



10 STORY FANTASY

DONALD A. WOLLHEIM, Editor

Vol. 1 No. 1, Spring 1951

THREE GREAT NOVELETTES

- TYRANT AND SLAVE-GIRL ON PLANET VENUS** John Beynon 4
(Science-fiction)
 Bert had to take his choice of the decadence of Old Mars or the harsh virility of the New Venus.
- THE POISONOUS SOUL** (*Weird-fantasy*) Franklin Gregory 32
 Was that stranger merely a man who looked like a snake—or was he actually a snake that looked like a man?
- GETAWAY ON KRISHNA**
(Interplanetary adventure) L. Sprague de Camp 76
 There was a secret to winning that mad race over the ice of that far planet—a secret only one Earthman knew.

TEN FANTASTIC SHORT STORIES

- HAUNTED ATOMS** A. E. Van Vogt 14
 Five hundred years after Hiroshima, will new spectres walk among the graves?
- CRY WITCH!** Fritz Leiber 19
 What was it about that young lady that made the villagers bar their doors at night?
- FRIEND TO MAN** C. M. Kornbluth 26
 Martlan charity demanded payment in its own eerie way!
- SENTINEL OF ETERNITY** Arthur C. Clarke 41
 What would happen when the signal pyramid on Luna was silenced?
- THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL** August Derleth 48
 Pincus Hawk couldn't understand why that unfinished wall whispered to him.
- PRIVATE WORLD** Martin Pearson 55
 Mr. Allen found himself being shot at in a war he couldn't believe in!
- UNEASY LIES THE HEAD** Lester Del Rey 62
 Civilization would fall if no one could be found strong enough to replace the dying mastermind.
- SEEDS OF FUTURITY** Kris Neville 71
 Edward Barnett had a scheme to solve an old world's strange dilemma.
- WHO BUILDS MAOS TRAPS?** K. W. Bennett 93
 Some fiend left a "better mouse trap" at the city editor's desk.
- THE WOODWORKER** Gene A. Davidson 99
 Something was carving stinging insects out of wood—and bringing them to life!

10 STORY FANTASY, published quarterly by Avon Periodicals, Inc., at 119 West 57th Street, New York 19, N. Y. Copyright, 1951, by Avon Periodicals, Inc. Single copies 25¢. The publishers do not assume responsibility for the return of

unsolicited manuscripts. Names of all characters and persons appearing in the stories in this magazine are fictitious, and any resemblance to the names of actual persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

PRINTED IN U. S. A.

PRIVATE WORLD



One minute he had been the center of a peaceful American city; the next instant he was being instructed in the art of battle in a land he'd never heard of and in a war he couldn't believe in!

By MARTIN PEARSON



ACTUALLY, you understand, the collecting of what is termed toy soldiers is by no means an unusual pastime. Nor, for that matter, is it always a hang-over from childhood."

Charles Budd tasted his wine and smiled pleasantly at me. I returned the smile. It was good wine and Budd was a good host. I mentally tried to picture his past: had he been a suc-

cessful businessman and now retired to pursue his expensive hobby, or was he once a military man? He had the air of both. The air of a commander who had controlled the destinies of hundreds of men in battle and of an executive who might have controlled the fortunes of a great industry. Piercing blue eyes stared at me under shaggy gray eyebrows and again Budd pursued his topic.

"Napoleon had a vast collection of miniature soldiers with which he

planned his battles. Churchill was an ardent toy soldier campaigner in his youth. Toy soldiers have been dug up in the ruins of Egypt and Babylon. In ancient communities they were regarded as objects of magic—on a par in a mass manner with the famous wax-dolls of voodoo. You must be familiar with collectors of toy soldiers . . . or should I say 'militelists' as I understand the dictionary compilers are now going to call us. You can judge for yourself whether we are in second childhood or whether our hobby is not actually as dignified as that of the stamp and coin collectors."

I nodded. When I had first taken over the Special Orders department of Meteor Miniatures, I had thought that I would be dealing with a group of senile old fools. But I found that my customers were altogether an interesting and intelligent lot. Charles Budd, whom I had never met before, I had thought might prove the exception. His orders had been the most eccentric.

You see Meteor Miniatures is the best and largest manufacturer of toy soldiers in America. As you might expect we are enjoying a boom in these days with warlike toys on the rise. Yet I was not displeased to have been assigned to the special orders branch—it was always the most interesting.

There are in this country about a thousand or so really big collectors of toy soldiers. These men, virtually all fairly well-to-do, and often very wealthy indeed, spend great sums on the manufacture of special sets of figurines. They order companies of Romans, Egyptian archers, Napoleonic cavalry, Cathayan archers, Confederate zouaves, Prussian uhlans, and sets of the very latest in modern soldiery. All these have to be modeled, dies made, cast, and hand-painted. That takes money and that is how the Special Orders department

came about. There are enough of these demands to create a division of skilled painters and designers to handle these orders. I keep in contact with the collectors.

But Charles Budd was always the oddest. The others invariably ordered types made up of armies that had existed. Budd designed his own uniforms and composed his own toy armies representing types that had never existed. That is why I thought he was probably the sure-bet among my customers for an old fool returning to his youth. I was wrong as I now saw.

Budd was wealthy, all right. I knew that to begin with for he often placed orders in larger quantities than other collectors. They usually were satisfied with a dozen at most of any type but Budd sometimes bought hundreds. And sometimes, conversely, he ordered only a single piece but with such minute detail that the two-inch long lead figurine would cost him fifteen dollars or more when it was done.

As I sat and talked with him I wondered now what he did with his pieces. I saw no sign of them in his drawing room in the ground floor of his house. I did see that he had a small bookcase filled with books on military tactics—Clausewitz, Werner, Haushofer, Suvarov, and so on.

"In spite of what you say about collecting, surely you have some other purpose for your own pieces, Mr. Budd?" I asked. "After all, yours are of your own design. Are you interested in military problems?"

Budd picked up a small bronze Chinese dragon and twirled it around in his fingers.

"You are rather observant, I see," he answered. "In my own way I conduct fascinating little puzzles in tactics and strategy. Would you be interested in seeing my set-up?"

I nodded. He poured another glass of his excellent wine.

"Let us have another drink then and we shall go up."

We downed it. It was sweet and heady but good.

"Redgren!" called Charles Budd arising from his seat.

His secretary entered. I had met him when I had first come in. He was a youngish man of military bearing, slightly foreign in attitude, I suspected French or Swiss.

"Redgren, Mr. Allen and I are going up to the second floor."

The young man nodded and as we got up he followed us. Out into the hall we went and up the softly carpeted stairs.

The wine must have been stronger than I had thought for I felt a slight dizziness and realized that it had gone to my head.

The stairs seemed interminable but at last we came to the top. I was very groggy and woozy. Things were beginning to whirl about me.

Budd stepped up to two large sliding doors and thrust them silently apart.

For an instant I got a glimpse of a very large room that must have filled the entire second floor. The walls were covered with a great mural showing scenery and a flowing landscape.

Dizziness overcame me. I felt myself slipping and as I went down my last impression was that the floor in that room was all laid out like a huge three-dimensional relief map.

I SHOOK my head groggily. I was coming to. I realized I must have been knocked cold by the wine. Funny, I thought, could it have been drugged and if so, why? I opened my eyes, stared and closed them again. I must still be unconscious I thought.

For I had looked out, not at the walls of a room in the city but at an open landscape, flowing and verdant under a blue sky. Now I became more cognizant of my surroundings; I was

sitting up, not lying down, and it was upon some stone bench or other. I opened my eyes again.

I was on the terrace of a big white marble building set on the side of what must have been a mountain or high prominence for I could see ahead over the balcony into a great stretch of valley below.

I got up, shook my head to clear it, but the vision remained and the balcony responded very solidly to my touch. I stared down into the land that unfolded below. There were mountains in the purple distance and between them and the range of mountains upon which this building stood was a great level green plain; a few rivers and creeks could be seen wandering through it; far off habitations and the towers of several cities could be made out (there was not a cloud in the sky), and what might have been a railroad somewhere off in the distance. Directly beneath the balcony the mountains sloped down and I saw a winding white road going on down to the plains. I noticed several barricades and at one point some figures pacing up and down like sentries. There was a step behind me. I turned.

It was Redgren, Budd's secretary, with a smile on his face and saying: "Welcome to Landragon, Mr. Allen. I trust you are over your slight discomfort?"

I stared at him before answering. He was wearing a military uniform, one I could not place with any soldiery I had seen. It was purple in color, nattily cut, he wore brown alligator leather boots and belt and a jaunty black beret slanted over his youthful face. A holstered revolver dangled from his belt.

Then I stared again at his uniform for it struck me that I had seen something like it before, but I still couldn't place it. Swiss perhaps? Italian? No, they didn't fit.

"What's all this? Where's Landragon and where's Mr. Budd?" I

asked, perplexed. The young man smiled, shrugged his shoulders. "This is Landragon," he repeated. "I'm afraid I can't tell you where Mr. Budd is or explain much further. You'll have to be patient a bit. And now, will you come with me and I'll be pleased to show you around." He took my arm and we started off along the balustrade and around a corner.

I noticed then that I was wearing different clothes than the business suit I had originally had. I stole a glance at myself. I was clad in a semi-military khaki outfit, leather puttees and all. No insignia or anything though. I could fancy a war correspondent would dress as I. I confess I couldn't figure it out at all.

Around the corner we stepped on to a street and I saw something of the town we were in. It was a little mountain city, I imagine like many except for its oddities. The buildings were narrow and gabled and quaint in the Swiss manner.

The oddities were the evidence that this was nothing but a military fortress. For I saw no children around or any sign of marketing, washing, or the myriad things that occupy a normal city. The only men in sight were soldiers, all wearing purple uniforms of Redgren's design and many helmeted along the French model. Rifles aplenty, few went unarmed. Women there were extremely few; I scarce remember any.

I noticed another odd thing as we went along the street. The soldiers all looked oddly alike. As if they were all brothers, sometimes even twins. An extremely isolated town, I thought, to have such close resemblance among its populace.

"Where are we going?" I asked my guide. Redgren hesitated a moment. "I'm taking you to the castle. The Grand Dragon will be interested in meeting you."

The Grand Dragon, eh? A sort of mountain prince, perhaps? Or an odd

thought occurred to me maybe it was Budd playing some game possibly. This might all be a sort of expensive occupation of Budd's carried on at some isolated estate outside the city. Budd was supposed to be very rich, I knew.

WE CAME to the castle, an imposing structure in a medieval manner, upon whose towers and battlements modern soldiery patrolled and anti-aircraft guns were mounted. I noticed then that it was midday exactly for the sun shone brilliantly in the center of the sky. It had been afternoon when I visited Budd's.

We entered the castle, went through a great entrance-way and came into a large hall in which a number of people were standing talking. There was a slight smell of smoke in the air and I looked to find its source. I stopped short and stared.

There was a genuine living, breathing dragon coiled up on the floor and the smoke was coming from its nostrils. Before it was set a large chess board and sitting opposite was a man in a general's uniform.

As I watched in amazement, the dragon reached out a clawed paw, moved one of the pieces and intoned in a deep hoarse voice:

"Check, General Blakwyt."

The Grand Dragon of Landragon was actually just that! A dragon! It was at that instant that it dawned on me at last that I could not be anywhere on earth as I knew it. Landragon was quite real. The Dragon was real, intelligent, living! But where was I then?

Redgren whispered to me. "We'll have to wait a while. It may be some time before the Dragon finishes his game and he doesn't like to be disturbed."

We stood around a bit, watching. I didn't say anything because I still didn't know what to say. The other men were all officers and they seemed

to be talking about things of no consequence when suddenly through the entrance another officer ran in, all covered with dust, and ran up to the chess-players.

They looked up from their game at this interruption whereupon the newcomer blurted out something about war. Redgren whispered to me excitedly. "There's another war on. Looks like we're going to see some excitement."

The Dragon uttered a disgusted growl, emitted several short puffs of smoke and reared back upon a pile of cushions. The officers were hastily conferring and three or four higher officials were talking plans with the Dragon. Redgren and I stood aside and watched things.

Several men came in now in different uniforms than those of Landragon. I was told that they were ambassadors and attachés from other nations. The Dragon was asking for help.

My guide was whispering to me the various nationalities and he kept saying that he was sure no help was to be had. It seems that this other country, Coucheran, which appeared to be directly below us in the valley had gotten up a steam about the Dragon.

They maintained that it was indecent for a human country to have a monster at its head. Redgren said that this was nonsense because the Dragon had always lived here, originally in a mountain cave, and that he had naturally become ruler of the mountaineers because of his age and wisdom. Anyway that was the excuse that the enemy was using.

I watched the Dragon and General Blakwyt argue with some of the envoys. One fellow, who wore a brown and red uniform, was particularly the object of their pleas. It seems his country, Narland, had usually supported Landragon in the past. This time they couldn't because one of their powerful neighbors had just

made a pact with Landragon's enemy and the Narlanders were worried themselves.

Then everyone stopped talking and stared up. I listened and heard the droning of an airplane. Then I heard a banging outside.

"An air raid!" someone yelled and Redgren and I dashed for the street.

OUTSIDE everyone was looking up instead of running for cover. Up in the air was a single airplane circling over the castle. The anti-aircraft guns were popping at it and suddenly the plane tipped over, wiggled a bit and then started falling.

Over and over it fell and soldiers ran from all sides as it seemed headed for the castle square. Then it hit.

There was a terrific crash and bits of wood and metal flew in all directions. When the dust settled, a pile of almost unrecognizable wreckage lay in the street, the shock had been so hard and violent. And then I gasped and stared. For the wreckage was being jiggled and shoved aside from below!

Then out of that pile of junk there climbed the aviator, without a scratch or a tear. He was smiling broadly as he stepped out and kicked his heels free of dust. He had survived that crash absolutely unhurt! It was incredible.

I frowned as I looked at his uniform. Black belt, helmet and boots, black fronting on bright green jacket and pants. It seemed vaguely familiar but again I couldn't place its nationality. I recalled, too, that some of the uniforms worn by the foreign ambassadors had seemed familiar likewise.

They led the prisoner away for questioning and things began to happen thick and fast. Bugles rang out and soldiers rushed out of buildings and began to assemble in the streets. Guns were rolled down towards the road barricades and trucks filled with solid shot rattled down the streets.

Redgren and I ran back to the terrace and looked down into the valley. We had a perfect view of the proceedings.

The roads leading up the mountain from the valley city nearest to us were obviously filled now by the troops of Coucheran. We could see thin lines moving up towards us. Below, the purple ranks of Landragon were getting into position, in trenches, behind walls, setting up cannon on the road.

There was a *whiz* in the air and something bounced off the wall behind us. I looked and it was a piece of solid iron as big as one's head.

"We're under fire," Redgren said, "let's get below with the troops."

"How come they don't use explosive shot?" I asked my guide as we made our way down the mountain road with the troops.

"Too destructive," he said to my profound bewilderment. "After all, they have no interest in destroying buildings? What would they want to conquer a pile of ruins for?" I puzzled that thought for a while and then gave it up like all the other mysteries of this odd land.

There was heavy shooting up ahead and we rounded a bend in the road to find ourselves almost in the front lines. It was then that I first realized another thing missing. I had seen no ambulances nor Red Cross stations. A decidedly peculiar war, I thought to myself.

And I also noticed that the sun was still at midday though I must have been there for almost two hours by now.

We crouched down behind some upturned rocks and watched the fight. A squad of Coucheranians came down the road with fixed bayonets. A cannon firing from concealment landed shot among them and in a short while they were knocked cold. A shout went up from the Landragon troops around us and then there was a

charge. Heavy chunks of metal began flying thick and fast around us.

The Coucheranians were coming up the road again, this time a lot of them and there was some brisk hand-to-hand fighting. I noticed with dismay that the purple troops were being routed and our men were falling back up the road. We turned and ran back with them into the next line of defense.

"They're sort of strong," Redgren muttered to me. "It'll be a very tough fight to beat them."

I looked back and saw a Coucheran soldier lying in the road. Something kept recurring in my mind about his uniform. It had been familiar when I saw that aviator but now. . . .

I saw two more of their green-clad men come into sight and before they ducked down, it hit me. They were wearing pot helmets like the German army. And that added the final clue. A whole chain of thought went off in my brain like Chinese firecrackers and I gulped.

"Holy smokes," I shouted to Redgren, "let's get out of here while we can. We're sunk!"

"Huh, what?" he was puzzled. "What's the matter? We can lick them!" I grabbed him by the arm. "No, you can't. They outnumber you too heavily." I didn't have time to explain to him how I knew but he finally got up.

We started to run back up the mountain. I reviewed what I knew again in my mind. It was utterly incredible, it couldn't be, but yet here it was. That Coucheran soldier couldn't be denied any further. I knew where I had seen his uniform before and Redgren's as well.

About a week ago, we had finished delivering to Charles Budd a very large order of toy soldiers made to his private design number six. And his design six had German-type pot helmets, green uniforms and black facings. And we had delivered at least

ten times as many pieces of that design as we had ever made of Budd design eleven. Design eleven I knew because it was the only one on which we used purple paint. It was the design of the soldiers of Landragon! And they were outnumbered, I was completely sure, at least ten to one by their enemy!

We had better get out of there in a hurry, I thought, this is going to be a debacle. But just then there came out of the woods a whole bunch of Coucheran troopers and a huge cannon with them!

"Run," shouted Redgren. "This way!"

We dashed across the field opposite and came to a wall. Redgren climbed over it and I followed. Just as I got to the top I heard a Coucheran voice yell "Fire!"

The cannon went off with a roar. Something slammed into me with stunning force and I fell off the wall.

"**H**ERE, have a little water," said the voice of Charles Budd. I opened my eyes and found myself being propped up on a couch in the downstairs room of Budd's house. He held a glass to my lips and I sipped a bit from it. I was still a bit dizzy.

"I'm awfully sorry, old man. I didn't realize that the wine would hit you so powerfully," Budd apologized to me but I stared at him suspiciously as I got to my feet. I thought I de-

tected a little gleam of amusement in his eye but I said nothing. I questioned him and he said I had fallen on the stairs and been out for an hour or so.

He asked whether I was sure I was all right but I was and I wanted to get out and walk in the open air away from this house. He shook hands with me and I noticed again the small bronze dragon that was on his desk.

"My secretary will show you to the door," Budd said and a young man came in. It was Redgren, he was the same as before but he revealed not a hint of what had happened. I walked with him to the door and we exchanged not a word save good evenings.

Frankly, I don't know what to make of the whole business. I could have fallen and the whole crazy thing been a dream. It might have been just my imagination but that explanation just doesn't satisfy me. It was too real, much too real.

The only thing I have to show for it is this. When I got home I noticed that someone had put a small box in my coat pocket. It wasn't there when I went to Budd's house. In the box was a single toy soldier. It was dressed in a khaki semi-military uniform and its face was a remarkable miniature replica of my own.

It was badly dented in the middle as if something had struck it a sharp blow or as if it had fallen hard.