appropriate when the body is not to be viewed, the next of kin has to sign a "release." There has been no disproportionate increase in cremations, Hughes said, although crowded areas have led to wider employment of multiple in-

High School Class Inspires Undertaker.

Exactly what a funeral director does has been kept shrouded in a mist of misunderstanding and general ignorance, for no matter how strange and interesting the occupation may be, most people would rather not think about death — especially in his or her own family.

But when Aunt Fanny or Uncle Charlie passes on, someone has got to think about what to do. There are an inordinate number of calls to make, certificates to sign and services to arrange. Decisions about dealing with a corpse usually have to be made at the worst time — after the fact of death — unless the person made his or her wish for after-death treatment known in a will. Many people avoid wills and last testaments, let alone attempting to describe the manner in which they want their body treated. Considerations vary according to religion, family traditions, and individual whim. Services can be very subtle, quick and routine, or they can be lengthy, involved and elaborate.



JOHNATHAN ALBURGER/Nexus

Directors Uncovered

terments (bodies stacked coffin on top of coffin in a single grave plot).

Welch-Ryce-Haider was established in 1924, making it the second oldest funeral home in Santa Barbara (McDermott-Crockett Mortuary was established 1906). Hughes became interested in the business when he was asked to write an essay on a funeral home for his high school class. He appreciated the deep concern funeral directors showed. He was also enticed by the salary of \$75 a week.

Jurgens lived in an apartment above a funeral home 20 years ago when he first became interested in pursuing a career in undertaking. He helped the directors part-time while going to school and, like Hughes, was taken in by the value of "helping people at the most difficult time in life." He has practiced now for 19 years. Hauschild, with 16 years of experience, is the newest member of the firm.

To be licensed, a practitioner must complete one year at a mortuary college and serve an apprenticeship for two subsequent years. They must then pass a state funeral license examination. But that's not the difficult part, the three concurred; that comes later.

In a profession that operates 24-hours-a-day, it's a little difficult not to take some of the stress home at the end of day. That's why Jurgens, Hughes, and Hauschild all say they make a special effort to distance themselves from their work. A constant barrage of corpses and grieving families takes its toll, but the worst is having to prepare dead children, Jurgens said. No matter how often preparation and treatment for burial may be performed, "you always feel choked up with small children."

Hughes agreed, but added that he always has to be ready to act. Few bizarre problems or incidences of body mutilation occur, although Hughes did have to work with the bodies from a plane crash in the Santa Ynez hills two years ago. "You just do it. It's a part of the job. You feel for the people but you can't let it devastate you. You can't take it home. If you do, you don't last long."

They dismissed questions about the emotional toll the job takes by explaining that death is natural and unavoidable. Most of the persons they prepare are in their 60's, 70's, and 80's who have had "full lives."

Hauschild added, "Things may get to you at first, but after a while, nothing is too bothersome."

Even the process of embalming a body, which requires draining blood and other bodily fluids, becomes routine. After a body is received at the "back door," it is bathed and shaved. The features are set in accordance with family wishes. For an average of one and a half to two hours, the corpse is then arterially injected with a formaldehyde solution while blood and other fluids are extracted by pressure, Hauschild explained. The formaldehyde preserves as well as disinfects the body. Common problems include blocked arteries (from arterial sclerosis, for example) and decomposition of the body which may be more rapid in those bodies which have a lot of drugs in them, such as from chemotherapy.

Some cosmetics are used to make the corpse appear as he or she looked before death, Jurgens and Hauschild said. Cosmetological techniques are taught during the two-year apprenticeship. "We strive to not use much," Hauschild said, "but often you can't help it. For example, if a body is jaundiced, we'll have to use the heavy cremes and opaques."



JOHNATHAN ALBURGER/Nexus

When the corpse is finally ready, it is placed in a coffin chosen from the mortuary's "Coffin Room" (where coffins are displayed open-lidded and vary in price according to materials and ornateness) and taken to a "slumber" or visitation room where family and friends may spend some private, personal time with their dearly beloved.

The Ward Avenue, Goleta, branch of Welch-Ryce-Haider also has facilities for cremation, which was installed after a 1980 law was passed to allow "free-standing"

"You Always Feel Choked Up With Small Children."

(not on cemetery premises) crematoriums. Cremation takes about two hours, plus an additional two-hour "cool down" period before the ashes can be put into an urn.

As for all those myths alluded to above, Jurgens and Hauschild could only grin and laugh a little. No, a body has never sat up on its own and made disgusting noises. No, a body has never come back to life, although they have heard stories that were supposedly true about such. And no, the hair and nails do not grow after death; rather, the receding of skin is responsible for the illusion since formaldehyde embalming tends to dehydrate skin tissue.

In death as in life, every body is unique and every case a little different. But, as they say, all men are cremated equal — or something like that. Operating a funeral home is not a macabre, gloomy and morose punishment; it is a useful and necessary part of life. It just happens to deal with the means to an end!



JOHNATHAN ALBURGER/Nexus

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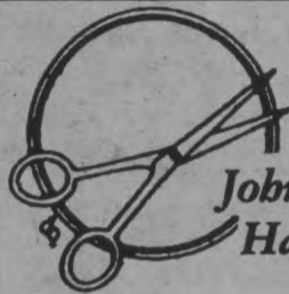
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"Vampyre" Attacks Death And Suffering

By JONATHAN ALBURGER

My film about a vampire who surfaces in modern society 200 years after being confined to his coffin in Romania started out as a comedy — in the same vein as *Love At First Bite* — but as the "dailies" came back I realized that the look and feel of the footage was very dramatic, lending itself more to a "serious" horror film than to a spoof of the vampire legend and the associated film genre. Death and suffering are not light subjects.

Sure, it's been done before. What hasn't? After all, I had just finished a musical-comedy and needed a change. Vampire mythology has intrigued me for years (*Dark Shadows* was a big influence back in my impressionable years) and one of my best friends looked alarmingly like Count Vlad himself. So, like Dracula thirsting after the rich blood of life, I sought to create a film full of the vampire essentials: eerie lighting, beautiful victims, a thousand candles, fog, a full moon, a hero-victim confrontation, and of course, a coffin. These are clichéd but necessary to revive vampire lore.

Granted, being too serious and less-than-entirely successful could lead to heavy criticism, especially considering the apparent lack of narrative originality. But the tendency toward the overly dramatic of the group of which I was indeed a part, made the choice in direction increasingly clear.

The Vampyre, my film made with friends from UCSB and Pomona State University, with some help from students at Brooks Institute and Kerr Learning Resources, is currently in the editing stages, nearing completion. It took over three years of on-again, off-again production, and I hope that it will not turn out to be the comedy I originally intended.

Making this modern day horror tale turned out to be more fun and laughter than chills and flinches — at least behind the camera. Looking back I've learned that you must begin a film project with one assumption in mind: nothing will go right. When all else fails — and it will — laugh. With this little bit of emotional insurance, one is fairly safe from the complete emotional collapse that's always just around the corner. No matter how good or bad a film may be, it's the complications and problems you've overcome that make you reminisce with laughter.

Like catching a building on fire when all that was intended was to burn some living room drapes. Hearing the approach of roaring fire engines made hearts beat just that much faster. Using gun powder and flash paper for special effects worked fine during the rehearsal, but when the cameras were rolling my vampire's aim was a little off — just enough to catch one of the actresses hair on fire. Cut! Those were some of the pyrotechnic mishaps.

Every actor's fear is to not remember his or her lines. Luckily, when working with film, the scene can be shot and reshot... Never ask a police officer to take a bit part with one, short, tongue-twisting line. And timing, "isn't that done with a stopwatch?"

Then there are the irritating little things: matches that don't light and cigarettes that won't come out of the pack; a necklace that chokes the leading lady instead of being pulled off on cue; the actress who always giggles when the vampire bites her; props that fall apart before their time; people who stand in the background and look into the camera when you're shooting a scene; the cemetery caretaker who threatens to call the police because we failed to get permission from some dead person's family to film over his grave.

The outtakes will probably make a more entertaining film.

As the impatient writer and hot-tempered director, I was often quite unpopular. I think I took everything more seriously than others did. Hey, nobody was being paid: as



JOHNATHAN ALBURGER/Nexus

I constantly reminded cast and crew, they were working till three am for the "love of film art." It smoothed things over — sometimes.

There are situations which indelibly haunt the mind. A local mortuary thought nothing of loaning us a coffin for the film, but driving around town with it in the back of the station wagon drew wide-eyed stares from State Street shoppers. We used the Earl Warren Showgrounds dome as a sound stage for the final scene when the vampire is impaled in his coffin, but most of the grounds personnel were not informed as to why a casket and over a hundred candles had been set up in an area that was made up to look like a mausoleum. A throng of curious workers soon assembled to find out who had died.

We fortunately got a hold of a fog/smoke machine to provide mysterious ambience, but the solution (a rich kerosene mixture) created a mist so heavy in the filming area that people would cough and choke. Or, instead of clinging lightly to the ground, the mist would billow into blinding clouds, forcing our evacuation until matters cleared up.

Most things really did go fine; it's just that they're probably not as interesting. This is the very point of why we like full moons, Halloween and stories about sorcery, lycanthropy and strange things that go bump in the night. We like the unusual and the abnormal because they grab us by the nerves and give us no alternative but to react.

Remember Bram Stoker's gothic account of Dracula and all those old Bela Lugosi and Christopher Lee flicks? Those things are enjoyable because we can appreciate the effort and imagination that went into creating atmosphere and setting up a scare.

People like to be frightened, to jump at the unexpected, to feel the rush of adrenaline when the beautiful heroine screams (the sexual overtones of biting, swooning, and blood connected with the vampire legend are obvious). If *The Vampyre* can suspend someone's sense of reality for a few minutes, elicit a shiver, or at least be entertaining and fun, then the project is successful and can be deemed worthy of the undertaking — as it were.

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World View

Fantasy In IMF

By STEVE LIST

In keeping with the theme of the Halloween issue, an article on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) seems appropriate, because observers of the situation suggest that it includes elements of fantasy.

The international financial system, in which the IMF plays a central role, is nearing collapse. The system is based upon a shortsighted and, perhaps, fanciful notion that sovereign nations can not default on their loans. Foreign nations could, and probably will, default on their massive debts, making the whole system a "house of cards...which is coming towards a breaking point," said UCSB political science professor Robert Wesson.

The IMF was designed to stabilize the world financial system. It guarantees loans made by private banks, and is funded by member countries. In Wesson's opinion, this function enabled private banks to lend irresponsibly.

In the mid- and late 70s, Western banks were flooded by petrodollars, oil money from the Middle East, creating large reserves. Banks searched madly for new borrowers, mostly among Third World nations.

Potential Latin America borrowers, such as Brazil and Mexico, appeared particularly attractive. These countries, which had sustained economic growth for more than ten years, sought investment capital. Further, they seemed a low-risk investment.

By 1980 foreign debts of major borrowing countries had doubled and Mexico's had almost tripled. The stage seemed set for big bank profits. But in the early 1980s, the plot took a strange twist. Economic conditions deteriorated and oil prices skyrocketed as did interest rates. Third World countries were the hardest hit, and the large debts accumulated became insurmountable.

Banks, especially in the U.S., panicked. Loans were

hastily rescheduled, and further credit to Latin American borrowers was drastically restricted. It soon became apparent that most of these countries wouldn't even be able to pay the interest on their debts. The situation looked grim.

Not to worry. The IMF stepped in, equipped with a big loan in one hand and austerity programs in the other. The loan wasn't supposed to be paid back; it was intended to be simply funneled back to the private bankers. The austerity programs were to be taken seriously. The intent was to make Latin American economies self-sufficient. They would be able to repay their own debts by restricting government spending, cutting back on imports and expanding exports.

Wesson called expecting depressed economies to cut spending "a weird piece of fantasy." The bankers "talk as though there are no political costs involved. They talk as though bankers in New York can somehow dictate to consequential countries how they're going to run their economy and get it to stick."

In Wesson's opinion, private banks had loaned carelessly, had not seen the money put into productive uses and, ultimately, placed Latin America in a worse

condition.

The total Latin American debt is currently about \$300 billion. The annual interest alone totals \$40 billion. To be able to pay this interest, countries such as Mexico and Brazil would have to pay nearly all of their annual export earnings to Western banks. Wesson calls it a "fairy tale situation."

"The only reason that (these countries) say they're going to comply is so they can get more loans," he said. "When they get a bridge loan to help them pay the interest that they owe, they get more than they're actually going to pay out, so they get something to put in their pocket."

When this incentive is removed, Wesson said, Third World debtors will have no reason to comply with the IMF's wishes. This leads to the question of a debtor nations' cartel. What would happen if these countries decided as a group not to pay back their loans? Would this be the end of the current world economic structure? That is the subject of the next article in this series.

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Still Life With A Pumpkin

By DAVE PUGH

The man in the recliner had been watching a western with John Wayne, the volume reduced almost to nothing. Now, as the Duke rode in grand silence across some desert waste, Larry slept, his head on his shoulder, mouth open, one hand on his gut. His two-day growth of beard, already flecked with gray in his thirty-first year of life, seemed to glow with the television's light. So did the metallic beer cans, six in all, which were gathered in a disorderly group on the small table next to the recliner.

The doorbell rang, ding-dong, shrilly, and the man did not stir. It rang again, seemed to reach his mind. He moved his arm, opened his eyes, and sluggishly realized that someone was at the door. He got up, stumbled through the darkness, forgetting that he had undone his jeans for comfort when he had decided to nap. He opened the door.

"Trick or treat!" three sharp young voices screamed. The costumed children were probably seven or eight, but because of their costumes Larry couldn't be sure. They held out their bags eagerly, expecting treats.

"Yeah, okay," Larry said. He looked back into the hallway for the bowl, grabbed a handful of the assorted candy and dumped some in each bag. A headache pounded the inside of his skull, his mind wanting out.

"Thanks, mister," the kid with the Frankenstein mask said. Then "your fly's undone" and giggling as they scampered down the front walkway. Larry looked down and saw it was true. Obnoxious brats, he thought, buttoning his pants.

He turned the light on in the front hallway and saw that the candy bowl was almost empty. It was only eight. There was no more candy in the kitchen; Carol hadn't bought enough. Now she was at some stupid board meeting called by her new boss Richardson. Always working, never at home with her husband. Larry hadn't realized how boring unemployment, forced unemployment, could be, especially in this house. No kids, no pets, no wife. No job. One lousy screw-up and they send you on your way. Now there was only television. And beer.

He went back to the living room and was getting comfortable when the doorbell rang again. He thought of ignoring it but got up anyway. Opening the door, he was confronted by two kids almost as tall as he, dressed in ghost garb, their bags heavy with candy.

"Trick or treat, smell my feet, gimme something good to eat," a menacing, pubescent male voice said. Larry did not know which one had spoken.

"A bit old for this, aren't you, guys?" Larry asked.

"Hey man, skip the lecture. It's Halloween. We want some candy."

"Uh-huh. Hold on a sec." Obnoxious, so obnoxious. Kids'll do anything these days. If I had a kid he'd know how to behave, Larry thought. He went into the living room and got the poker from the fireplace. He reappeared at the door holding the poker behind him and looked at the ghosts for a second.

"Well?" one of them asked.

"Hah!" Larry yelled, brandishing the poker and assuming a bad fencing posture.

"Hah! Hah!" He thrust the poker in front of him. The ghosts ran down the front walkway as fast as they could, too scared to even yell. Larry chased after them and whacked one on the shoulder. The boy dropped his bag of candy but kept going.

Larry picked up the bag and went back inside. He dumped the contents into the candy bowl.

"Steals from the rich, gives to the poor," he chuckled. He unwrapped a Tootsie-roll and went back into the living room, where he again assumed a fetal position in front of the television.

A few minutes later, in the middle of another beer, he heard the garage door go up. Then Carol, a slender, smartly-dressed woman with short black hair, came into the living room. She walked slowly, her energy lost to a strenuous day. Her usually unremarkable features looked disoriented. Wrinkles on her forehead, not usually noticeable, were prominent.

"God, look at this place," she said wearily, putting her briefcase down. She sat down on the edge of the couch behind Larry's recliner.

"Nice to see you too," Larry said. "How was your meeting?"

"Long and boring."

"I've just been sitting here watching T.V., handing out candy to the charming little kiddies."

"Did many come by?"

"Yeah, some. Pretty bratty, too. I'd never raise a kid to act like that."

Carol was silent at the mention of the sensitive subject of children. She reached down to get her briefcase.

"Sometimes," Larry went on, looking at the television, "I think about raising another kid ..."

"Larry."

"These kids tonight in their costumes ... remember how Danny looked in that little skeleton suit you got him, his first Halloween out? That was a great costume ... it was the dark color of the costume that made it so hard for the guy in the pick-up to see him in the road ..."

"Larry, you're drunk."

"Ah-hah, a profundity! You always were quick."

"It's in the past, Larry, it was three years ago. You have to forget —"

"Forget! It happened right in front of me. How could I possibly forget?"

Carol said nothing. She stood behind the recliner, looking down at the spiral of hair on her husband's head. She realized for the first time that his hair was beginning to thin.

"We could try again," Larry said slowly.

"Try what?"

"To have another kid. It would make things so much better, like it was before. With Danny."

Carol picked up her briefcase, not sure what to say or do. "I'm going to take a shower," she said finally. "I'll fix us something to eat after I change."

"You don't want to talk about it."

"You know how I feel," Carol said, walking out of the room.

"You bet I know," Larry said loudly. "You can't help but know when your own wife won't sleep with you."

Carol went back into her bedroom, the room which had up until three months ago been the guest room. She put the briefcase on the floor and sat on the bed to take off her shoes. Then she heard Larry's heavy footsteps coming up the hall. He appeared in the doorway, tall and bloated, his eyes puffy, and leaned against the frame.

"It's not natural," he said. "It's not right for a husband and wife to be like this. To live in different bedrooms. Tell me what ... I was drunk then, you know that. I didn't mean any of the things I said."

Carol could not look at her husband. "It's not what you said, it's what you did," she said quietly. "And you're always drunk, why should that matter?"

"But I haven't touched you since."

"Because I haven't let you."

Neither knew what to say next, both lost in the realization that they were strangers to one another. The doorbell rang, abruptly interrupting the silence. Carol heard Larry sigh, listened to his footsteps as he thumped down the hallway.

"Trick or treat!" came the shrill voices.

"Yeah, brats, take it all," she heard Larry say. Then she heard the hollow clatter of the candy bowl rolling down the front walk, the frightened scurry of children's footsteps, the front door slammed shut. She put her hand to her face, breathed deeply. Then she took a small suitcase out from under the bed. She started to pack a few selected things.

Larry appeared again in the doorway, said nothing, watched his wife pack.

"What're you doing?" he finally asked.

"I have to go Seattle for a regional meeting. I told you about it last week. It's only until Thursday."

"Leaving tonight?"

"No, tomorrow."

"What is it with all of these meetings all of a sudden? All of these trips, these late office conferences?"

Carol said nothing and continued to pack.

"And I'll bet that Richardson guy is going, too, isn't he?" Larry asked with mounting anxiety.

"Jesus Christ, Larry, of course he's going. He's my boss."

"Your boss, you bitch!" he shouted, shoving Carol. She lost her balance but then regained it, almost falling into a potted fern. She turned to face him, her hands in front of her.

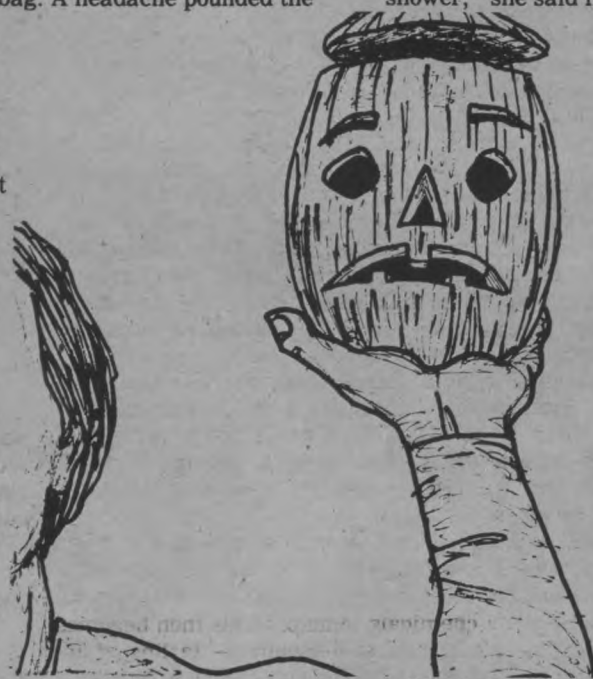
"You think I'm stupid, huh? You think I can't figure out what's going on?" His hands were fists, ready to hit.

"You're crazy," Carol taunted. "Go ahead, beat me up like the last time!"

"Ah-ha ha," Larry cackled, his face breaking, beard bristling. He turned around, went out of the room and down the hall. Carol, scared, picked up her suitcase and followed him. She found him in the living room, standing over the two pumpkins that grinned out at the night through the living room window.

"What're you doing?" Carol asked. "Larry." She watched as he picked up the smaller of the two pumpkins. He cradled it in one hand. The face he had carved stared back at him.

"Alas, poor Yorick," Larry said. He looked at Carol, and then he heaved the pumpkin at her.



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