

joint-of-beef. Playboy Bunnies and Penthouse Pets made Red Sonja and Belit, Queen of the Black Coast, look pretty lame. (Not to mention smell.)

He switched on his reading light. Nothing.

He switched the light for his extra seat. Still nothing.

All over the bus happy people were switching their reading lights on, settling back to pass the long hours profitably, enjoyably, while he sat swathed in gloom.

There was not one other empty seat.

"Well, they can't blame me this time," Conan growled to himself as he loosened his tie, stood up, and felt around in his golf bag for his sword.

#### THE CENTAUR

"Here, here, you can't reserve these!"

"My legs? But they're private property! I just took them off to rest them. See, I left my pants on them so no one would think them abandoned. The pants are 30-31 -- my size, I can prove it. The legs have a small crescent-shaped scar on the ...."

"Tough tit, shorty. They're mine now. Call it squatter's rights. Better the strong have all than all have too little."

"Well I must say, this is a hell of a life! If it doesn't improve soon, I'll demand my money back," scolds a torso, wriggling towards a door marked MANAGER as a 4-legged man whinnies, leaps a 10-foot fence, and with a clatter of leather hoofs, is gone.

#### WHAT THE TRAFFIC WILL BEAR

After he'd waited in the checkout line for an hour and 26 minutes, it was discovered he was 6,774 dollars short.

"6,774 dollars!" he exclaimed with a show of surprise, though he was not surprised, he'd been afraid he'd be short -- though not that short -- though maybe even shorter, since the register was probably rigged. They mostly were. But he could never make an accusation stick.

"What will I do? How will I face the disgrace?" he wailed. "Couldn't you let me go? If I swear it won't happen again?"

"Impossible," the old checkout lady stated flatly. "However," she added in an undertone, "young man, I like your face. I have a son with a very ugly face, and I'm sure he'd like it too. So give me your face, swear a blood-oath to secrecy, and you're off the hook."

"But what'll I do for a face?" he wailed in a whisper.

"Use mine. I can always get another."

"It won't work. People aren't blind. They'll smell a rat."

A sly wink worked its way out from beneath her wrinkles as she handed him a black nylon stocking with mouth-and-eye-holes cut out. "Not if you wear this."

"Well, I'm over a barrel," he admitted. "Besides," he thought, "you can't change faces." So with the checkout line getting longer and longer, with everyone screaming and griping and threatening, he and the old lady went into a storage room and, minutes later, left with black nylons over their heads -- she to her ugly son, he to a crippled lawyer who, he'd heard, for a good leg and a blood-oath of secrecy, would accomplish miracles.

B.P. 1050

As a boy, Jimmy planned to be a baseball star. The springy thwap of ball on bat, the feel of well-oiled leather, the crowd roaring from the bleachers full of popcorn-hotdogs-beer, the slides, the hotbox, 3-and-2, inside-the-park-homeruns -- that was what got him.

...

But there he was at 40 -- Body Piler 1050. All day corpses came rolling in and Jimmy -- considering size, shape, weight, and color -- fitted them into his part of the Mountain.

His Supervisors called it "a challenging art", "social service", "a credit to his country," which Jimmy bought at first, then quit buying.

...

Here came a Chinese merchant -- short, fat, fiftyish, one slanted eye still looking for the well-paid whore who knifed him. Then a drowned Jewish boy, who'd never be a doctor, have his own tv show, or marry a blonde shikse. Next an African -- long, rangy, looking like hard black rubber except where the tires passed over him.

"Death's integrated," Jimmy like to say.

...

At first dead women made him sick. Then sad. Then he started fucking the good lookers. Then he stopped.

...

Body piling being hot and smelly, Jimmy wore a nose-clip and worked naked. He'd come to work, fold his clothes neatly on his office chair, and wade in. It was against the rules, but Supervisors shunned the Mountain, and no one else cared.

...