

THE STATE OF THE ART ON ALYSSUM

by Marta Randall

Greze, who is not the sanest of us even at the best of times, has advised me to cease and desist. Himmel believes that I should continue in my plans, but has warned me not to associate any names with it whatsoever, foremost among them, Himmel's own. Nort, of course, says nothing. All of this is excellent advice, particularly Nort's.

Today I completed the implement. It was not an easy job. As I sat upon the stone floor, resting, Himmel came by to see the finished effort and spent a good deal of time inspecting the thing for any words. This worried me, for if the words were discovered, Himmel could destroy the entire apparatus in two seconds flat, and so, although I was much too tired to rise, I watched nervously. Green hair flying, three eyes all poked out at the same time (unusual, that), telescoping fingers inserted in every conceivable location; having received my assurances that nothing would bite, those fingers explored every millimeter of the apparatus relentlessly and passed right over the words etched into the upper surface. Three times.

"Stop it," I said to them, then to Himmel, "Can't you stop them?"

"They do as they please," Himmel replied, writhing one of three yellow-scaled bellies in a shrug gesture. Himmel, I realized with surprise and relief, can't read. I hadn't know that before. Funny how little you know some people, even after seventy years.

Greze tells me that Nort is planning a party, but is undecided on the guest list. Since there are only four of us, I wondered what the problem could be then decided that Nort may be planning to invite the sea-slips again. If so I'll have to put off the entire plan until they leave; it's impossible to get any serious work done when they're around.

The wind comes up tonight. I must be losing

