

HOW TO WRITE A WEIRD TALE

by Hoy Ping Pong

Unlike its sister, the science fiction story, the weird tale needs a plot. To go about this, select the plot which has been used most since 1926 and write your tale around it. I said *around*. Don't touch the plot itself; editors won't stand for that! Above all, *don't* invent an original one. Readers won't know what you're talking about if you don't use one that has been plotted 6,438,900 and a fraction times more or less. At this point, you can discard the plot altogether, because the editor would send your brain-child back if you didn't, on the grounds that there are too many stories with plots in them as it is. They would rather have action.

Action—that is the keynote! The hero must dash hither and thither over the landscape, saving the beautiful blue eyed heroine, who lisps in baby-talk, from the snakey clutches of the villain who, incidentally, is about to let loose on the city a horde of terrible monsters. Where he got them from is none of your business, so you'd do much better to worry yourself about something else—where your next meal is coming from, for instance. I would suggest that pre-historic monsters be used, for they are easier to account for than ones from other dimensions. Editors have an annoying habit of asking authors where their monsters came from. You had better have the monsters destroy New York City. The inhabitants of this city are so used to being destroyed that they now take it with a chuckle of

droll humor. The tax payers might protest a bit though, but don't mind them.

Here to add a bit of flavor to the tale, bring in a new plot. Discard it and bring in a third. Throw that one away too. Plots are cheap—\$1.75 an acre in Missouri. Small plots will do. Then, while the stunned readers are still gasping over the plots, throw in a barrage of big words that none of them will understand, including Webster and Clark Ashton Smith. This will stupify them.

About this time, put in something really weird and spine-chilling. Ice might do, but it melts too rapidly in warm climes, and a southern reader wouldn't get his spine thoroughly chilled, so you had better devise something else.

As a final bit of advice, it would be best to have some sort of recommendation to the editor in order to have your story more readily acceptable. So have your Uncle Silas, who has a friend that knows a friend who is an acquaintance with someone that knows the printer who publishes the said editor's magazine, put in a good word for you.

If this fails (as it undoubtedly will) take your brain-child to him in person. This will save postage both ways, because editors never fail to reject manuscripts from beginners (I object—Editor). Don't worry over this tho. Let it lay around home a few weeks mellowing with age, and then send it in again, untouched. This time it will be accepted. Maybe.

If you go in person, buy a plot in a local cemetery.