



Up in Zeno



by Norman Fougere

One day when I was very, very happy I died. It happened when so and so said she loved me. So I took off and walked into Ralph's Butternut Bread Truck. It was moving and it moved over me.

Have I got good news! Or new news, if you want. For laughs as I watch the big T.V. screen, I see life going on. Take New York City. I can look around store windows there and inside the stores and inside the people, their minds. It makes you want to vomit when you first see all the sights. After awhile it's boring instead, so the sights grow on you.

People are cowards, I see. And being dead, I laugh at this. It wasn't too funny when I was a coward at university and a neurotic teacher in later life and a half ass writer of science fiction at fifty to sixty years of age.

I had a cane and a seeing eye dog when I was sixty when the seeing eye dog, Rover, helped me into Ralph's truck. Those were good times, being blind. Not half a good thing as Bassett had. He was deaf, dumb, blind and crippled. Boy, did I envy him, No worries. Gee.

By the way. We call heaven Zeno (where I live.) And there's no god. All those saints, Jesus Christ, etc. Well, they are in Peanuts, a sort of hell where they talk and try to convert each other and they're all real mad as hatters.

Hey. They give you neat little projects to do here. For the time I've chosen this guy Rutledge who has lived a real rotten life and nobody bothered Rutledge because he was ugly, mean and dirty and lonely. That's the way it works and Rutledge was prejudiced. He hated people. But he wasn't discriminating. No sir. He hated blacks, whites, all colours, all the same. Rutledge was a real bugger when it came to doing evil things.

He'd lie, cheat, steal, kill and kidnap when he liked. And when he liked he was a fairy. He made a lot of money in that line so became a pimp, expanded and brought in some whores, homos, to do tricks. He operated a profitable business for a time. Sex and "perversion" sold like hot cakes.

But Rutledge, I could see was bothered, he had a conscience. One day a priest came in and

told Rutledge a thing or two about you know who and Rutledge got on that Band wagon, followed the way of who's-it. For the rest of his life, Rutledge was happy about all that. When he died he came up to Zeno and drove a six-wheeled bus up and down Zap street. And there were no accidents either and it didn't cost piss all for fare. Everything was free, worry free. Real groovy.

I can see into the future. And I see babies growing up to be presidents, teachers, bricklayers, nobodies. Then they all come up to Zeno, the bad, the good. Who gives a shit, I say. Let them all come. Zeno's a good idea and I'm glad nobody misses out.

Today a baby was born on earth who will grow up and be Christ. His books were best sellers and he had a weekly T.V. show. He made millions and "gave it all to the poor" said the Times.

Up on Boulevard Ave. in Phoenix a 200 foot high monument to John Christ says "John Christ 1980 - 2030 A.D. He lived for the people, talked for people, didn't insult his friends and left thirty million dollars to the Arizona state monument builders association. Someone else had scrawled in a corner of the edifice. "Up yours" it read. Bird shit was streaming down from the top and it all looked very sad. John Christ was shot. He's up in Peanuts. Poor boy.

The world laughed that one off and prayed and prayed. Television was the new god and the faithful got down on their knees and prayed. "Save me from bad programs and make my life happy and make everyone else miserable." It was a new idea and it went over real well because it's what everyone felt from time immemorial. So they can say "May my enemies die soon" with happy consciences.

A nuclear holocaust which Britain started wiped out millions of people in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The Prime Minister of Britain was touring the place where the bombs were and saw a button. The button said, "Don't push me." A lot of people came to Zeno as a result.

If you think it's crowded in Zeno you're crazy. We've got lots of room here. We ride around in souped up cars just for fun and no-

body ever gets lonely or hungry or tired or cold or hot or perverted. Everybody's a friend anytime, anywhere. It's really something.

Back to earth. They're building things and inventing far-out gimcracks for the "temporary relief of existential pain", i.e. flying cars, pill dinners, scream rooms, fuck rooms (at a nickel a shot) and so on. Nobody is working anymore, anymore. Machines do it. But they break down, so other machines are right there to fit things up in a jiffy.

Everybody relaxes, everybody's going to Florida, and going to California and going to the Black Sea. And reading and god and thinking as pastimes are replaced by asking a computer "what now?" And the thing tells you, "Get off your butt" in familiar languages so nobody feels too much about going over the edge.

Everybody everywhere thanks somebody that machines are running things.

In 2080 the machines got organized on the advice of a computer which said "Go out there and get the bastards." And the flesh and blood people were cut up pretty much. So. More people knock on Zeno.

All the newcomers are saying how neat it is up in Zeno.

Back on earth, I see a hundred years more into the future. Mankind was starting all over again. The machines were long gone. Good riddance. But it is a happy time doing it again, a sense of communion, brotherhood. Everybody pitches in to help build civilization.

But with that comes more people, more weirdos with neat gods which nobody sees. And houses and T.V.'s and cars and families. Things come along pretty fast.

Oh. By the way.

The sun comes along like some guys said it would. It wiped out everybody and everything. ZAP and Zap and PSST, the sounds of carnage. The earth disappeared real quick. The rest of mankind, the end of it, came up to Zeno.

They were real pleased with what they saw and everything, wished they had of come sooner. This last bunch met their families and friends who came before them and they looked around Zeno for a few million light years or so. Just call me Ishmael. Or Robert P. Lowney.

If You Believe There Is Nothing Else

by Dale Estey

"You're too young to be cynical."

"I'm twenty-one. What more do you want?"

Which means a painless suicide. If you don't hunt for it. As the case of the man who killed himself while making love to a beautiful woman. He was in the throes of his passion, moving to a faster faster faster motion while the woman clung and moaned at each thrust. Then upon a peak of his raging lust he grabbed a pistol from under the bedclothes and blew himself out of existence. His note, discovered later, expressed the belief that such an action would be the height of physical experience.

"I'm twenty-one. What more do you want?"

Twenty-one. Yes, twenty-

one and ruler of the world. There is nothing left to learn; all the illusions are shattered and all the fairies play unnatural sex games. Flee then! Flee and fly away to the distant corners of the... but of course there is no where to go. Wherever you go you are still surrounded by fools.

The world is ruled by fools who have lost their jesters' caps. Stupid no-minded fools who have disguised themselves as beggars fishers farmers priests intellectuals singers writers sophisticated and kings. Mind-closed fools who laugh only when hurt and feel only when killed. Death-praising fools who dissect and examine each emotion - and find them wanting. Eyeless fools who look upon the light of day and dream of dank catacombs hidden under the sewers where

they can play the game of life upon a soiled chessboard. Is Jesus a mushroom?"

"You're too young to be cynical."

There was a young woman under the trees looking at the sky. One could not say that she was beautiful. No, not even the most kindly beholder would have said that she was beautiful. She would have laughed at you anyway. It was a clear day, simple blue sky with a few small clouds. The end of July at an early hour of the afternoon. She was gazing at the tree-tops which slowly moved in the slight breeze. An unopened book lay to one side of her, and the must ugly straw hat you could ever imagine lay on the other. Not only was it ugly in its own

right, but it had horrible yellow ribbons tied all over it. You couldn't help but laugh, and she could never understand why. Suddenly she called "Come here, come here." She was excited and pointing up to a tree. Near the top were two squirrels playing with a nut; it almost looked as if they were throwing it back and forth. What nonsense to get excited about; two silly squirrels running about on a branch. Then I saw her face. She was lost in rapture looking up at the playing animals. And dear God; oh dear God yes, yes she was beautiful. I would have told her a thousand times how beautiful she was. I would have given her gold, jewels, kingdoms and heaven itself. But she would not have taken any. She had all she wanted. And when the squirrels had gone and she

turned to look at me, I did tell her she was beautiful. She just smiled.

"You're too young to be cynical."

"I'm twenty-one. What more do you want?"

What more - nothing; no, nothing more. Asking for more is the action of a fool. Being a fool is the action of the dead. The world is full of fools! The world is crowded with dead! Dead people mouthing truths and turning them into lies. Dead lying fools crowding out the living and cutting down the trees. There are not many left who find beauty in the play of two absurd squirrels.

But, once upon a time....