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GORDON R. DICKSON

HOME FROM THE SHORE



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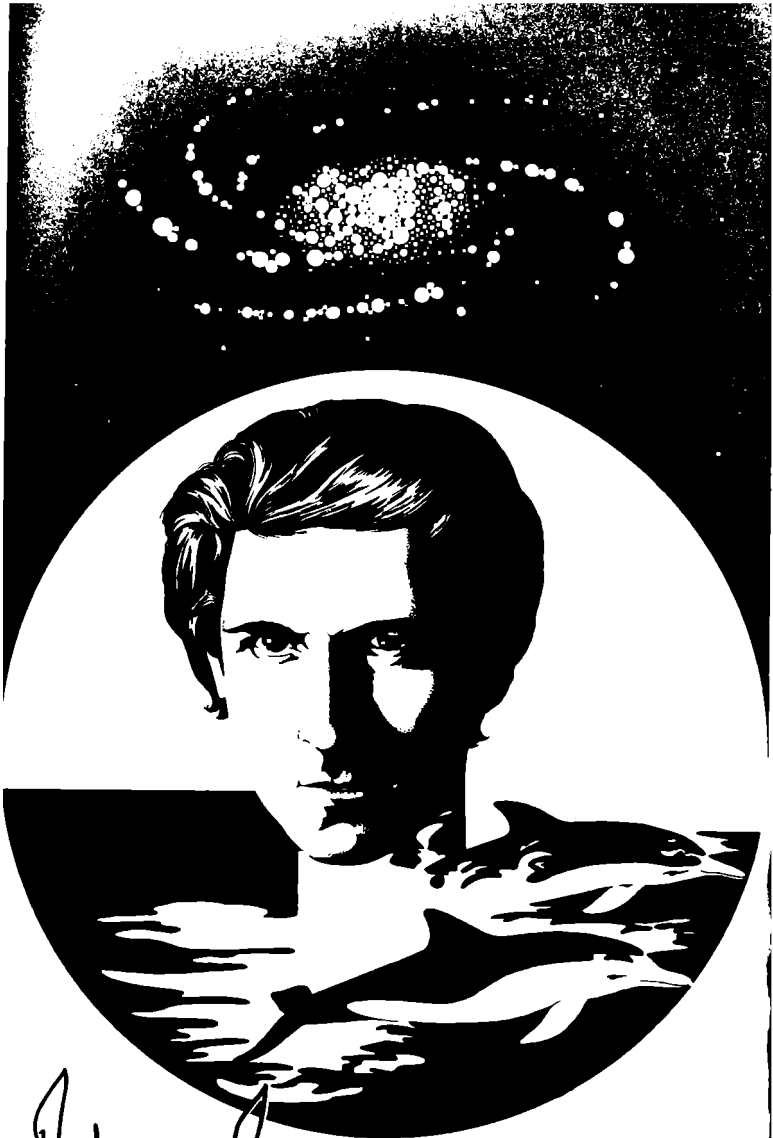
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**HOME
FROM
THE
SHORE**





Johnny Joyce

HOME FROM THE SHORE



**Gordon
R. Dickson**

Afterword by Sandra Miesel

Artwork

James R. Odbert



ace books

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Manufactured in the United States of America

This book is dedicated to
Tom Doherty,
who by his concern with it
made possible a long-standing dream.



Foreword

What lies between the covers of this book represents an attempt that is unique, not only in science fiction but in publishing. Only the thesis that anything can happen explains it—except that in this case it is the sort of anything that lurks beyond the ordinary dreams of most artists and writers. In fact, in my twenty-seven years as an author previously I had seen nothing to suggest that there might be a practical possibility of arranging the kind of mutual creation that produced this book in its present form.

Nearly a year ago at the time of this writing, Tom Doherty, publisher of Ace Books, spoke to me about an idea of his, not realizing how closely it matched one of my own, which had, in fact, been in mind for a number of years. That long-held idea was a plan for rewriting one of my earlier works to my exact satisfaction and furnishing it with illustrations made to my direction, which would exactly fit the story and interpret it as I had originally wished it interpreted. The plan had laid in the back of my mind all these years, unfulfilled, because I had seen no possibility of putting it into execution, except by publishing such a book at my own expense.

Now, independently, I had been approached with Doherty's idea, which was that one of my early writings be expanded and illustrated with the work of an artist of my choice. Ace Books, he indicated, could bring me and the artist together into New York, where we could discuss the book and the illustrations to be done.

This offer was the first of two happy coincidences. The second, was that just at that time, by good fortune, there was an artist named James Odbert in my home area, whom I considered an ideal choice to do the illustrations for such a book as Doherty had in mind. I made the suggestion, therefore, that instead of our making use of an artist whom I would be able to meet with only once and briefly in New York, Odbert be asked to do the artwork. He and I lived only the width of a city apart; and we would be able to get together as often as the work required.

Moreover, there was another reason which made him the ideal choice as an artist to work with me on the book. Like me, he was deeply interested in the Polynesian culture on which the culture of the sea people in the book was based; and he had made a study of it during a two year stay in Hawaii. Vital to the story of *HOME FROM THE SHORE* was the special feeling of belonging, the *nous-nous*, of the sea people; which Odbert not only also understood but to which he responded—see the illustration on page 97. In effect, we spoke the same language in this area, and the fact that we did would be critical to a successful making of the book as I envisioned it.

It was settled, therefore; and James Odbert agreed to work with me on *HOME FROM THE SHORE*. The work

itself turned out to be full of discoveries for both of us. The profusely illustrated story that the book presently is, with over fifty pages of Odbert illustrations, developed eventually into something not merely new in bookmaking but in artistic concept. The end result of our teamwork eventually became a collaboration in the truest sense of that word between the artist and the author. What emerged was not merely an illustrated story, not even a story with special illustrations carefully fitted to it; but a unique unit of pictures integrated with words in which these two elements became equal partners.

There were a number of factors involved in this. Primary to the rest was the fact that the work to be done was the product of a collaboration between an artist who was in love with the story and an author who was profoundly impressed with the capabilities of the artist. The effect of this was that Odbert and I each fell almost immediately into the practice of leaning on the other for strengths outside our own creative area, to the great benefit of the work itself. Involved in this, and made necessary by it, was an astonishing amount of conferencing—many times over what I had envisioned when I had first urged that I work with an artist living in close proximity to my own working area. Odbert and I found ourselves continually concerned with matching the fine details of the art to those of the story and those of the story to that of the art. The end result was a situation in which each of us fed off and gained from the creative imagination of the other.

There have been instances in this book, for example, of Odbert making suggestions to me, and my making suggestions to him, that rang almost eerily in accordance

with what the other had himself been thinking. One of the other of us would, separately and independently, conceive of something to be done with the book, and hasten to tell it to the other only to discover that the other had been only waiting a chance to suggest it himself. A very clear example of this type of parallel thinking are the pictures of the two sea-sisters on pages 26 and 27. Odbert drove over to see me specifically to suggest this illustration and found that I had been eager to seem him so as to suggest it to him.

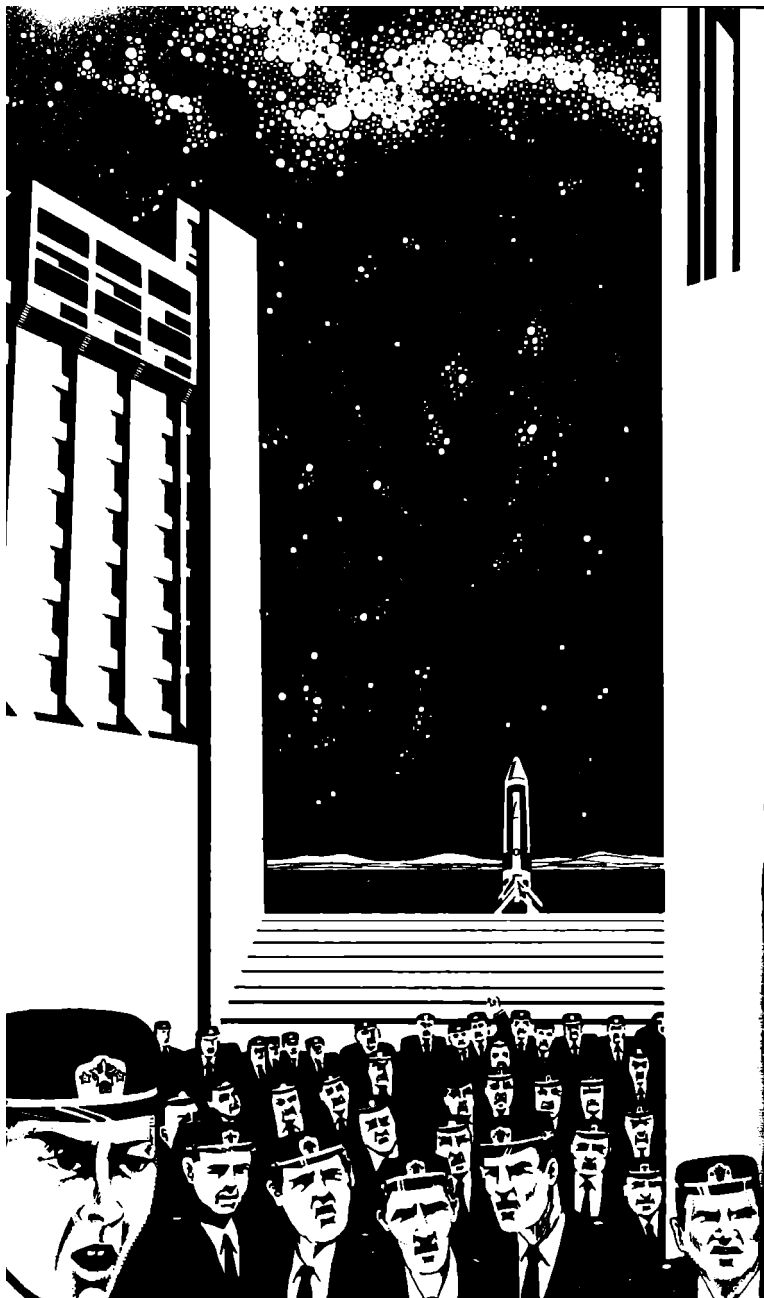
The resultant creation has consequently become this something which is more than a book in the traditional sense. If we have done what we think we have done, what you hold now is a mechanism for the imagination never developed before—a magic box of sorts that the reader can open on an experience more fully rendered than those in ordinary books, putting himself or herself into the life of the story with an extra element of depth or involvement which comes from the direct interaction between the subtleties of the text and the subtleties of the illustration. And it is my belief that as such it marks the first exploration of a hitherto-untouched area in book making.

Illustrations were always considered a part of books up until the early part of this century, when they began to be crowded out from most fiction for reasons of publisher's cost. The only exceptions to this trend were in fiction written for the young; and even for this sort of reading matter they were severely curtailed. A book-maker's misconception grew into general acceptance to the effect that it was words, and words alone, that adult readers wanted, not pictures.

As often happens in the literary field, this misconception was generated and accepted without any real

referendum of those most concerned with it—the readers themselves. The result, consequently, was that it existed very nearly until the present historical moment, with one exception. The exception was in science fiction, the one area of literature where the readers had an opportunity to respond directly to the authors both in person, and by letter; and where, accordingly, they had strongly expressed their preference, not only for illustration in the books they read, but for good illustration—illustration not merely expressed in the poster-like colors of the moment's fashion and sideshow patterns of advertising, without any real concern for the story to which it applied. The illustration the readers showed a desire for was that which truly mirrored the story it illustrated; and which tried to bring into sharp, artistic focus the general images of the characters and scenes forming in the mind as the story was read.

It was toward this sort of illustration and its particular effectiveness that our work on HOME FROM THE SHORE has been directed. For it seems certain, now approaching the end of the twentieth century as we are, that the dispersion of the arts has gone far enough, and that in turning back, as James Odbert and I have here, to the paired unity of word and picture, we are merely part of a general return, now commencing, to the basic intent of all craft, which is to reach the reader, the viewer, the listener—the appreciator in all forms—by any and all artistic means at our disposal.





Chapter 1

The night before the sea-born among the senior space cadets were due to ship out—the night before they were to leave Earth to actually witness an attempt at a space bat capture—the chanting of the cadets from the land began early. It was heard down in the quadrangle of the Space Academy, between the two tall barrack buildings, that of the sea-people and the one housing the landers. The sound of massed voices echoed like the growling of penned animals up from the dark shadows of the ground level. It bounced off the walls of the two buildings and entered through the windows of the sea-born cadets, open to the soft New Mexico evening. At his desk, working with his books on the geology of the inner planets, Johnny Joya heard it in his ears and felt it in his bones.

“... slug a slug a slug a slug!”
“Slug a sea-slug, slug a slug...”

He forced it from his mind. But only a few minutes later his door opened—without warning, for among themselves the sea-born did not knock, knowing as they knew so many things about each other, when they were welcome and when they were not. He looked up to see Mikros Palamas, standing at his elbow.

"They've got to stop that," Mikros said.

Johnny's gaze read the strong, rectangular face of the other, who was Representative for those sea-born cadets in their junior year at the Academy, as Johnny himself was Representative for the senior sea-born, the first of them all to have accepted the landers' invitation to enroll. Like Johnny, Mikros looked big but not alarmingly so—even, perhaps, a little soft-bodied and harmless like the sea-slugs for whom the lander cadets had nicknamed them. But looks were deceiving.

"Don't even think about going down there," Johnny said.

"None of us want to go," Mikros said.

"But it hurts us more than they know, that chanting. We aren't built to take all that hate and fear they're throwing out. No one is. Our class sent me up to ask you to call a meeting of the four class reps."

"A meeting won't do any good," said Johnny.

"And no one's to go down. No one."

"It's hard not to."

"They aren't going to stop just because some of us go ask them to," Johnny said, "and if they saw just a few of us down there they might do something foolish. Seeing us just rubs it in to them, makes it worse for them."

"They won't come in here," said Mikros, bleakly. "If they'd just come in—but they won't try that."

"Of course not," said Johnny.

It was true. There were probably over a thousand lander Space Academy cadets in the darkness below, now, and less than four hundred of the sea-born in their dormitories. But even the landers would not go to the extent of using weapons in a raid on the other building; and without weapons they did not stand a chance against young men and women grown to physical maturity in the endless waters of the oceans.

"All we need to do is ignore them," said Johnny slowly, patiently repeating the familiar words. "Just six months more until we seniors graduate. Then there'll be some of us in space alongside the landers. We'll be their partners. Keep your mind on that, Mikros, and tell your classmates to keep their mind on it. Up here on the top floor we've had a year more of this than even you juniors; and we've ridden it out, the way

you'd ride out a hurricane up on the surface. So hang on six months more. We'll graduate and then the land can't say any longer the sea-born're unfit for space. And the difference between sea and land can start to heal."

"It'll never heal," said Mikros. "They hate us because we're bigger and better than they are. We'll always be bigger and better. How can anything heal?"

"Put plugs in your ears. Cover your head with a pillow. They'll be stopping in an hour or so because they have to study, too. Wait it out, Mikros, and tell the others to. Because it's got to heal. If it comes to war, they can kill us all."

"All right," said Mikros wearily. The skin over the big bones of his face was tight and his mouth was one straight line. "I'll go back and tell them once more . . . we wait a while longer."

"Just a few more months," Johnny said. "I tell you, it's us seniors up here they're trying to break—not the rest of you. Six months, and there'll be no point in their chanting out there. We'll have graduated a class and got commissions. We'll have won and they'll have lost—this try of theirs to keep us from space. Keep telling our people that, Mikros. It's us seniors they're after; and if we can stand the chanting, they can too."

"All right," said Mikros. "Once more."

He went out.

After he had gone Johnny sat alone, listening to the voices. His own words repeated themselves in his head. He had been the one who had most urged and pushed the coming of the sea-born here to the Academy. He and his cousin Patrick—Patrick of the magic musical instruments and magic voice—had been the two most listened-to among the third generation of those who had first begun to call themselves the sea people, the fourth generation of those who had permanently turned their backs on the land to live completely in the oceans, underwater and on the continental shelves, or completely in movement about the seas.

In a real sense it was he, alone, who had led the best of the third-generation sea-born into this. The land had wanted them for their superior physical strength, their saner minds, those new, or perhaps old, instincts that the landers themselves did not have. And he—idealizing the situation in which he now saw there was nothing to idealize—had thought he had seen a chance to end the land's growing jealousy of his own, free people who had all the wide oceans of the world to live in.

Instead, he had led the others of his generation to this place; and the landers'



Home from the Shore

inferiority complex, maturing into hatred, had, instead of being reduced, grown now greater than ever, its increase now echoing in the voices from the lander cadets down below.

He went back to his books; and around eleven o'clock the chanting in the quadrangle dwindled and stopped.

The following dawn after morning parade the sea-cadets gathered their personal gear and filed aboard low-altitude transports lined up on the Academy airfield. One by one the boxy-looking flying platforms with their transparent roofs of light-sensitive glass took off and lumbered southeast through the skies to the shuttle field at Albuquerque, New Mexico. There they landed and the cadets went by people-mover to the shuttle.

Four hours later, they were in orbit and leaving the shuttle for the spaceship itself. None of them had ever been in a space-going vessel before. They came aboard, however, with the practised movements that were the result of many hours of training in the mock-ups on the ground back at the Academy. A long double-file of them passed through the main



airlock into the rear third of the ship, saluting the duty officer as they came in, then continuing in a single file down one of the two corridors that led to assigned quarters on each side of the aft section.

Johnny found himself near the front of the file directed down the starboard corridor. To his right and left as he went along were the doors of the tiny, personal rooms that would be home for each of them during the trip. It was strange to feel the carpet underfoot, to see the picture-screens inset in the walls, with scenes that tried to imitate the three-dimensional Earth, as seen from the window of a lander structure. There were few scenes of the sea—and none at all of the undersea.

Like all of his generation among the sea-born, Johnny listened to his feelings and perceptions to an extent inconceivable to a lander. In the sea they had moved away from the heavy, omnipresent technology of the land. They were used to and reached out for direct contact with the living universe of water that surrounded them—and for all their Academy training, their instinctive image of space vehicles had hardly progressed from the romantic period of their grandparents who had first moved out into the underseas.

The carpets, the picture screens, the imitation wood panelling of the metal making up the walls and doors around him now all seemed false and almost pitiful in their attempt to carry the image of a lander earth into space. Particularly this was so, contrasted to the old image of bare-metalled, utilitarian craft out of the dawn of the space age. This, a more modern ship than the ships of his youthful dreams, ironically seemed old-fashioned, ornate and fussy.

"John Joya?" said the Space Force lieutenant checking them into their rooms. He made a mark with his light pencil on the coder he carried, when Johnny nodded. "Right. Twelve-B. This is yours."

"Thank you, sir." Johnny pushed through the door indicated and found himself in an apparently bare closet. But this, too, was as it had been in the mock-up practises. He reached high on the wall, opposite the door, pulled down the desk surface at which he would be studying and working, and put his personals bag upon it. Then, turning, he went about the other walls, folding out bed and chair, opening clothes-locker, bookcases and stowage compartments.

Satisfied finally that all the room's appurtenances were clean, available and in working

order, he began to unpack. He was just hanging the last of his clothing in the locker, the room set on study mode with the desk still down but the bed up, and seating surfaces taking up the space it had occupied, when the door opened without warning.

It was, of course, one of the sea-born who came in. A lander would have needed to hear him answer before knowing entrance was agreeable. The Cadet Commander of the Senior Class, Peri Tashkent, stepped in.

"Something wrong, Peri?" Johnny asked, for her slim, oval face was drawn into serious lines. Almost as tall as Johnny, she looked at him soberly.

"Something personal," she said. "That's why I'd like you to be the one to talk to them about it. They've given me the number one room on portside, and Mayal ended up in room sixty-eight, away back down the line on starboard. It's not only the distance. That's going to put us in different watches."

"Of course," said Johnny. Peri and Mayal Dumayne were sea-sisters.

"It's not as if we can't survive the time we're out in space with a hello and wave from time to time," said Peri. "But Ykari Dhu was the one they put into room two next to me and he's

perfectly willing to trade with Mayal. There doesn't seem to be any good reason why the duty officer won't let them. But he won't."

"You'd like me to ask him for you?"

"If you don't mind. Unless you know some reason why it can't be done."

"I don't," said Johnny. "I'll ask him. Just a minute while I finish stowing the last of my things here."

Peri led him down to the end of the corridor and across to the port side of the spacecraft. At the last minute, she hesitated.

"You might have better luck if I'm not there," she said. "He's geared up to disagree with me."

"Maybe you're right," said Johnny. "All right, I'll go on alone."

He left her and started down the corridor.

"His name's Shiefer," she called after him. "He's a lieutenant."

He was, in fact, the same lieutenant who had checked Johnny into his room, a trim man in his late thirties with thinning brown hair and sharp blue eyes.

"Aren't you from over on starboard?" he asked as Johnny came up. He glanced at his coder.

"That's right, sir. I've already got my room," Johnny said. "But I'm also representative for the sea-born Senior Class."



The blue eyes sharpened.

"Something wrong, Mr . . ."

"Joya. Johnny Joya, sir."

"Something wrong, Cadet Joya?"

"Just a minor problem." Johnny spoke slowly and casually as he had learned to speak to the lander cadre at the Academy. "You've got a cadet named Peri Tashkent in room one, here. She spoke to you, I think, about Ykari Dhu—who's in next to her—trading places with another cadet named Mayal Dumayne, over on portside. Is there any particular reason why they can't trade rooms and assignments?"

"If we start it with them, we'll have everybody wanting to trade. This is space, not a picnic outing." The lieutenant almost peered at Johnny. "Why do they have to be in adjoining rooms, anyway?"

"They're sea-sisters," said Johnny. He had sympathized from the start with Peri and her problem of explaining the matter to a lander. Sea-sisters had no counterpart ashore; any more than had sea-friends, the family customs of the People and innumerable other matters that were part of the very fabric of society and existence



to the third generation of the sea-born. Aside from the difficulty of making the concept of sea-sisters comprehensible to a lander like this, there would be a personal element for Peri herself in making such an explanation. It was easier for someone outside the relationship to do it.

"Sisters?" the lieutenant was saying.

"Not blood sisters—sea-sisters," said Johnny. "It's a matter of choice, starting at a very early age. They grow up together and they're very close."

It was a weak explanation of the essentially psychic kinship that could spring up between two sea-born of the same age. There was a sensitivity and awareness to that relationship that the land could not know, matching the two individuals to the point where they could almost read each other's minds. Only the unusual strength of individual wills in Patrick and himself had prevented sea-brotherhood between him and Johnny.

"Close?" The lieutenant was frowning.

"What do you mean—*close*?"

"I mean they're very much alike," said Johnny, still trying to give the other something he could understand in lander terms. "So alike that they're almost one person. Like natural,

identical twins. Only, as I say, in this case there's no family relationship between them."

The lieutenant shook his head slightly.

"No," he said. "No. That's not enough of a reason to go making changes. As I said, if I let them switch everyone's going to want to."

"They won't, sir."

"Oh? Why?" the lieutenant gave him a hard grin. "What makes you so sure? Aren't there more of these sisterhoods among the cadets we've got on this cruise?"

"Well, yes, there are," said Johnny. "But—"

"But what's so different about—" he glanced at his coder and tapped buttons with one finger, "Cadet Tashkent and her friend, that makes them unique?"

Johnny played his last card.

"Cadet Tashkent is Cadet Commander for the Senior Class."

"Oh?" the lieutenant's face changed. He looked startled and a little wondering, then almost suspicious. "She didn't tell me that."

"It wouldn't have occurred to her to, sir."

"Well, of course . . ." the lieutenant tapped buttons on his coder again. "The Cadet Commander's entitled to some special consideration. All right, it's done. But she should have told me. It does her credit that she didn't want to

use her rank, but it would have saved us all a lot of trouble."

"Yes sir."

It was the right result for the entirely wrong reason. Peri and Mayal would have been insulted by the idea that their special rapport was so light a thing that it could be made the tool of a desire to pull Cadet rank.

Johnny saluted and left. Like all the others, he had been hoping that once they were into space with actual, working Space Force personnel, a lot of the misunderstanding between landers and themselves would evaporate. Instead, he began to fear that out here, if anything, the difference between sea and land cultures might be intensified. Hopefully, he would turn out to be wrong in this.

He did not. And the difference the sea-born felt came to localize itself in paneled walls and the simulated depth-dimensional, antique landscapes in the artificial windows along the corridors, in every cabin and wardroom. These constructs had been meant to alleviate the shock and loneliness of being away from the familiar Earth; but one of the extra senses evoked by ocean living made such devices useless to the sea-born, who responded only to that which was real and alive.

"I'll agree the picture-screens work for the landers, if that's what they claim," Joaquin Loy said to Johnny on the fifth day out of Earth parking orbit, when they were alone for a moment, on duty in the chartroom. "I'll take it on faith, if that's what they want from us, that all this imitation of planetside means something to them. But, Johnny, I really can't believe it, not down in my guts. Maybe it's true, and they don't feel how false it is, like we do; and maybe again, they can't feel the steel walls beyond the screens, and space, and the stars beyond that. But they have to *know*, intellectually know, that these pictures and things are fakes—so how can it be any real help to them?"

"Because it is," Johnny said. "That's just one of the differences they have from us, that is all. They can trick themselves and get some comfort from it. We can't. That's all."

"Then how are they and we ever going to get together?" demanded Joaquin.

Johnny shook his head; and a moment later the cadre officer in charge of the chartroom came back in, so that there was no more chance for private talk.

Their transport continued to fall, outward from the sun toward the orbit of Mars; and Johnny found himself becoming excited over the prospect of their flight, after all. The sea-born all had



felt a call into space—so like the calling of the sea to them. Perhaps on this trip he and the other sea-born would be able to learn things about the space bats that the landers had never discovered. Learning anything was difficult, for the bats reportedly had always died when captured. For one thing no one understood why the bats were normally only to be found beyond Mars orbit. It was true one would occasionally be seen somewhat closer than that to the sun. But the general assumption had been that they were planoforming creatures who sailed the sea of space under the pressure of light from the various stars and presumably used light for sustenance. It might be something about



being closer to the sun than Mars orbit which was painful or distressful to them.

Perhaps, thought Johnny, that something might be something non-physical but nonetheless strong—like the feeling of unnaturalness that came on the sea-born themselves whenever they came ashore. To the space bats, it was theorized, the apparently empty void was a place of great currents and pressures—some of them violent, perhaps—as well as other things imperceptible

to humans. That space was in fact such a place, the sea-born felt instinctively; and they talked about that aspect of it as their transport moved away from the sun.

"It's so full of life out there—"

Albert Paredho, one of the oldest of the seniors, gestured at the landscaped wall of their wardroom, beyond which was the hull and the endlessness of space—"It quivers. I suppose that's one more thing that the landers don't feel."

"What makes you so sure they don't?" Joaquin asked. "They could be pretending not to because they want to see our reactions to it. How about that, Johnny?"

"I don't know," Johnny had to say, once more. "But there's no point in our mentioning it to them until they mention it to us. Is space bothering you, Joaquin?"

"I'm having some trouble sleeping," Joaquin said. "And I've talked to a few others who're having the same. It's not unpleasant, but . . . you close your eyes and lie back. It's dark, and these sorts of jagged, electric lines of light start sliding back and forth in your head."

"It can't be helped," said Johnny. "We have to live with it, that's all."

"Then you haven't felt it, yourself?"

"Yes," Johnny said. "I've felt it too."

He had. But for him it had taken on a different form than that reported by Joaquin. To him the blackness had seemed one long endless eternity, one endless depth of living velvet. It was true that he could feel the web of great forces running through it. But the velvet itself was what fascinated in his case. It was a velvet alive but permeable; so that other living forces could pass through it, as they and the landers and the ship were passing through it—as the planets themselves passed through it with their great cargos of life of all kinds, from the lowest one-celled animal and even smaller viruses, to the elephant and the great blue whale, now extinct. The feelings peaked in him—the feelings peaked in them all—as they passed Mars orbit and reached the territory of space where the great semi-transparent space bats were to be found.

Two ship's days later, at a hundred and eighty thousand miles beyond Mars orbit, they picked up their first bat on the scanning equipment. But its blip stayed on their screens for only a few seconds, then disappeared. At a distance, such as this one had been, the very fact of the bat's turning sideways to the scanning sweep caused it to drop out of view. In the next four days they picked up two more blips, but lost both—one after a five hour chase.

"We've only got five days out here," said Joaquin. "We'll never catch up with one in that time."

But on the fourth day they picked up one and it was not able to lose them. Given a close discovery of any bat whose relative velocity was not too high, it was impossible for the creature to escape. The ship was not only more maneuverable, but capable of accelerations far beyond the bat's ability; for under the light-push these space creatures built velocity slowly, and their changes of direction were effected only gradually. Beyond that push they had a very limited ability of movement, some kind of propulsive system in which they threw off tiny amounts of bodily mass at high velocities—the mechanics of which humans had not yet pinned down.

So the ship closed swiftly with this latest prey, once the velocities of the two were close to being matched. Aboard, there was a flurry of activity.

"Suit up!" roared the amplified voice of the duty officer over the intercoms.

There were suits—really small one-man space vehicles—for only a little more than one-third of the cadets. The rest would have to watch through monitor screens tied to one or other of the suits of those lucky enough to leave the ship.

Johnny, in the upper third of his class academically, was one of those who rated a suit. He had been through this drill with mockups back on Earth a thousand times; but now he felt a weird, almost a lightheaded, feeling as he fitted himself into the massive, mechanically-appendaged globe. Once within it, locked in the webbing of his harness, with the vision screen inches from his eyes, and his fingers resting on the keys of the controls, the feeling lessened, but it was still there as the chamber about him decompressed explosively, and shot him in his suit into the airlessness beyond the ship's skin.

He activated the suit's vision screens. Other personnel were already out of the ship and their number in the near vicinity of it was increasing rapidly. The bat was being paced steadily now by the ship; and the suited men and women who would try to make the capture shared the same intrinsic velocity as the ship and the bat. To Johnny, it was as if they were all at rest in space, the only indication of motion being the rippling of the several-miles wide body of the bat, as it tried to change direction and escape, and the shifting of the navigation lights of the suited chasers as they closed in on it with the semi-electronic vast net in which they planned to enclose and capture it.

From the distance at which he first saw it, the bat looked to Johnny like nothing so much as a rippling gossamer handkerchief, some five kilometers wide in one direction and four in the other, painted with a rainbow of colors which flowed and spread about its moving surface like the aurora borealis, in their flow over the dark bowl of the sky in both arctic regions of Earth.

"Chaser twelve-forty-nine, move up to position!" crackled the speaker in Johnny's suit.

"Moving up to position," he answered, and set his suit motors to driving him forward. Watching the distance-shrunken figure swell as he approached it, the sight brought a heaviness of excitement



to his chest. He had felt this particular sensation only once before. It had been miles deep in the Mindanao Trench of the Pacific Ocean, six years ago, when the running lights of his sea-home had suddenly shown him what seemed at first to be only a gray-pink cable or hawser from some sunken ship, lying on the diatomaceous ooze of the deep sea-bed.

Then, following the line of it, he had slowly begun to recognize it as undeniably a tentacle, but a tentacle impossibly large. He had gone on following it, driven by a fascination he could not clearly name, and had ended by illuminating one of the legendary, great deep-sea squids who looked on



even the largest whales as legitimate opponents; one of those krakens of ancient mythology and sailors' tales, who had been reputed to pull down tall sailing ships to a watery grave.

But the monster squid, somnolent and indifferent to the mosquito-like flitting of the small sea-home about it, had radiated to Johnny then, along with its impression of power and mightiness, only an animal predator's ruthlessness and animal savagery. There was no such feeling emanating from the space bat, now. This greater creature of the void impressed him in this moment only with a strange feeling of beauty and wild freedom, coupled with an inability to understand why this small thing that was the spaceship, and these even tinier things that were the suited human hunters, should wish to trouble it.

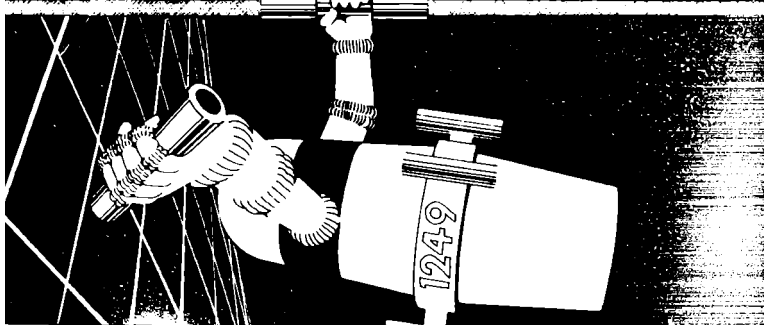
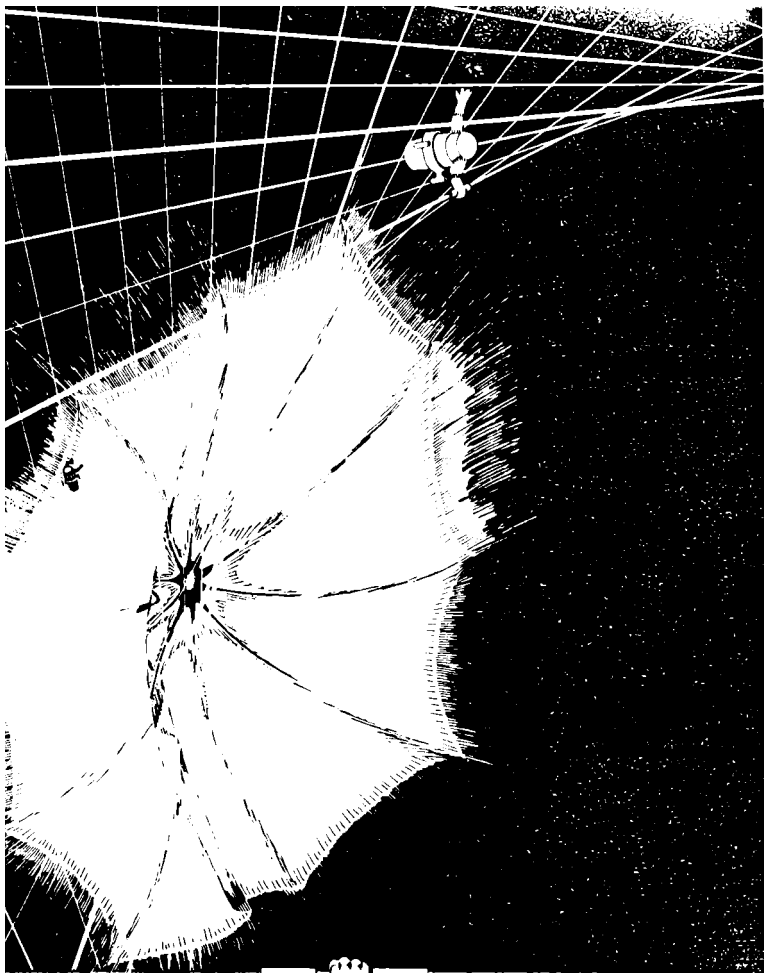
Now, moving swiftly to the capture net, headed for his position on its outer rim, Johnny felt the velvet living depths all about him pressing in on him with a power many times that which he had felt on board. This was not Earth. Nor was it that little fragment of pseudo-Earth that men had made out of metal and carpeting and glass and called a ship. This was the ultimate reality that was the universe, casting the special unreality of one little planet's surface into insignificant contrast. Out here was another place—a place where the

space bat belonged, and it could be that humans like himself did not.

Johnny was almost to the rim of the net and his position on one of the generator rods, which produced a fabric of force lines that, out here where there was no atmosphere, would be more effective in restraining the bat than cables of steel. Johnny reached his rod and closed two of the mechanical hands of his globe-shaped spacesuit upon it. Activating the rod, he began to move off at an angle with it, fitting the lines of force it now projected into relationship with the other lines being projected by the generators of the chasers on either side of him.

Section by section, as more chasers came up to take control of their individual rods, the net of force lines wove itself into existence, and then, complete, began at a signal from the capture officer to move in about the bat.

It felt them coming. Plainly, it sensed their approach, although there was no way to tell how, for it was only a mist-thin web of molecules with no visible eyes, or ears or other organs of detection. It writhed more actively in its airless universe that had always until now been free of attackers. A faint drift, like a sparkle of stardust, seen for a second off one edge, signalled



its throwing off some of its bodily mass in an effort to accelerate away from the metal-suited chasers and the net of bright force-lines.

But it was no use. Swiftly—seemingly more and more swiftly as they came closer and closer, the spacesuited humans and the net surrounded and closed upon it, the net swirled about it, several times larger than even the bat itself . . . and closed.

It was trapped. Held. Captured.

For a moment more after it found that there was no longer hope of escape, it flared and burned with a racing tide of brilliant colors. Then, before the eyes of Johnny and all the others on the net, it began to die.

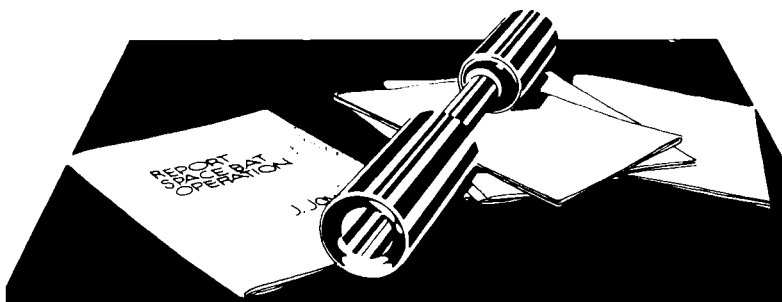
Its colors flickered and faded. Its frantic rippling slowed and stopped. It seemed to contract, to fall in on itself, to shrink and decay into a lightless, smaller version of itself. In the suits, Johnny and the other sea-born cadets felt its dying, felt its life dwindling like a guttering candle, going away and away from them until it was only a faint, glowing spark—and then even that spark was gone.

There was no more light, no color left—only a drifting, grayish mass without purpose or value—enclosed in the net.



ORBIT 6.7 EX-MARS STATUS





Chapter 2

"You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs," the ship Commander said to Johnny. "Your classmates knew from the beginning that these space bats died when captured. Of course we understand that being from the sea you're different. I suppose something can be done."

He was a short, lean, gray-haired man in his late fifties with a narrow face set off by a neat mustache that was still sandy-colored. There were noticeable crows-feet at the outer corners of his pale blue eyes. The skin beneath them was puffed, and the eyes themselves more bloodshot than usual, after the recent long hours of duty. He sat, very human and a little incongruous looking, before a wall picture-scene showing a section of the towering Yukon Rocky Mountain range.

"We'd appreciate that, Commander,"

said Johnny. "The truth is, the bat's dying was more of a shock than any of us expected. A psychic shock—"

"What you've got to understand, Joya," said the Commander, "is that there are always bound to be things like this. I know, there's a damned general superstition about the military that we're all very rigid and unfeeling. But that's not so. I know—we all know—things can't get done right unless the men and women doing them are whole-heartedly committed to them. If the people involved feel they're in a straight-jacket, if they feel they're in handcuffs, then what they're doing is going to suffer. Nobody wants it or them to suffer. Nobody wants you cadets to suffer. So if you need extra time to make your reports, we understand. But you've got to impress on the rest of your people—it's your responsibility as class representative to impress on them—that getting this time is an extraordinary thing. It's a special favor. Ordinarily we'd take a fairly stiff line with cadets who came along with the excuse of being upset, as a reason for putting off a report they should have done the minute they got back to quarters on the ship."

"Sir," said Johnny. "I've been at the Academy nearly four years. I think my own record's a good one, and I—"

"No doubt about it, no doubt about it," said the Commander. "But you understand me?"

"Of course, sir. But the point is," said Johnny, "there are differences between those of us who were born in the sea and people born on land. There's some things we sea-born react to more strongly—"

"We understand that. You take small things to heart. Of course," said the Commander.

"Yes, sir. Only it goes deeper than that," said Johnny. "I know how it can sound from the standpoint of someone born on land—that we can be incapacitated by the emotional backwash of the space bat's death. But for us it was an actual experience—as actual as getting hit in the stomach. It's not because something died. We're used to death in the sea. We just aren't used to death where the dying thing kills itself because it's been caught and trapped first. There aren't any cages or prisons in the sea."

"Yes—we know," said the Commander. "All the same, you tell your classmates that I'm under a certain amount of responsibility where they're concerned. Officially, it's part of my job to see they turn these reports in immediately on returning to the ship—"

"Sir—"

"Just a minute. Now, it's also within my

authority to give them more time. But I'm going to be asked why I gave it and I'm going to have to say the only reason was they requested it, and because they said they were different. The point is, for the sake of your own people you have to understand it's much better for them not to go claiming special exemptions, not to go parading their differences. You understand this?"

"Believe me, Commander," said Johnny.

"I understand that as well as anyone aboard here."

"Well then," the Commander said. He smiled, deepening the crows-feet. "There's no problem about giving you the extra time. It's a consideration within our discretion, so to speak. But the important bit is, your people have to understand that this literally is a favor; they've got to realize that, and not expect some allowance always is going to be made for them, just because they're different. Once they get their commissions, special factors can't come into account this way—otherwise we'd have a two-value service. You follow me?"

"Yes sir," said Johnny.

"Well, that's really the only important point," said the Commander. "Take your time, but restrict these special indulgences to a minimum. All right, Joya?"

Johnny went back to his quarters. There he found Joaquin and a few of the others.

"How was it? How did it go?" Joaquin asked.

"He agreed," said Johnny. "Maybe it'd be better for us one of these times if people like him didn't agree. The worst of it is, he agreed without understanding. He doesn't really know why we want extra time."

"*Damn their bloody blue eyes!*" exploded Joaquin suddenly. "Couldn't they feel anything? Couldn't they feel it when that bat died? It never did a thing to anybody; and they took it and killed it. They think that that's nothing. Do you know what that says about them? And they think that we should just sit down and write a report about it . . . *'I was out in number fifteen position on number two thread of number eight strand of the net and I trapped it—I helped kill it, and I watched it die, and that is all, sir!'* "

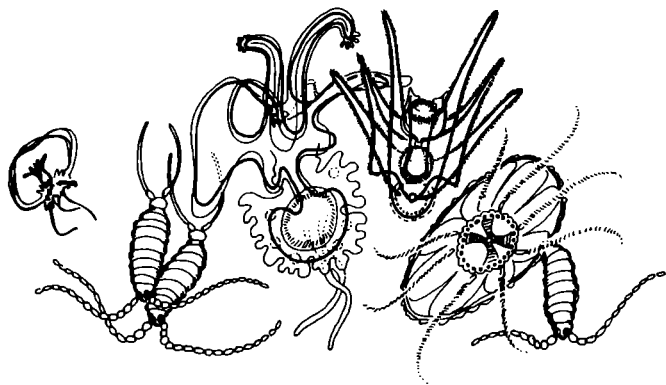
"Calm down," Johnny said. "Letting it upset you doesn't help. It doesn't help the situation for you, or for any of us."

There was a silence in the cadets' wardroom.

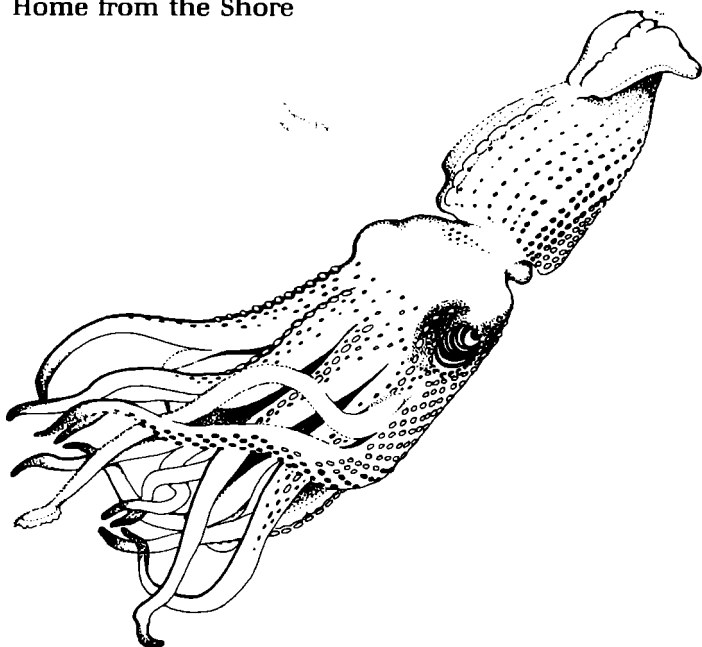
"All right," said Joaquin. He breathed slowly and deeply. "All right, I won't let it get me. But I've still got to write that report, sooner or later."

"We all have to write it sooner or later," Johnny said.

The days of their return to Earth were filled with exercises in handling the ship; this being after all their main reason—the larger, if not the more important reason—behind the cruise. Their work days were long, and it was easy for all of them to put the idea of the reports out of their minds. It became something they did not talk about. Johnny had privately determined to write his report right after talking to the Commander, just to prove he could do it. But it turned out that this was hard to do. He had to force himself to his desk. Still, in the first off-duty hours after they were free from the duty cycle that had included the space bat capture, he sat down in his cabin and turned on his printer.



Home from the Shore



But what he found himself writing was not so much a report as a White Paper, a policy statement in which he wrote about the fact that life—all life—had to be understood and respected or else no form of life would survive. He drew analogies from the sea. It was the only place he had to draw analogies from, out of the endless deep waters and all the creatures there from the smallest plankton to that same great deep sea squid he had seen and remembered ever since. He finished the report during his second set of off-duty hours

and stacked it, telling himself he would re-write it into something more acceptable before the deadline for its turning in came.

But he did not re-write it. Two ship's-days before they were back on Earth he turned it in, in its original form, telling himself that it would be lost among the other reports, that one such statement could do no harm except to lower his personal grade for the cruise; and his grade did not matter, measured against the necessity of getting the senior sea-born graduated. Accordingly, he put the whole business from his mind. He had nothing to think about now, he told himself, but graduation.

They landed again on Earth. It was eight o'clock of a warm, soft night when the low-altitude transports finally brought them back to the Academy. It stood, quiet and almost homelike after space, the windows of its rooms alight where cadets were at study inside. No landers were on hand to chant them home; but Johnny noticed one window lit that should not have been—the window to his own room.

When he got upstairs to the room he found three of the sea-born waiting for him. Two class representatives, Will Jakin of the Freshmen and Per Holmquist of the Sophomores, were on his bed, which had been pulled down from the wall to provide seating space. Abner Yoerg, a thin,

dark-haired Junior who was Mikros' backup rep. for that Class, was seated in the chair at Johnny's study table.

"What is it?" said Johnny, looking at them.

"Mikros," said Abner Yoerg.

"What about Mikros?" Abruptly, there was a familiar heaviness in Johnny's chest. He began to stow his gear.

"He's disappeared," said Abner. "And they won't tell us what they've done with him."

"Who won't?"

"The cadre—the officers. They keep saying he's off on some special duty which can't be explained."

"We've talked to everyone but the General—" began Will; and Per Holmquist broke in to agree.

"Start at the beginning," Johnny said.

He shoved the last of his gear into storage and turned around to face them. Abner got up to give him the study chair and they told him about Mikros. He had gone off duty one evening and into Albuquerque to visit some lander relatives. He had spent the evening with them and left, saying he was headed back to the Academy before his pass ran out, at midnight. He had never reached the barracks.

When he had not appeared by morning formation, Abner had reported him missing to the cadre Officer of the Day, and been told that there was

no need for concern, Mikros was on special duty and would return "... in a while."

Abner and the others had not been satisfied with this answer. In fact they distrusted it entirely and were alarmed. Now they had been waiting to ask Johnny to go to the general officer commanding the Academy, and demand to know where Mikros was.

"It doesn't make sense!" said Abner, passionately, "Why would they pick Mikros for something like that? There's no reason for it. Those—Landers know that as well as we do. They're hiding something."

The little catch in his voice before he pronounced the word 'landers' marked a point at which one of the land-born would have sworn. But in the pragmatism of the oceans, the younger generations of sea-people had almost forgotten how.

"You're guessing, Abner," Johnny said. "Something could be happening here we don't know about—something that does involve Mikros."

"Something we don't know about—but they do?" Abner's voice was thick.

"Yes," said Jakin, "and something Mikros didn't tell any of us about? He'd have said something to someone about whatever it was—not just gone out one night and not come back."

"All right," said Johnny. "I'll see if the general'll talk to me tomorrow."

"Talk to him tonight," Abner said.

"All right. I'll try."

Johnny was still in travel uniform. He changed to dress greens and went down to see the Officer of the Day.

"Not tonight, Joya," said the O.D. He was a lieutenant named Harness whom most of the sea-born liked, a tall, thin young man who tilted his head back and seemed to sight along his nose as he spoke. He did this now, looking up from his desk to talk to Johnny.

"You can't see General Stower tonight," he said. "Even if he wanted to see you, he's out for the evening."

"How soon tomorrow, sir? We could have a real problem. The sooner I can talk to him about it the better."

"Yes. I know. Well . . . I'll leave a message for him now and check again before morning parade. I'll get you in to see him as soon as possible. That's a promise."

But in fact it was nearly noon before Johnny, on special pass from his morning classes, got to the office of the general officer commanding the Academy. Stower was in his fifties, a square man with a brush of gray hair, and an explosive way of talking.

"Come in, Johnny! Sit down!" he said, swiveling his own seat away from his desk and waving Johnny to an armchair. "What's it this time?"

The question was a ritual opening to all their talks. Stower would know what had brought him here. He answered regardless.

"There's some worry about Mikros Palamas."

"Oh, that," Stower frowned. His eyes went to his desk-top. "As a matter of fact, I've been waiting for you to get back. There's some unpleasant news, I'm afraid. It seems on his way back from a pass into town, your classmate was beaten up. We've got him in the Veteran's Hospital across town."

Cause and effect clicked together in Johnny's head.

"Beaten up," he echoed. "By landers?"

"Do you have any sea-people in town?"

"Of course not, sir," said Johnny, "But I think you understand me. I meant—by lander cadets from the Academy here?"

Stower's face seemed to settle into itself.

"No," he said.

"Sir?" said Johnny. He waited, but Stower did not say any more. "Sir, forgive me, but have the lander cadets who were out on pass that same evening been checked?"

Stower's face did not change.

"Yes," he said, without inflection. "Their

movements are accounted for. None were near where Palamas . . . was injured."

"I see," said Johnny. "Can I see him?"

"You can now," said Stower. He swung about, back to his desk and pressed a control on it. "The doctors didn't want anybody bothering him until today—which is why we've kept back word of what happened—"

His aide came through the office door.

"Marnal," said Stower, "will you take Joya over to the hospital to see Cadet Palamas?"

But when Johnny and the aide reached the veteran's hospital, they found a mild uproar in progress at the room of Mikros. It appeared that he had been demanding to be let go back to the Academy. The argument had now reached the point where two military policemen had been sent for to stand guard outside his room.

"Can I talk to him?" Johnny asked.

"No," answered the physician in charge.

The hospital authorities were not interested in anything that looked like special consideration for their troublesome patient. General Stower's aide phoned back to the General's office; but even with Stower's intercession, it was still more than an hour before Johnny was finally allowed to step through the door of Mikros' hospital room and find him sitting up in bed there.



"Johnny!" he exploded.

"That's right," said Johnny, smiling. But the smile faded at the sight of Mikros' battered features. "How are you?"

"I'm all right," said Mikros. "Our bones don't break that easily."

"Was that what they tried?"

"They were talking about it—before they got too busy to talk. The thing was," Mikros grinned hideously under his bruises, "they couldn't hold me still long enough. They'd get me pinned down and then I'd break loose again."

"How many of them?" Johnny asked.

"Four or five—there might have been six, but I don't think so," Mikros said. "I didn't have time to count too carefully."

"Do you know who they were?"

"Lander cadets." Mikros looked steadily at Johnny. "Who else?"

"You're sure?"

"Who else, as I said? No, I'm sure, even if I didn't know any of them. But I'll know them if I see them again. They were trying to make an object lesson of me—they talked about that, too—so none of us would dare leave the Academy from now on, for fear of the same thing."

"They talked about that?"

Mikros nodded.

"They started out with a lot of things they wanted to tell me," he said. "But then—as I say, they got too busy to talk much. Johnny, get me out of here."

"I'll check with Stower. Maybe we can get you loose tomorrow."

"Not tomorrow! Today. Now! This whole place reeks of sickness, and death and chemicals and pain. I don't know how even these landers can take it. Don't you feel it, yourself?"

"Yes," said Johnny, soberly. "But I can't get you out until tomorrow, I'm sure. I'll do as much as I can. If they won't let you go then . . ."

He stopped talking aloud and switched to hand signals, the silent underwater language of the sea-born.

I'll get you out tomorrow, myself, if they won't, his hands said.

All right, Mikros signalled back, then, if it comes to that, I won't go back to the Academy. I'll run for the sea.

"If they don't let you go tomorrow," said Johnny again, once more aloud, "I'll ask to speak to General Stower again."

"Tell him I can identify those landers, if he'll line up the other cadets for me to look at," Mikros said.

"All right," said Johnny, "I'll pass that word to him, too."

They talked for a while longer, then Johnny left. On his way out, he made an effort to talk to the hospital authorities, but no one responsible would admit to having any right or authority to discuss when Mikros might be released. He went back to the Academy with Captain Marnal, the aide; and Marnal, at his urgent request, got him in to see Stower again that same day.

"He wants to come back to the Academy, sir," said Johnny. "He'd like to come now."

"That's up to the doctors," Stower answered.

"Yes sir. But . . ." Johnny hesitated, aware of how his next words must sound like a broken record in the ears of the Academy's commanding officer. "A lander hospital's hard on someone who's sea-born. Mikros reacts to all the suffering going on around him whether he wants to or not . . ."

"It's in the doctors' hands, as I say," Stower cut him off brusquely. "I can send a message saying I'd appreciate his being let go back to duty as soon as they think he's able; but that's all I can do."

"Thank you, sir," said Johnny. "By the way, Mikros says he can identify the men who jumped him, if you'll parade the lander cadets and let him look at them."

Stower sat looking at Johnny for a moment.

"He recognized the ones who beat him up?"

"Not recognized them, sir. It's just that he remembers them and he'd be able to identify them again."

"What makes him so sure they were from the Academy? They'd have to be in town in civies and without passes."

"He knows, sir."

"He does, does he?" Stower looked away from Johnny, out the office window for a second. He looked back at Johnny, his face calm and motionless. "We'd want to find any cadets who'd do something like that—whether they're from the land, the sea, or the far side of Jupiter. Find them and get rid of them. You say he can identify them?"

"Yes sir, I do. I know he can."

"And you think he's right? That they're cadets from here at the Academy, over on the other side?"

"If Mikros says so, yes sir."

"Yes . . ." Stower looked away, out the window again. Abruptly, he turned back to Johnny. "All right, then. We'll see about it, as soon as he can come back here. That's all, Joya."

"Yes sir. If Mikros can't leave tomorrow, can I go see him again? I may be able to get him to wait more quietly."

"Of course," said Stower.

Johnny stood up, saluted and went out. Back in the barracks, after the day's duties, he rounded up the other class representatives, including Abner, and told them the news about Mikros. He did not tell them that Mikros might possibly be making a run for the sea. Such ideas were best kept private as long as possible.

Mikros was not given permission by his physicians to leave the hospital the next day; and it was not until after duty hours that evening that Johnny was able to make the trip to see him.

"Good, you made it," said Mikros as Johnny stepped into the hospital room, closing the door behind him. Mikros' hands continued his speech, silently. *If you hadn't come by lights-out, I'd have been gone.*

It's a good thing I got here when I did, then, signalled Johnny. He went on aloud. "I've got good news for you. You're leaving, with me, now."

"Leaving?" Mikros stared at him. "Back to the Academy?"

"That's right," Johnny said. "Stower talked to the hospital early today; and the order to release you went out this noon. But you know administrative red tape. The papers just got here to your ward a few minutes before I showed up . . . slow down, Mikros. There's no rush."

But Mikros was already out of his hospital bed and rummaging in the room's closet for his uniform. He pulled it out and glanced over it. It had been cleaned and repaired. He dressed swiftly.

How'd you manage it? he hand-flashed at Johnny as he pulled his jacket on.

I didn't, Johnny replied. Stower'd obviously made up his own mind to get you back quickly. He wants the whole business over and dealt with as fast and quietly as possible. He's going to line up the lander cadets tomorrow morning and give you a chance to pick out the ones who jumped you.

"Good," said Mikros, aloud.

"I told him you'd have no trouble."

"I won't."

Since Mikros was returning to the Academy on orders, official transportation was available.

They returned in the back of an empty ambulance, on a shuttle run from the hospital to the Academy infirmary. When they got there, a group of Mikros' classmates were waiting for them, just beyond the check-in desk at the entrance to their barracks. These swarmed around Mikros as he went through; and he disappeared in the crowd of their bodies. Johnny, however, was held up by the Duty Officer as he started to pass the desk.



"General Stower wants you, as soon as you come in," the duty officer said. This night, it was a short, stiff lieutenant with red hair, not one of the cadre staff known to be sympathetic or friendly to the sea-born.

"Oh?" said Johnny. "I'll go over right now."

"You'll wait to be taken over," said the lieutenant.

Johnny looked past the man to the crowd about Mikros, now moving off, disappearing down the corridor and through the further double doors that let them into the barracks proper.

"Yes sir," he said, and stepped aside from the desk.

A single military policeman showed up in answer to the lieutenant's phone call, and with the MP Johnny left the barracks and walked over to the Academy Commandant's residence. They were ushered into an old-fashioned, lamplit library to meet a Stower in shirtsleeves, with a pipe in his mouth and an unsmiling face.

"That'll be all," he said to the military policeman. "Close the door behind you."

The MP went out.

"Well, Joya," said Stower. He was on his feet himself and he made no motion to sit or offer Johnny a chance to sit. "Suppose you tell me about this report business."

"Report business, sir?"

Johnny stared at the officer. It was beyond common sense that he had been escorted here by a guard because of the report he had written on the unsuccessful attempt to capture the space bat.

"I think you know what I'm talking about." Stower's teeth clamped down hard on his pipe. "All those reports you cadets from the sea wrote after the training cruise—the reports you asked the commander for special permission to turn in late."

"Yes sir—but I still don't understand, sir," Johnny said. "We did get the permission; but I think everyone turned his report in well within the extended deadline."

"You know they did," said Stower. His eyes glittered in the lamplight like highly polished brass buttons on some stiff and ancient uniform.

"Who organized it? Was it you?"

"Sir," said Johnny. "I repeat, I don't understand."

Stower walked close to him and stared up into his eyes.

"By God," said Stower, softly, "if you don't, who does, then?"

His voice came back once more to a conversational level.

"Do you know what was in the report anyone beside yourself turned in?"

"No sir."

"Then I'll tell you," said Stower. "They all said the same thing, almost with the same words all the way through, as yours did. Are you trying to tell me that wasn't arranged?"

Johnny thought suddenly of the criticism, and the argument against attempts to capture the bats, that had filled his own report. There was an lost feeling inside him.

"No sir . . ." he shook his head. "No one arranged anything. I assure you. What you tell me . . . it's hard to believe."

"You can't believe it?" Stower gave a short grunt of a laugh. "Well, it's happened! And how could it happen unless all of you planned it?"

Johnny stood silent, his mind spinning.

"Well, sir . . ." he began, slowly, after a second.

"Damn it!" exploded Stower, "you're not going to try to tell me it could be done without agreement by all of you?"

"Yes sir, I am," said Johnny. "You see, the sea people—"

"Now, by God! I've had this sea-people business, and had it, until I'm full up on it!" snapped Stower. "Whenever you people do anything you shouldn't, the excuse is always that you're none of you to blame, because the way you were brought up in the sea made you do it. There's no regulation, there's no duty, you can't shove aside

just by pleading your difference from the rest of us. Well, there's got to be a limit to that and this time you've exceeded it! Do you know what you, all of you, did with those reports? You made a massive, unanimous, political protest against something that's vital to our development of space! How can I cover up something like that?"

"You don't have to, sir," said Johnny. "Why don't you just pass the results on to the Department of Space with my assurance that it was an instinctive unanimity, and ask them if they wouldn't like to reexamine the business of capturing space bats in the light of it."

Stower's eyes remained changed.

"That might get me off the hook," he said, his voice suddenly emptied of emotion. "It won't get the rest of you off."

"We shouldn't have to apologize for anything that's an honest reaction," Johnny said. "If they question us, we'll admit how we felt. The truth of the matter is, sir, trying to catch one of those bats to study it is a dead end. If we keep trying from now to doomsday, the bats we catch will always choose to die once they're captured. The whole thing's wrong—and useless. It ought to be stopped; and any one of us would be glad to tell anyone that, if we're asked."

"I suspect you will be," Stower said.



Johnny watched him closely. When the general said nothing more for several seconds, Johnny spoke again.

"Sir," he said. "Was something else concerning you?"

"Not something else," said Stower. "I've only got your word for it that those reports weren't an organized effort. Tomorrow, I've agreed to line up the cadets who don't come from the sea and let your classmate pick out those he says attacked him—and I'll only have his word for it that they're the ones. You know, Joya, there's a limit to how far we can go to accommodate you and the others like you, a limit to the amount of things I can do to the other cadets and to the military structure of this Academy; and I rather think we've finally gone beyond it."

"I don't follow you, sir."

"Follow this, then. I'm going to hold that parade tomorrow as promised. Palamas can go down the lines and look the other cadets over. But all that's going to happen to any of the people he picks out is that we'll look into them. Unless there's other evidence, solid evidence, to prove that those particular cadets were off-Academy without permission and beat him up, nothing's going to happen to them."

Home from the Shore

"General!" said Johnny. "How can there be any other evidence?"

"There'd better be," said Stower. "We're still a society where people are innocent until proved guilty, I'll remind you of that."

"But what you're saying," Johnny said, "is that it's almost a certainty the ones who ganged up on Mikros will get away with it. If that's so, they'll have shown they can do this sort of thing any time they feel like it!"

"Look at it that way if you like," said Stower. "Evidence is still going to be required. Good night, Joya."

"Sir, if you let those landers get away with this, all the sea-born cadets are going to be pushed to a breaking point—"

"Good night, Joya."

Johnny stared at the older man. In the lamplight, Stower's face was like the face of some ancient, angry snapping turtle.

He went back to the barracks by himself, without the escort of the military policeman, who had been dismissed to his usual duties. His mind was racing like an engine under full throttle; and by the time he reached his own room, its activity had begun to turn up certain inevitable alternatives.

There was no one in his room, no one in any of the rooms along the corridor of his floor. But he could hear a muted rumble of voices from the floor just below, where the cadets of the Junior class had their rooms. Some sort of party seemed to be in progress. He walked down and found the noise centering around the room of Mikros. The crowd there turned to greet him but he pushed through with hardly a word until he came to Mikros himself, seated cross-legged on one of the beds of the room as if on an emperor's divan.

"Johnny!" said Mikros, seeing him. Mikros moved over on the bed to make room. "Sit down!"

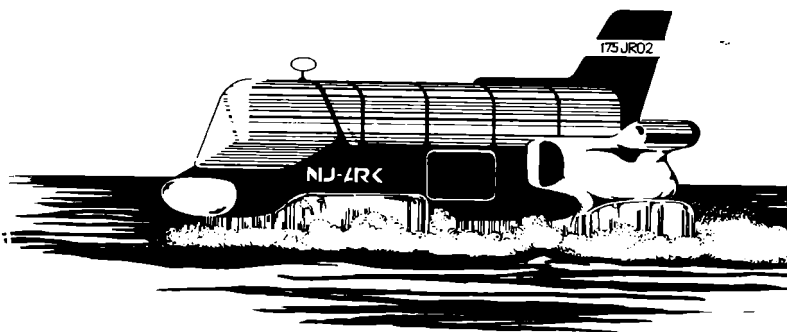
Johnny shook his head and leaned forward to speak in the other's ear.

"No," he said, softly. "Break this up, find the other representatives and bring them to my room. Do it quietly. We've come to the point of making a decision at last, one way or another."

MIKRO
PALAM







Chapter 3

The hour was about four in the afternoon at Savannah Stand, with most of the air-taxis, the day-charter flyers, back in the ranks.

Pilots were hanging around, talking, and the smell of solvent was on the air, the water stains drying back to the pale color of the concrete ramp floor from the flyers that had just been washed down.

It was, in fact, a few minutes after four. A gang of the pilots were needling about how the *Nu-Ark* was just about ready to split apart in the air and her pilot never know the difference. Just then, one of them spotted a possible fare down at the far end of the ranks. He came up along the line of parked flyers, a big young tourist, in a flower-patterned thousand-islands shirt, hanging outside his pants, walking across the water stains already fading out like the

cigarette smoke in the sun and looking into faces under the shadows of the ducted fans as he passed. He came on down and stopped at last by the *Nu-Ark* and hired her. He and her pilot took off east, out over the ocean.

"One to five, in beers," said the pilot of the *Squarefish* as they watched the *Nu-Ark* shrink down in the distance, "one of the fans comes off before he gets back here."

"That's a bad luck bet," said the pilot of the *Singalong*. "Don't none of you take him up on that." Nobody did, either.

"You got no sense of humor," said the *Squarefish* pilot.

The day was a hot-bright day in late July, clear as a bell. About twelve miles off-shore aboard the *Nu-Ark* the two men felt the motors of both fans quit, stutter a moment and then take up their tale again, not quite as smoothly as before. But the pilot said nothing and the passenger said nothing. They had not uttered a word to each other since leaving the Stand. They had not even looked at each other.

The pilot was sitting by himself up front. The passenger stood in back. They were in different sections of the flyer, which was like a metal shoebox in shape between the fans, and divided up near the front by a steel partition with a

narrow doorway in it just back of the pilot seat. The whole flyer had a light flat-tasting stink of lubricating oil from the fans all through it. It vibrated to the hard working of the fans so that anything touched sent a quiver from the finger ends up to the elbow. Up front of the partition there was just room for the pilot, his control bar and instruments, and a wide windscreen looking forward. In the bigger part of the box behind was the passenger section, six bolted-down seats and luggage racks in the space behind the seats.

The racks were forest-green like the walls, with a permanent color that had been fused into them. The two side walls had a couple of windows apiece. All the seats, which were overstuffed and with arm and headrests, were covered in an imitation tan leather that still looked as good as the day it had been put on at the factory. Only the olive drab paint of the floor had been scratched and worn clear down to silver streaks of metal by the sand tracked in from the beach, which gritted and squeaked underfoot at every step.

With only an occasional little noise from the sand, the passenger stood by one of the windows looking north in the back section, staring out and down at the sea. To his left, back the way they had come, the shoreline where the land ended and



the ocean began was sharp and as definite as if someone had drawn it in sand-colored ink. To his right and northeast, from this height the sea was blue-gray, smoke-colored, corrugated and unmoving, stretching miles without end to the horizon, and lost there. There was no doubt about the shoreline. But the distant horizon line where ocean met sky was no line at all. The still, blue-gray waters lifted to the far emptiness until they were lost in it. No one could have said for sure where the one ended and the other began.



The sky, on the other hand, that went to meet the sea, was a pale thin blue with only a small handful of white clouds about thirty miles off and at twenty thousand feet. Right from the moment of takeoff, the passenger had seen that the pilot of the *Nu-Ark* never looked at the clouds. He kept his eyes only on the indefinite horizon. Glancing over now, the passenger saw by the back of a head showing above the headrest of the pilotseat that the pilot was still at it. It looked to the passenger as if the pilot was so used to the sky that he no longer noticed it. He

did not notice the vibration, the faltering of his fans or the stink of oil. Likewise, he seemed used to the look of the sea. But the far-off and strange part of things that was the horizon drew all the attention of his eyes.

They were brown, his eyes, the passenger remembered. A little bloodshot. Set in a middle-aged tropical face tanned and thickened into squint lines around the corners of the eyes. Just then the pilot spoke, without turning.

"Keep straight on out?" he said.

The passenger went tight at the sound of the voice, jerking his eyes back to the pilotseat. But the black, straight hair of the pilot showed unmoving against the tan imitation leather. The passenger hooked a thumb into the neck opening of his bright-printed sports shirt. With one quick downward jerk of the thumb he unsealed the closure and the shirt fell open.

"Straight on out," he said. He shrugged off the shirt and reached for the belt closure of his green slacks. "Another four or five minutes, this heading."

"Ten, twelve miles," said the pilot.

"All right."

The black-haired portion of his head that was showing tilted forward. The passenger could see him finally leaning toward the sea. Looking,

no doubt, for a vee of wake, a squat triangle of sail, some dark boat-shape.

"Who do you think's out here now—" he began

He had started turning his head to look back as he spoke. As his eyes came around to see the passenger undressing, he moved with unexpected quickness, letting go of the control bar and swinging himself and his pilot seat all the way around. The flyer shuddered briefly as it went into autopilot. The passenger ripped off his slacks and stood up straight in only khaki-colored shorts. They looked at each other.

The look on the pilot's face had not changed. But now the passenger saw the brown eyes come to sharp focus on him. He stood balanced and waiting.

The only thing he was afraid of now was that the pilot would not look closely enough. He was afraid the pilot might see only a big young man in his early twenties. A young man with a strong-boned body muscled like a wrestler, but with a square, open and too easy-going sort of face. Then he saw the pilot's eyes flicker to the three blue dots tattooed on his bare right collarbone, and after that drop to the third finger of his right hand which showed a ring of untanned white about its base. The eyes came back up to his face then. When he saw their



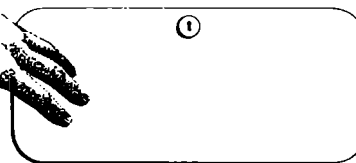
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expression had still not changed, he knew that there was one fear, at least, he could forget.

"I guess," said the pilot, "you know who's out there after all."

"That's right," he said. He continued to stand, leaving the next move up to the pilot. Six inches from the pilot's still left hand was the small, closed door of a map compartment. In there would probably be a knife or gun. The pilot himself was big-boned and thick-bodied. The years had put a scar above one eyebrow and broken and enlarged three knuckles on his right hand. These were things that had caused the pilot to be picked by him for this taxi-job in the first



place. He had trusted a man like the pilot of the *Nu-Ark* not to go off half-cocked.

"So you seen a space bat," said the pilot now, still watching him. The name came out sounding odd in the southern accent; but for a moment it hit home and the pilot blurred before his eyes as tears jumped in them. He blinked quickly; but the pilot had not moved. Once again he remembered how slow land people were to tears. The pilot would not have been figuring that advantage.

"We all did," he said.

"Yeh," said the pilot. "Your picture was on the news. Johnny Joya, aren't you?"

"That's right," he said.

"Ringleader, weren't you?"

"No," said Johnny. "There's no ringleaders with us."

"News said so."

"No."

"Well, they did."

"They don't know."

The pilot shrugged. He sat still for a second.

"All right," he said. "They still got a reward out for you bigger than on any the rest of the Cadets."

They held still for another little moment, watching each other. The flyer bored on through the air, automatically holding its course. Johnny stood balanced. He was thinking that he had picked this pilot because the man was like him. It might be they were too much alike. It might be that the pilot had too much pride to let himself be forced, in spite of the squint lines and broken knuckles and knowing now what his chances would be with someone like Johnny. If it was that, the pilot would need some excuse, or reason.

Easily, not taking his eyes off the pilot, Johnny reached down and picked up his slacks. From one pocket he searched out something small, circular and hard. Holding it outstretched in his fingers, he took two steps forward and offered it to the pilot.

"Souvenir," he said.

The pilot looked down at it. It was a steel ring with a crest on it showing what looked like a mailed fist grasping at a star.

Two words—*ad astra*—were cut in under the crest.

"Souvenir," said Johnny again.

The pilot looked it over for a long second, then slowly reached out two of the fingers with the broken knuckles and tweezered it between the

ends of them, out of Johnny's grasp. He turned it slowly over, first one way and then the other, looking at it.

He said, "Once I would've wanted one like that." He lifted his eyes to Johnny. "I don't understand. Nobody does."

"It looks that way to us, too," he answered, not moving. "We don't understand landers."

"Yeah," said the pilot. He turned the ring again. "Well, you was the one that was there. You all go home, you sea kids?"

"It's not our job," he said. "Fill your Space Academy with your own people."

"Yeah," said the pilot, almost to himself. Slowly he folded in the fingers holding the ring, until it was covered and hidden in the grasp of his fist. He put the fist in his pocket and when it came out again he no longer held the ring. "All right. Souvenir." He turned back to the controls. "How much on out?"

"About a mile now."

The pilot took hold of the control bar. The flyer dropped. The surface of the sea came up to meet them, becoming more blue and less gray as it approached. From high up it had looked fixed and unmoving, but now they could see there was motion to it. When they got close indeed, they could see how it was furrowed and all in action, so that no

part of it was the same as any other, or stayed the same.

Johnny put one palm to the ceiling and pressed upward. He stood braced against the angle of their descent, looking past the bunched-up muscles of his forearms at the jacketed back of the pilot and the approaching sea.

"How can you tell?" asked the pilot, suddenly "You know where we are now?"

"About eight-one, fifty west," said Johnny, "by about thirty-one, forty north."

The pilot glanced at his instruments.

"Right on," the pilot said. "Or almost. How?"

"Come to sea," he answered. "Your grandchildren'll have it." His eyes blurred suddenly again for a second. "Why do you think they wanted us for their Space Program?"

"No," said the pilot, not turning his head, "leave me out of it." A moment later he leaned toward the windscreen. "Something in the top of the water; there."

"That's it," said Johnny. The flyer dropped. It came down on the surface and began to rock and move with the ceaseless motion of the waves. The ducted fans were unexpectedly still. Their thrumming had given way to a strange silence broken by the slapping of the waves against the flyer's underbody and small creakings of metal.

"Well, look there!" said the pilot.

He leaned forward, staring out through the windscreen. The flyer had become surrounded by a gang of stunting dolphin and seal. A great, swollen balloon of a fish—a guasa—floated almost to the surface alongside the flyer and gaped at it with a mouth that opened like a lifting manhole cover. Johnny slipped full-eye contact lenses into place and stripped off the shorts. In only the lenses and an athletic supporter, he picked up the small sealed suitcase he had brought aboard and opened the side door of the flyer, just back of the partition on the right. The pilot turned his seat to watch.

"Here—" he said suddenly. He reached into his pocket, brought out the Academy ring and held it out to Johnny. Johnny stared at him. "Go ahead, take it. What the hell, it don't mean anything to me!" Slowly, Johnny took it, hesitated, and slid it back on his right third finger to carry it.

"Good luck."



"All right," said Johnny. "Thanks." He turned and tossed the suitcase out the door. Several dolphins raced for it, the lead one taking it in his almost beakless mouth. He was larger and somewhat different from the others.

"You going very deep there?" asked the pilot as Johnny stepped down on to the top of the landing steps, whose base were in the waves.

"Twenty . . ." Johnny glanced at the gamboling sea-creatures. "No, only about fifteen fathoms."

The pilot looked from him to the dolphins and back again.

"Ninety feet," said the pilot.

Johnny went down a couple of steps and felt the soft warmth of the sun-warmed surface waters roll over his feet. He looked back at the pilot.

"Thanks again," he said. He hesitated and then held out his hand. The pilot got up from his seat, came to the flyer door and shook. In the grip of their hands, Johnny could feel the hard callouses of the man's palm.

"It's what you call Castle-Home, down there?" said the pilot as they let go.

"No," said Johnny. "It's Home." On the last word he felt his vocal cords tighten and he was suddenly in a hurry to be going.

"Castle-Home's—something else."

He let go of the doorpost of the flyer and stepped down and out into the ever-moving waves.



Chapter 4

The ones that had come up to meet him—the seals, the dolphins, the guasa—went down with him. He saw the color of the under-waters, green as light behind a leaf-shadowed window. And he spread his arms with the gesture of the first man who ever stood on a hilltop watching the easy soaring of the birds. He swam downward.

The salt water was cool and simple and complete around him, after all the chills and sweatings of the land. In the stillness he could feel the slow, strong beating of his own heart driving the salt blood throughout his body. He felt cleaned at last from the dust and dirt of the past four and a half years. He felt free at last from the prison of his clothing.

Down he swam, his heart surging slowly and strongly. Around him, a revolving circus act of underwater, free-flying aerialists leaped and



danced—ponderous guasa, doe-eyed harp seals, bottle-nosed and common dolphins. And the one large Risso's dolphin, with the suitcase in his mouth, circling closest.

Johnny clicked fingernails and tongue at the Risso's dolphin. It was a message in the dolphin code that the Risso knew well. "*Baldur . . . Baldur the Beautiful . . .*" The twelve-foot gray beast rolled almost against him in the water, offering the trailing reins of the harness.

He caught first one rein, then the other, and let himself be towed down, no longer pivot man to the group but a moving part of it.

Seconds later, there was light below them, brighter than the light from above. They were coming down into the open hub of a large number of apartments, mostly with transparent walls, sealed together into the shape of a wheel. People poured out of the apartments like birds from an aviary. They clustered around him, swept him down and pushed him through the magnetic iris of an entrance. His ears popped slightly and he came through, walking into a large, air-filled room surrounding a pool. The dolphins, the seals and the guasa broke water in the pool in the same second. People crowded in after him, swarmed around him, shouting and laughing.

In a second the room was over-full. There was no spare space. A tall, lean young man, Johnny's age, looking like Johnny, climbed up on a table holding a sort of curved, long-necked banjo. Sitting crosslegged, he flashed fingers

over the strings, ringing out wild, shouting music. Voices caught up the tune. A song—one Johnny had never heard before—beat at the walls.

Hey, Johnny! Hey-a, Johnny!
Home, from the shore!
Hey-o, Johnny! Hey, Johnny!
To high land, go no more!

Long away, away, my Johnny!
Four long years and more!
Hey-o, Johnny! Hey, Johnny!
Go high land, no more!

They were all singing. They sang, shouting it, swaying together, holding together, laughing and crying at the same time. The tears ran down their clean faces.

Johnny felt the arms of those closest to him, hugging him. Those who could not reach to hold him, held each other. The song rose, chanted, wept. It would be one of his lean cousin's songs, made up for the occasion of his homecoming. He did not know the words. But as he was handed on, slowly from the arms of one relative or friend to the next, he was caught up, at last, in the music and sang with the rest of them.



He felt the tears running down his own cheeks, the easy tears of his childhood. There was a great feeling in the room. It was the *nous-nous* of his people, of The People, the People of the Sea in all their three generations. He was caught up with them in the moment now and sang and wept with them. They were moved together in this moment of his returning, as the oceans themselves were moved by the great currents that gave life and movement to their waters. The roadways of the seal, the dolphin, and now the roadways of his people. The Liman, the Kuroshio, the Humbolt Current. The Canary, the Gulf Stream in which they were now this moment drifting north. The Labrador.

For four years he had been without this feeling. But now he was Home.

Gradually the great we-feeling of the People in the room relaxed and settled down into a spirit of celebration. The song of his homecoming shifted to a humorous ballad—about an old man/ who had a harp seal/ which wouldn't get out of his bed. Laughter crackled among them. Long-necked green pressure bottles and a variety of marinated tidbits of seafood were passed from hand to hand. The mood of all of them settled into cheerfulness, swung at last to attention on Johnny. Quiet

welled up and spread around the pool, quenching other talk.

Sitting now on the table that his cousin Patrick with the banjo had vacated, he noticed their waiting suddenly. He had his arm around the shoulders of a round-breasted, brown-haired, slight young woman who sat leaning against him on the table, her head in the hollow of his shoulder. Her name was Sara Light and he had been looking down at her without talking, trying to see what difference four years had made in her. He saw something, but he could not put his finger on just what it was. Like all the sea-people, she was free; although he wondered if the landers had appreciated the difference between that, and their own legal ways, when they had set all the Cadets from the sea down as unmarried. But still, she was free; and he had not even been certain that he would find her still here with his family and friends' Group when he came back.

She sat up and moved aside now, to let him sit up. Her eyes glanced against his for a moment and once more he thought he saw a new difference between her now and the girl she had been when he saw her last—the person he remembered. But what it was, still stayed hidden to him. He turned and looked out at the people. They were

all quiet now, sitting on chairs or hassocks or cross-legged on the floor and looking at him.

"I suppose you've all heard it on the news," he said.

"Only that it was something about the space bats," said the voice of Patrick beneath him. Johnny leaned forward and peered over the edge of the table. Patrick sat cross-legged there, the banjo upright between his knees with the long neck sloping over his shoulder, his head leaning against it with the edge pressing into his cheek. He winked up at Johnny. The wink was the same wink Johnny remembered, but it put creases in Patrick's lean face he had never seen there before. Without warning, Patrick's face looked as it had been on the jacket of a tape of Patrick's Moho Symphony, in a music department ashore. At the time Johnny had thought the picture was a bad likeness.

He winked back and straightened up.

"The space bats were the final straw," he said. "That's all, actually."

"Were they big, Johnny?"

It was a child's voice. Johnny looked and saw a boy seated cross-legged almost at the foot of the table, his eyes full open, his lips a little parted, all his upper body leaning forward. He was one who had evidently been born into the

Joya Group since Johnny left. Johnny did not know his name.

"The one I saw would have weighed very little down here on Earth." He spoke to the boy as he would have spoken to any of the rest, regardless of age. "But—it was four to five kilometers across."

The boy drew in so deep a breath his shoulders lifted. When he let it out again his whole body shuddered.

"Five kilometers!" he whispered.

"Yes," said Johnny, remembering. "It was like a silver curtain waving in the current of an off-shore tide. That's how it looked to me."

"You helped catch it?" said Emil Joya, who was an uncle both to Johnny and his cousin Patrick with the banjo.

Johnny looked up.

"Yes," he said. "They took our senior class of the sea people out beyond Mars." He hesitated a second. "We were told it was something we'd be required to do as space officers some day. It's part of a project to find out how the space bats travel between the stars, if they do. And how to duplicate the process."

"I don't quite understand," said Emil, his heavy gray brows frowning in his square rock of a face.

"The Space Project people think the space bats can give us the secret of a practical way to drive our own ships between the stars at almost the speed of light."

"And you caught this one?" said Patrick, beneath the table.

"We caught it," Johnny nodded. "It didn't try to escape until it was too late. We went out in special space suits and trapped it in a net of energy. Then, all of a sudden, it seemed to understand it was caught. And it died."

"You killed it!" said the boy.

"None of us killed it," said Johnny. "It killed itself. One minute it was there, waving like a colored curtain in space, and then the color started to go out of it. It fell in on itself. In just a moment it was nothing but a gray rag in the middle of the net."

He stopped talking. There was a second or two of silence in the small-home crowded with sea people.

"And seeing that made you leave the Academy?" asked Patrick's voice.

"No," said Johnny. He drew a breath as deep as the boy had drawn. "After we came back from the observation cruise, we had to write reports. We wrote them separately; but afterwards

we found we'd all written the same thing, we sea-Cadets. We wrote that the space bats killed themselves when they were captured because they couldn't bear being trapped." He breathed deeply again. "We wrote that it would never work this way. The bats would always die. The project was a blind alley."

"And then?" said Patrick.

"We wrote our reports separately," Johnny said, "but the general in command of the Academy believed we must have gotten together on them, since we'd all said the same things. For that reason he refused to follow through properly when lander cadets beat up Mikros, away from the Academy. We saw they'd never understand us, or how we felt about things, so we came away."

No one spoke for a long moment.

"It doesn't make sense," said Patrick at last.

"Not to us, it doesn't," said Johnny. "To a Lander it makes very good sense. They never wanted us sea people as people in the first place. When they asked our third generation to enlist as Academy Cadets, they only wanted those parts of us they could use—our faster reaction times, our more stable emotional structure, our gift of reckoning location and distance and all the other new instincts living in the sea has wakened in us ..."

Johnny's voice trailed off. He thumped softly on the table by his knee with one knotted fist, staring at the blank wall opposite, until Sara Light, beside him, took his fist gently in her hands and cushioned it to stillness.

"We were like the space bats to them," said Johnny after a bit. "Time and again they'd proved it to us. I called a meeting of the other class representatives—I was Senior Class Rep. Will Jakin for the freshmen sea-Cadets, Per Holmquist for the second year group, Mikros Palamas for the juniors. We decided there was no use trying any longer. We went back and told the men in our own class. The next weekend, when we were allowed passes, we all took our rings off and headed as best we could for our own Homes."

He stopped speaking and sat looking across the unvarying surface of the wall.

They swarmed all over him for a second time. But they quieted down soon, the more so as Patrick's banjo did not join them. When it was still again Patrick spoke from under the table.

"You were the one who called the meeting, Johnny?"

"It was me," said Johnny. "I was Senior Representative."

"True enough," said Patrick. A faint E minor chord sounded from the strings of his banjo

as if he had just happened to shift his grip lightly on the neck of it. "That's why the news services have been calling you the ringleader. But you didn't have any choice, I suppose."

"No," said Johnny.

"It'll be a hard thing for them to swallow."

"Perhaps," said Johnny. "I've lived with them four years, and they swallow differently than we do, Pat. We see and think differently than they do. We've already got instincts they don't have—and who knows what the next generations will be like? But they're not ready to admit the difference. And until they do, we can't live on dry land with them."

For a second it seemed as if Patrick would not say anything more. Then they heard a faint chord from his banjo again.

"Maybe," said Patrick, "maybe. But we all started by coming from high land in the beginning. A hundred thousand generations of men ashore, and only three or four in the sea. All the history, the art, the music . . . We can't cut ourselves off from that."

His voice stopped.

"We won't," said Emil. He stood up from the chair in which he was sitting. The rest of the people began to rise, too. "We'll be going to Castle-Home, shortly. And Castle-Home will

straighten it out with the Closed Congress ashore, the way they've always done before. After all, we're a free people here in the sea. There's no way they can make us do for them against our will."

The people nearest the exit irises were already slipping out. Beyond the transparent front walls of the small-Home they were leaving. The encompassing waters were already darkening toward opaqueness. By ones and severals, saying good night to Johnny, they melted away toward their own small-Homes in the wheel-shape that was the Joya Group's combined Home.

Johnny found himself alone by the pool.

He looked about for Sara, but he could not see her. As he stepped toward the iris leading to the inner part of the small-Home unit, she came out of it. He reached out to her, but she avoided his grasp and took his hand. Puzzled, he let her lead him through the eye-baffling shimmer of the iris.

Beyond it he found not one bedroom, but two, for another iris led to a further sleeping room. But in this first area, a single bed was against a wall, at the foot of which a small night-light glowed.

On the bed, under a light cover with his face dug sideways into the softness of a pillow that was dampened by his open-breathing mouth, lay a small interloper. It was the boy who had spoken up earlier to ask about the space bats.

Politeness was for all ages among the sea people. Johnny stepped to the bed and reached down to shake gently a small bare shoulder and wake him to the fact that he was in the wrong small-Home. But Sara caught Johnny's hand; and when he looked down into her face he found it luminous with an emotion he did not know.

"Tomi," she said. "His name's Tomi. He's your son, Johnny."

Johnny stared at her. They had talked to and written each other across the distance between them these last four and a half years, and never once had she mentioned a child. Among the sea-born that was her right, of course. But somehow Johnny had never thought that Sara would not tell him if . . .

He forced his gaze away from her watching face, back down to the boy. His son slept the heavy slumber of childhood's exhaustion.

Slowly he sank on his knees by the bedside, drawing his hand out of Sara's grasp. A chill ran through him. He felt the heavy muscles of his stomach contract. In the small white glow of the night-light reflected from the palely opaque walls, Tomi slumbered as if in a world remote, not only from land and sea and all the reaches of space, but from all things outside this one small room. He breathed without a sound. His chest movements



were almost invisible; his skin fine to the point of translucency. The chill in Johnny spread numbness through all his body and limbs, and his neck creaked on stiff tendons.

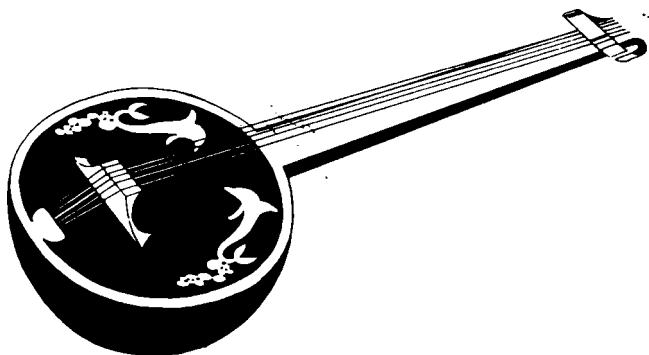
He reached out slowly. With what seemed an enormous, creased and coarse-skinned fingertip, he traced the slight line of an eyebrow on the boy. The brown, fine hairs were crisp to his touch. An abrupt flush of emotion rushed through him, burning away the chill like a wave of fever. He felt clumsy and helpless; and a wild desire prompted him to gather the boy in his arms and, holding him tightly, snarl above him at all the forces of the universe. Wrung and bewildered, Johnny turned his face up to Sara.

"Sara!" It was almost a wail of despair from his lips.

She knelt down beside him and put her arms around him and the boy, together. He clung to her and the sleeping youngster; and the boy, half-waking, roused and held to them both.

And so they held together, the three of them, there in the glow of the night-light.





Chapter 5

"It's good to have you back with us," said Patrick.

The two of them with Baldur and Pat's sea-friend, a spectacled porpoise named Manui, lazed on the surface some two hundred miles off the eastern coast of the North American continent. The sky was blue and clear with only a few scattered clouds, the day warm with a light wind and the ocean swells normal; but they could both feel the warning of heavy weather to come in the next few days, like a prickling under their skins. They had gone out together as once they had when they had been boys, addicted to weeks-long explorations of the ocean that surrounded them. But in this case, it had been mainly a search for privacy that had taken them off. Both knew that there were things on the mind of the other.

"It's good to be back," Johnny answered as they floated on their backs, watching the sky, barely aware of their own small, instinctive arm and leg movements that kept them half-reclined in the sea-swell, rocking with the movement of it. "But you think I ought to have stayed, don't you Pat?"

"Not you. Not if you didn't want to."

"But you think I shouldn't have led the other cadets home."

"Yes," said Patrick, simply. "I do think that. I don't know what it was like for all of you. But, having gone, I think I would have stayed."

"You were against our going in the first place."

"Yes," said Patrick. "But after you all went, anyway, the sea was committed. It's no solution to our problems with the land to first agree to join with them, and then abandon them. There's no answer in just running away from it all."

"I know. But we couldn't stay any longer," Johnny said. "It got to the point of being plain, finally, that there wasn't any hope in staying."

Pat said nothing.

"All right then, what would you do now?" Johnny turned his head to watch Patrick's profile, against the blue sky and the green water beyond.

Patrick sighed to the sky and the clouds.

"Go back, I guess," he said.

"Back to the Academy? What would that solve?"

"It'd return the situation to what it was before you left," Pat said. "With land and sea standing apart, things'll never work out, Johnny. We agreed about that once, you and I."

"We still agree about it," said Johnny.

"Then . . . ?"

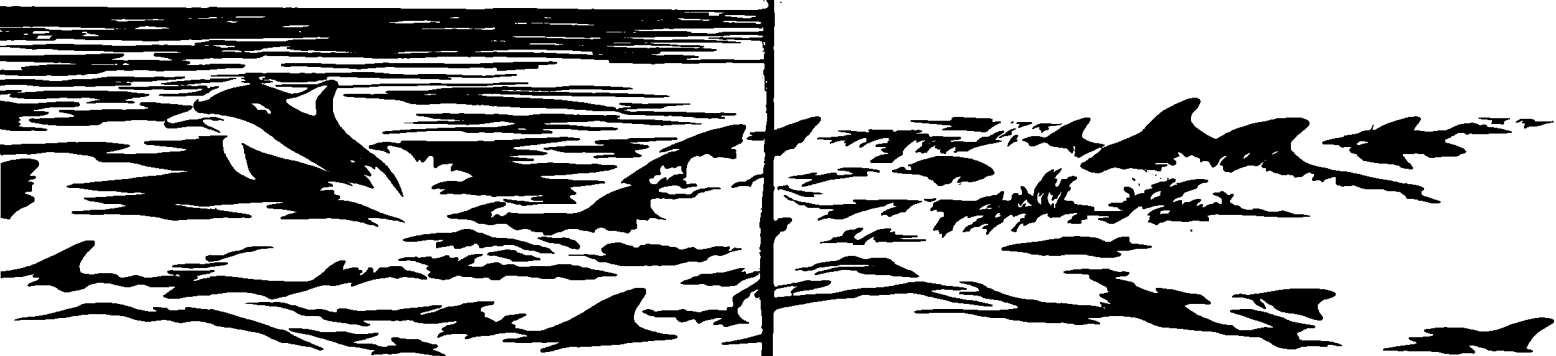
"No," said Johnny. "The facts are, we moved toward the land as much as we could. We gave, they didn't. But they're like young children. They took everything we gave them for granted. It never seemed to occur to them that they had to give anything back—or even that it costs us to give them what we did. The best of our best generation, Patrick! What if we'd asked that of them?"

"When you deal with a sea-friend, you don't expect understanding from it that it hasn't got."

"These aren't sea-friends. They're us—grown up ashore. They can't be excused for not understanding. If we can make the effort it takes to understand them, they can make the effort to understand us and our ways."

"Maybe it just needs more time, Johnny."

"They've had time. They've had four and a half years from when the first of us came ashore for them."



"All right," said Patrick, "then what are you going to do?"

"What has to be done," Johnny said. "Wait for them to come to their senses. We tried it their way and it didn't work. Now we'll wait for the lesson of that to sink in."

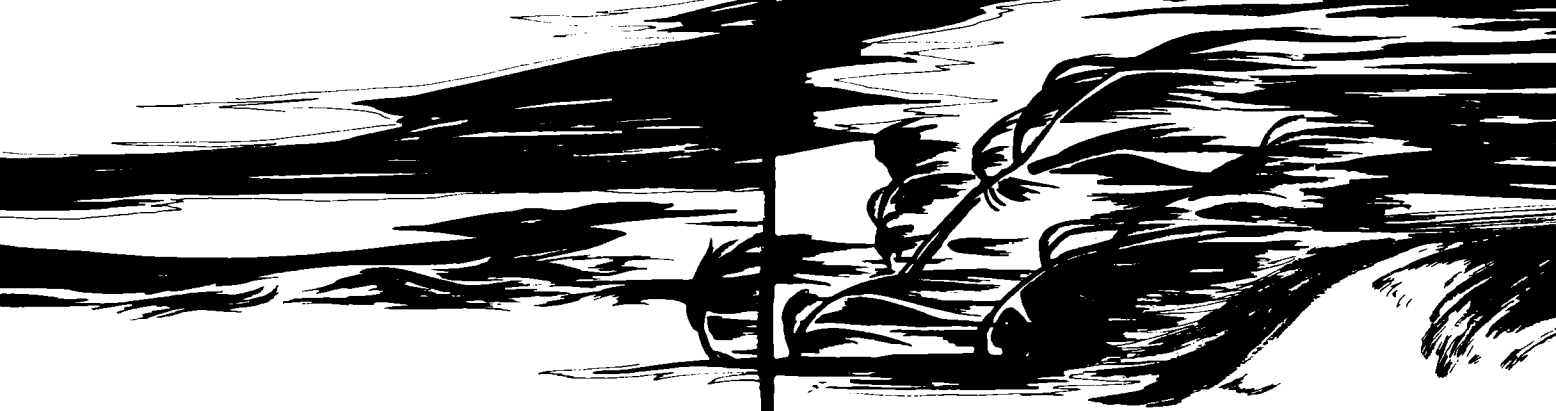
"And if it doesn't? What if they decide to use force against us—all their technology and resources against the tiny amount we have?"

"Then they do," said Johnny. "Patrick, we can't go back to their way."

"Fight or die?" Patrick said, sadly.

"If you want to put it that way," Johnny answered.

They left it at that and spent the next two days roaming the surface and underwater within a hundred sea-miles or so of Joya-Home. It was a good time, if not a purely happy one—though few landers would have understood the pleasure of the two sea-born in what were apparently only miles and miles of water, empty except for an occasional sea-creature. The landers would have lacked the ability to understand how that water itself was living, charged with varied and fascinating information about where it had come from, what it had encountered along the way, and what in the way of other life forms had passed through it recently.



For a while, both Johnny and Patrick managed to forget the deadly lack of understanding between land and sea. They lost themselves in the world of water to which with every instinct of their bodies and upbringings they could feel themselves to belong. But when at last they headed back to Joya-Home, a silence moved in between them and the closeness they had been feeling the last few days broke. They were left, each of them, separate in his own thoughts as they returned not merely to the Home but to the problems of the larger world beyond it. When they came at last to the spot on the ocean's restless surface that their third-generation instincts told them was above

the present location of Joya-Home—for the Home had moved a good two hundred miles since they had left it—Patrick lifted his head, looking around at the bright blue sky and sniffing the air.

"Hurricane coming, all right," he said. "Soon."

"Soon," agreed Johnny.

They rolled over in the water like dolphins and swam down to the lighted wheel of their destination; and at it they parted, going each to his own small-Home without further words.

The weather-warning they had felt on the surface had not misled them. It was the hurricane season and one big wind had begun its march north on the day Johnny left the Academy. On the

fourth day after their return, it hammered the ocean above the Home into spume and dark, tall masses of leaning water. To the east, it battered Georgia and the North Carolina shore.

The Joya Home slipped down to twenty fathoms depth and dwelt there in calm, green-blue silence. No effect of the howling, furious borderland between air and water reached down here to the bright wheel-shaped Home, away up in the middle of the ocean universe. The People of the Joya group hardly thought about what was happening above. In their swim-masks or small-Homes, they breathed the atmosphere made for them out of the water elements. They ate and drank of bounty the living ocean supplied. When they reached Castle-Home would be time enough to think about replacing any of the large, complex items of equipment that only the automatories of Castle-Home could supply. The land and all its problems might as well not exist.

Amongst the others, Johnny moved like a ghost. He was of them but not with them. He told himself he had been too long away, too long on high land, and the awareness of the life ashore was standing like a thick, transparent wall between him and these, his People.

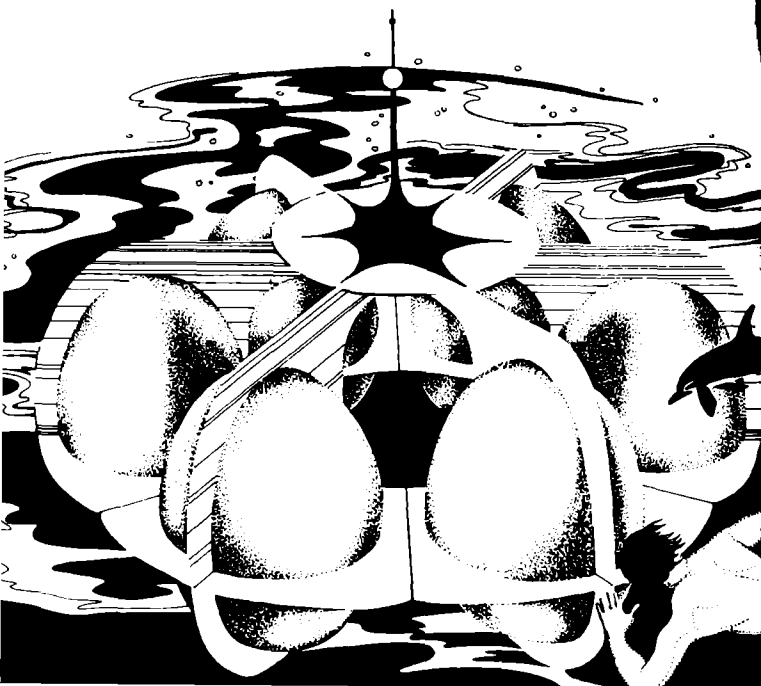
To those People, and to their third generation in particular, there was no more a

boundary between work and play than there was between place and place, wherever the deep oceans ran. All was one whole experience of life—unlike the compartmented lives they lived ashore. Johnny had gone without thinking, the first morning after he was home again, to the charts on which he had been working nearly five years before, the charts showing the movement of the great currents like the Gulf Stream, at various depths. He had been only one of the many People engaged in this, and he found the work far advanced since his last sight of it. He projected the current status of it in the display screen of the control area of Sara's small-Home, that was now his as well as hers and Tomi's; and he was impressed by what he saw. The sea-born were very few in number to survey all the majority of the Earth's surface that lay under deep salt water, but much work had been done since he had had a hand in it.

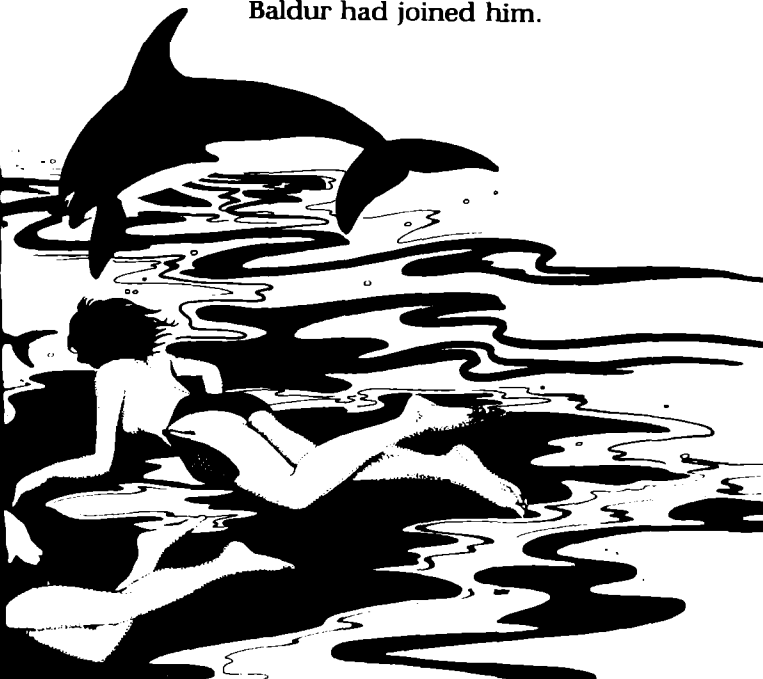
In the computer file were a large number of reports that had been sent to him after he had left and before those reporting had realized that someone else would have to translate these into knowledge expressed on the current charts. Many of those reports would be out of date now, handled by other workers on the project about the world; but Johnny started to go through them to winnow out what still might be useful.

It was a work that had fascinated him once. But now he discovered it had lost part of its power to hold him—as Sara's work with the temperature levels in the Gulf Stream would at this moment be holding her. Experience with the land beyond the sea and the space beyond both land and sea had made Johnny someone who could not lose himself in this former work—as all around him were losing themselves in theirs.

Truly, he was the odd member of the



community, though the others as yet had not seemed to suspect it. Restlessly, on the second day of the storm, Johnny left his work and went out to roam the other small-Home units. Entering the water, just outside his small-Home, he had to detour around the crowd of young bodies at play. Among them he caught a glimpse of Tomi. The boy was so intent on the underwater group chase going on that he did not even see his father passing, less than the width of a small-Home away. Johnny felt himself nuzzled, and turned to see that Baldur had joined him.



"Not now," he told the dolphin, giving the hand signal that said he would not be leaving the area of the Home. He swam on and entered one of the community small-Homes that operated as everything from lounges to laboratories.

The one he had entered was currently acting as a study area for a research group examining piles of different dried seaweeds. Faces looked toward him as he entered.

"Hello, Johnny," the workers said in several different voices, tempos, and times.

They went back to their work. He walked through and found himself in a biochemical laboratory where a brief glance and a smile was all the workers there had time to spare for him. He went on to prowl the whole of Joya Home and it was the same everywhere. The adults were all at their self-chosen occupations. The younger generation were lost in play. Patrick was not about and Sara, with others, would be a thousand fathoms down measuring her temperature differences. He, alone, was a ghost at the feast.

Saddened, he went out and swam off, away from the Home, without Baldur, to think things out. Either one of two things had to be true, he told himself, moving through the underwater. Either he was wrong and the land, with all the trouble it implied, could be safely forgotten. Or he was

right—and all of the others in Joya Home were wrong in thinking that the land could be ignored. If the life they loved was to continue in the sea, then the situation on the shore had to be dealt with. They could not turn their backs on the problems there—the overpopulation, the hunger and the need for other worlds to provide living space. They could no longer ignore the way in which the land had ceased to grow, had gone instead into what was almost a backward movement toward savagery and decay.

He could not be wrong. He could not be wrong because not only he, but the other Cadets, had experienced that savagery and decay ashore. The land had not only not understood the needs and the growth of the people in the sea, as they had not understood the space bats, they had not been able to see that their ways led only down a blind alley to racial death. What good would it do them to take over all the seas, or finally all the planets they could use, if they were to continue to remain blind to the larger spectrum of life and sensation, that stirred in the sea-people and ran like a rainbow of colors through the living fabric of the space bats?

And, that being the case, what good did it do for the sea-people to lose themselves in the seas as they had always known them, ignoring the storm

ashore as they now ignored the meteorological storm overhead. The road to survival led to conflict with the land—unless the land would learn from the sea. And they would not. They had proved that. The storm of war would leave the safe and distant surface outside the lives of the sea-born and come down among them. They had no choice, because the land was wrong, and the sea must fight or die if the human race was to survive.

And he, who was aware of this, could not make his own people aware of it also.

He turned back finally to the Joya Home. Coming into his own small-Home, he stepped through the iris into the main room and checked himself just in time, overhearing the voices of Patrick and Sara coming from the next of the two inner rooms.

"It's up to you," Patrick was saying.

"Me? In what way?" asked Sara's voice.

He took a step to his right and was able to see through the open iris to the adjoining room. The two of them stood quite alone, facing each other beside a desk piled with notes on which Sara must just have been working. Patrick stood tall, a little bent-shouldered and concerned above the shorter figure of Sara; and Sara had an unhappy look on her face.



Johnny stepped back around the corner of the iris entrance. He was about to leave the small-Home again, when it registered on him that he was the subject of their conversation; and he checked, listening; feeling like a thief in the night for doing so—but doing so.

"Talk to him." It was Pat's voice.

"What about?" Sara said.

"You know what about. About his responsibility to the sea-people. You and I are the only ones who can talk to him. The others only think of taking care of him and doing what he says."

"Yes, and he doesn't know it."

"Of course he doesn't know it. He's never really understood how he leads them. He doesn't understand how blindly they follow him."

"He could look."

"How, Sara? He hasn't got our point of view. He's the one person in the world who's inside Johnny Joya. From where he stands everything he does looks like dull common sense, so he thinks it's the common sense of it that makes other people agree with him. He doesn't know it's what he is, the different sort of person he's always been, and how that's marked him and made other people trust him instinctively."

"It doesn't matter. He's still got to see himself as he is."

"Can you see yourself as you really are? Can I? Can anybody? Johnny's as limited that way as anyone else; and it happens he sees himself as a cut-down version of what he really is. So he thinks he's being right, when he's really only being charismatic. And he can't understand it any other way. So we have to tell him, Sara, you and I—because there's no one else can reach him the way we can. We've got to make him see himself so he can break down and face the fact he's wrong to separate us from the land, this way."

She sighed.

"Maybe he's not wrong," she said, wearily. "Maybe we are. Anyway, how can I tell him, Patrick?"

"It has to be you or I. You and I are the only ones who understand him—and there's no one else but us he'd believe it from. I've tried and I haven't got through to him. So you've got to try now."

There was silence from Sara.

"All right," said the voice of Patrick. "Think about it anyway, and I'll talk to you again later . . ."

Patrick's voice was moving towards the iris as it ended its sentence. Johnny turned swiftly and left before he could be discovered.

There was a new sadness in him that he could do nothing about. He had sensed from the moment

of homecoming that there was something making Sara unhappy. It had been there to be felt in her, like a gaping rent in an otherwise perfect piece of fabric. In the first few seconds he had heard her talking with Patrick—and this, he now admitted to himself, was the reason he had stood back and listened—he had thought that what they spoke about was this same unhappiness of hers; and he would finally find out what it was.

But that had not been the topic. Now he had two worries instead of one. Johnny's throat tightened painfully. He had given Sara a number of opportunities to bring her concern up to him, by herself. But she had refused to take advantage of any of them. In all other ways, she was the same as ever, equally tender, equally loving. But she would not speak of whatever silent grief or anger was gnawing at her. Plainly, whatever it was, it had something to do with Tomi. She had never explained why she had not told him about Tomi; and the boy did not call him Daddy, but Johnny.

On the fourth morning a call came to rescue him from his personal problems. It was a phone call from Chad Ridell, Chief of Staff of the North Atlantic's Castle-Home, one of ten such undersurface metropolises that cruised the seawaters of the world. Atlantic Castle-Home was

nearest Joya-Home's present position, only about four hundred miles north of where Joya-Home drifted now.



"This time," Chad said to Johnny, "we're going to have to form a council to talk to the Closed Congress."

Chad was second-generation. His lean, fifty-four year old face had lines more suited to someone of the first generation. "They're as worked up ashore," he said, "about you Cadets going home as they were about keeping the whaling industry. Maybe more. The other Castle-Homes have delegated ours to speak for all. I thought we'd eventually have elections, with each ten Homes electing a representative. But for now, I'm simply bespeaking about twenty or so people I think are pretty sure of being elected."

"Patrick, you mean?" said Johnny.

"For one," said Chad. "Because his music's made him known and respected on shore. You, for one of the representatives of the Cadets."

Johnny nodded.

"You'll come as quickly as you can, Johnny?"

"Yes. Patrick too. I'm sure. All of us, I think," said Johnny.

They broke their phone connection and Johnny went to tell the others. Within an hour, the Joya Home was beginning to break into the small-Home sections that made it up. Each small-Home sent an electric current through its outer shell, and the plastic of that shell "remembered" a different shape, changing into an outline like that of a supersonic aircraft. Together, the fleet of altered small-Homes

turned north at a speed of ninety knots, under the thrust of individual drive units that used a controlled hydrogen fusion process to produce high-pressure steam jets. They drove through the still waters for Castle-Home.

Five hours later, reunited in wheel-shape, the Joya-Home inched into position and locked down atop a column of nine other previously arrived Homes. On three sides the column of Homes, which the addition of the Joya-Home had just completed, was locked and connected with three of the other ten-stacks of Homes that altogether made up the great underwater community clustering about—and momentarily part of—North Atlantic Castle-Home. Johnny, who was acting pilot for the Joya-Home, locked the controls and turned away from them.

Tomi said, "Why didn't Mommy wait here while you did that?"

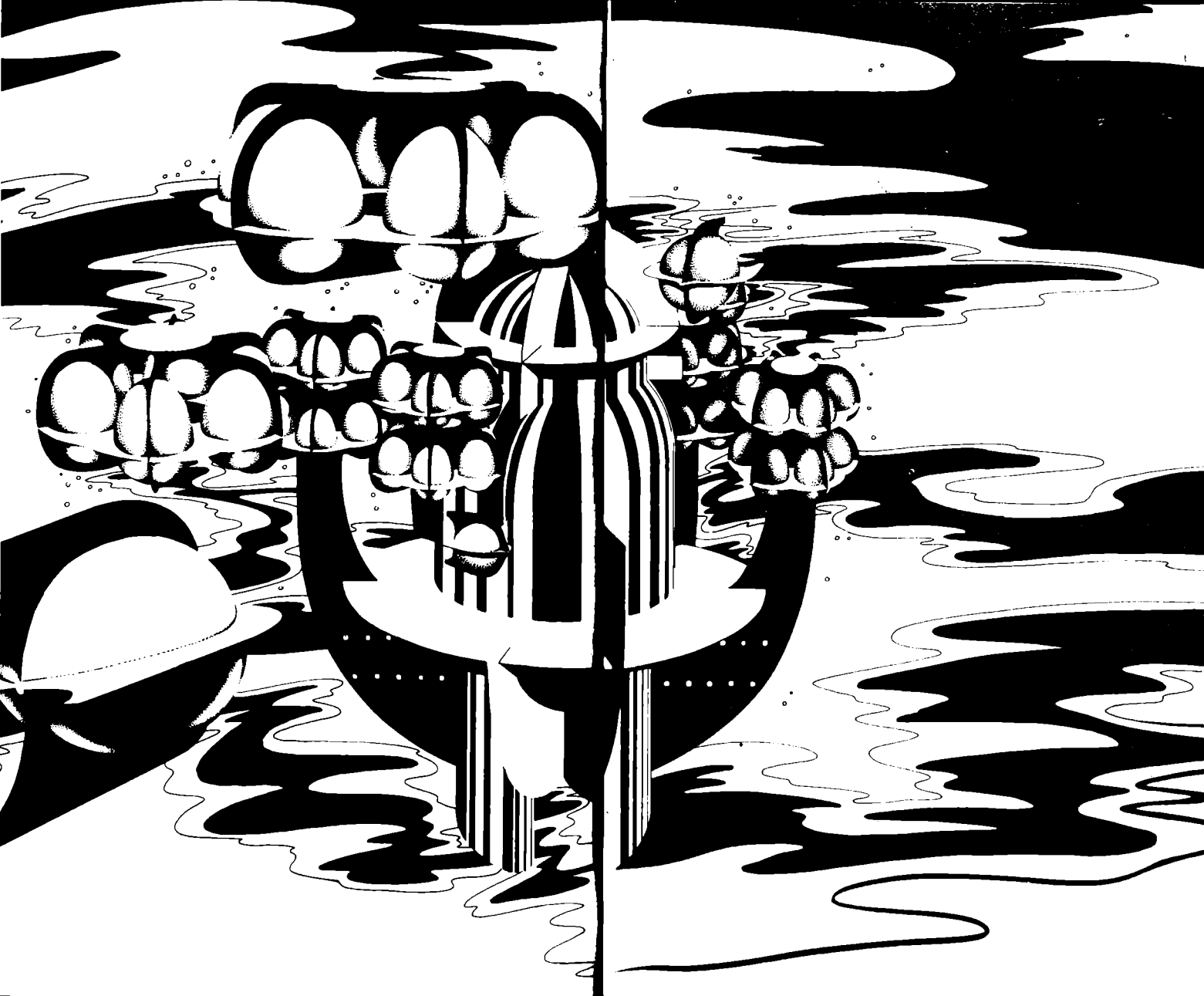
Johnny looked down. The small face, in which Johnny often found himself searching for a resemblance to himself, looked up at him across a gulf of years.

"Her own folk's Home may be here," Johnny said. "She wanted to find out."

"Grandpa," said Tomi. "And Grandma Light."

"Yes," Johnny said.

"They're my Grandpa and Grandma. They're not yours." The boy stood with feet apart. "Why



didn't *she* take me to see my Grandpa and Grandma Light?"

Johnny looked out the wide transparency before him at the blue waters and the ten-Home upright columns of Castle-Home. "I think she wants us to become better acquainted."

Tomi scowled.

"What's 'acquainted'?"

"We aren't acquainted," said Johnny. He looked back at the boy.

"What's," said Tomi, "*ac-quaint*-ed, I say!"

"Acquainted," said Johnny. "Acquainted's what you are with your mother."

Tomi looked hard at him.

"She's *my* mother," he said at last.

"And you're my son." Johnny gazed at the boy. He was square-shouldered, solid and thick. His eyes were not brown like Sara's but blue like Johnny's. But their blueness was as transparent and unreflective as a pane of glass.

Johnny said suddenly, "Did your mother ever take you to see the corral at a Castle-Home?"

"Unh-uh!" Tomi shook his head slowly from side to side. "She never took me."

"Get your mask and fins on, then," said Johnny. "I'll take you."

Outside the small-Home entrance iris, they found Baldur waiting with Sara's bottle-nosed

dolphin, Neta, and Neta's half-grown pup, Tantrums.

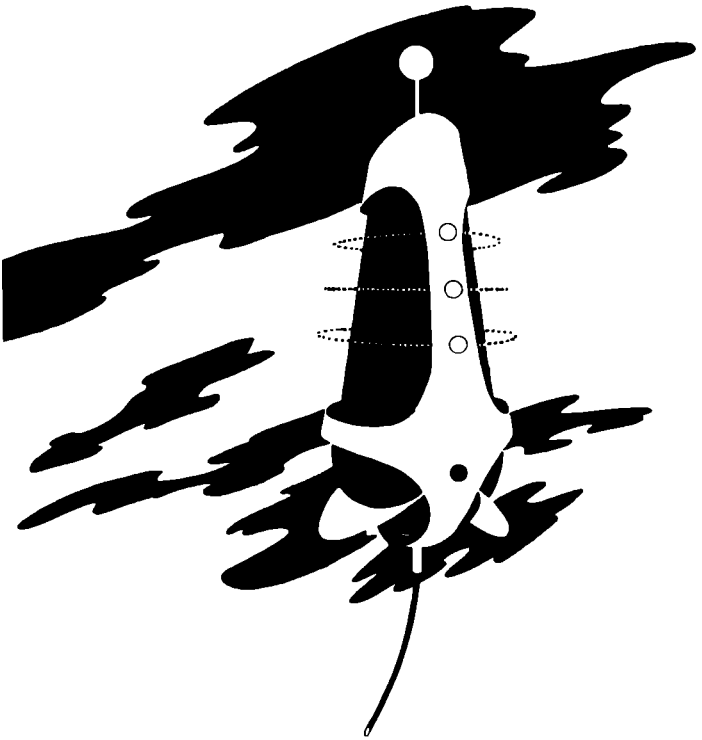
"Not now, Tantrums!" Tomi shoved the five-foot pup aside and reached toward Baldur; but Baldur evaded the boy, spiraling up on Johnny's far side. Tomi muttered something and grabbed at the reins of the harness on Neta, who let him take them willingly.

"No," said Johnny. The mutter had barely reached his ears over the underwater radio circuit built into the swim masks. If they had been relying on voice-box communication from mask to mask through the water it would not have reached him at all. But he felt it was time to settle this matter. "Baldur is not your dolphin."

Tomi muttered once more. This time it was truly unintelligible, but Johnny did not need to understand the words in this case.

"Our sea-friends pick us, not we them," said Johnny. "Baldur picked me many years ago. While I was gone he let you use him, but now I'm back. You'll have to let him do what he wants."

Tomi said nothing. Letting the dolphins pull them, they headed across the top of Castle-Home through three fathoms of water to a far area of open water where yellow warning buoys stood balanced at various depths. Neta jerked the reins suddenly from Tomi and, herding Tantrums ruthlessly before her, headed home.



“Bad Neta!” shouted Tomi through his voice-box. “Bad dolphin!”

“No. Careful dolphin,” said Johnny. “What do yellow buoys stand for?”

“Danger,” muttered Tomi. He glanced at Baldur and grumbled again.

“Don’t blame the dolphin,” said Johnny. “If Sara were here, Neta wouldn’t leave her even for Tantrum’s sake. It’s nothing against you. Some day you’ll have your own dolphin for a sea-friend, and it’ll stick with you.”

"Won't!" muttered Tomi. "I don't want scared little dolphins! A great, great, big space bat, that's what I'll get!"

"Suit yourself," said Johnny. "Well, that's the corral, beyond the buoys there and for four miles out. Want to go in?"

Tomi's face mask jerked up sharply toward his father.

"Past the yellow...?"

"As long as I'm with you. Well?" Tomi kicked himself forward.

"Let's go in, Johnny."

"All right. Stay close now." Johnny led the way. Tomi crowded him. Baldur hesitated, then spurted level with them.

They swam forward for thirty or forty feet. Tomi gradually forged ahead. Then, suddenly, he went into a flurry of movement, flipped around and swam thrashingly back into Johnny.

"Daddy!" He clung to Johnny's right arm and chest. "*Killers!*"

Johnny put his left arm instinctively around the boy. Holding him, Johnny could feel the abrupt and powerful beat of the boy's heart and the warmth of blood cresting out through his own body.

"It's all right," Johnny said.

"They're muzzled."



Tomi still clung. The warmth racing through Johnny came up against a different, powerful pressure that seemed to spread out and down from behind his ears.

"Look at them," he said. Tomi did not move. The pressure moved further out and downward. He put his hands around the small waist and overpowered the boy's grip, turning him around. He held his son out, facing the killer whales.

For a second, as he turned him, Tomi had gone rigid through all his body. Now the rigidity began to go out of him. He stared straight at the looming shape of the nearest killer whale with the open basket-weaving of the enormous muzzle covering the huge head. Johnny's fingers pressed about the light arch of childish ribs; but he felt no shiver or tremble. He was aware of Baldur quivering in the water at his back; but between his hands there was only stillness.

The boy relaxed even more. He hung, staring at the great, dim shape just ahead. After a second his hands went to Johnny's hand and he pushed Johnny's grip from his waist. He swam a few strokes forward.

Johnny felt the hard beating of his own heart against the pressure in his brain. He was tense as a strung bow himself; and his heart beat with the hard, proud rhythm of a man forging a sword for his own carrying. Without warning he remembered the striped gold length of a Siberian tiger lying in his cage outdoors at the zoo ashore in San Diego. And the small, dancing figure of a ruby-throated hummingbird which floated from some nearby yellow tulips, in through the gleaming bars of the cage. It had hesitated, then, hovering on the blurred motion of its wings, moved driftingly toward the great head and sleepy eye

of the tiger that watched it advancing.

Johnny looked about him.

At first there had been only the one killer to be seen. Now, like long boxcar lengths resolving out of the green dimness, other ponderous, dark-backed shapes were making their appearance without seeming to exert any of the effort of swimming. It was as if they coalesced, and came drifting close under some magnetic influence. They approached sideways. Through the open-work of the muzzle about the one now drifting, rising toward him on his left, Johnny could see the murderously cheerful mouth, the dark intelligent watching of the eye.

The eye, dark and reflective, approached Johnny, growing as it came. Behind it lay the large cetacean brain, and a mind close to Johnny's own. But that mind was a stranger, self-sufficient. Staring now into the approaching eye, Johnny thought he caught there his own sea-image. And it came to him then that it was for something like this he had advised the Cadets' return. It was for something like this that he had brought his son to the killer's pen.

Very mighty, ignorant of domination, moved by deep instincts to act to an end unseen but surely felt, the reflecting eye of the killer whale looked out on an unending liquid universe

where there were no lords, no chains, nor any walls. Through this universe only the dark tides of instinct moved back and forth. For the killer whale as for the people, now, those dark tides spoke with a voice of certainty. To listen to that voice, to follow the path it told of, setting aside all things of the moment, all pity, all fear of life or death—it was this knowledge Johnny saw reflected in the killer's eye. In the movement of those dark tides there was neither wife nor child, nor friend nor enemy—but only truth and what the mind desired. First came survival. After that what the individual chose to accept. That was the truth, the secret and the truce of the dark tides.

And that was why, thought Johnny over the strong beating of his heart, that it had been safe to bring his son to this place. His son was of the sea. In this place was the truce of the sea, and in that truce he was safe.

“Daddy!”

Tomi's voice shouted suddenly in Johnny's earphone, in the close confines of the mask and over the sound of the bubbling exhaust valve.

“Daddy! Look at me!”

Johnny jerked around in the water. Twenty feet from him and a little higher in the water, Tomi was disregarding one of the oldest knowledges

of the People—that the quicksilver members of the dolphin family hated to be held or clung to by any but their oldest friends. Like a boy on a Juggernaut, Tomi rode high on the shoulder area of the first killer whale.

“—Tomi,” said Johnny. He felt neither heart-beat, nor pressure now. Only a wide, hollow space inside him. He kept his voice calm.

“Uh-huh!” Tomi kicked carelessly with the heels of his swim fins against the great swelling sides of the killer. Five feet ahead and below him, the dark eye there looked like a poker player’s through an opening in the muzzle. It gazed steadily on Johnny. The great flukes of the killer, capable of smashing clear through the side of a small row-boat, hung still in the water. Johnny thought of the truce, of the primitive sense of fun to be found in all the dolphins, the savage humor of the killer whales.

“Tomi,” he said, surprised at his own calmness, “it’s time to go home.”

“All right.” Surprisingly without argument, Tomi kicked free of the twenty-five-foot shape and swam down towards his father. For a moment Johnny saw the boy’s legs beating the underwater by the muzzle where the dark eye watched, and then he was swimming freely toward Johnny.

Johnny turned and they swam together toward



the edge of the coral. Baldur shot on ahead.

"Tomi—" said Johnny; and found words did not come easily. He started again. "I should have warned you not to get close to them. Killers aren't like dolphins—"

"He's going to be my sea-friend, I think," said Tomi, kicking vigorously through the water.

"Tomi," said Johnny, "killers don't make sea-friends like dolphins."

"Then why does he keep coming after me, Daddy?"

Johnny's head jerked around to look back over his shoulder. A dozen feet behind them, the basket shape of a killer whale's muzzle was gliding through the water. At that moment the yellow buoys loomed before them, and they passed through. Here the killer should stop following. But he came on through with them.

"Tomi," said Johnny quietly. "You see the iris in the wall there?"

"I see it," said Tomi, looking ahead to the side of Castle-Home.

"When I tell you to, in just a minute when we get close, I want you to start swimming for it. And don't look back. You understand? I want you to swim as fast as you can and not stop."

The sudden wild clangor of an alarm bell broke through his words, racketing through the water all around them and over Castle-Home.

A buzzer sounded in the earphones of their mask-radio circuit.

"All bespoke members of the Council, this is Chad Ridell speaking," said the voice of the Chief of Staff of Castle-Home. "Please come to the Conference Room at once. All members—" Chad's voice repeated the request twice more.

"Daddy!" said Tomi, as the voice stopped. Johnny turned swiftly to him. "Look, Daddy," Johnny followed the boy's pointing finger and saw the waters behind them empty and still. "My killer's gone!"

"Never mind," said Johnny automatically. "We've got to streak for home now." He caught up a rein from Baldur and handed another rein to Tomi.

When the two of them entered their own small-Home again, Sara was back.

"Mommy! Mommy, listen!" Tomi ripped off his mask. "We went in the corral with the killers. And I made friends with one and rode on his back and he followed us but the bell scared him—"

Sara's face flashed up to stare into Johnny's. Her eyes were wide, her nose pinched, the skin over her cheekbones tight and pale. There was a white look to her eyes.

"I've got to go—" said Johnny. He pulled

on his mask and hurried out of the small-Home.

He saw he was late as he stepped into the conference room. About twenty of the others were already there. They were seated in a semicircle near the far end of the green-walled room, around the broadcast image of a small middle-aged man, standing, in gray slacks and Lander jacket.

Johnny recognized him. It was Pul Vant, Secretary-Advocate for the Closed Congress, governing body of the grouped nations of the land.

Johnny came up quietly and took a seat.

His cousin Patrick was among those already there, as were two other representatives of the ex-Cadets—Mikros Palamas and Toby Darnley of the Communications Dome, here at Castle-Home. And Anea Marieanna, a dark-haired woman of the second generation, startlingly beautiful still in her forties and in spite of the fact her left hand was gone at the wrist. She smiled at him across the semicircle, and he smiled back briefly.

"... ringleaders," Pul Vant was saying.

"I tell you," Ridell interrupted. "There are no ringleaders among the People."

"Very well. Setting that aside then—"

Vant gestured neatly with his hands as he talked. He had the smooth movements of an actor. "I'm trying to explain to you what the Space Program and the Academy can mean to a frontierless people

ashore." He went on talking. It was an old argument, one Johnny had heard before. He looked around the semicircle, noting the difference of his people from this little man of the land. Anea Marieanna was not the only one marked by the sea among the older generations; and in his own generation the very structure of mind and body was different. Different from the Landers. Already they were starting to use the same words to mean different things on each side. And the dangerous thing was they did not realize the difference that was there in their words.

"Now," Vant was saying, "the Congress is ready to make the same offer. To take you in as a full member nation . . ."

"No," said Chad.

"You understand," Vant said, "we can't have six million people without even a government holding seventy-point-eight per cent of the world's surface area. You can't do that."

"We've been doing it," said Chad. "We intend to keep on."

Vant lifted his hands and let them drop.

"I'm sorry," he said. "There's nothing I can do then, I just explain the situation, that's all my job is. You know, historically, the tail's never been let to wag the dog very long." He ran his eyes around the semicircle. They met Johnny's



eyes, paused for a second, then passed on.

"If the rest of the Cadets'll come back voluntarily . . . Otherwise, public opinion's going to get out of hand." He looked at Chad.

"We don't want to declare war on you."

"No," said Chad. "You don't want that."

Vant waved an easy hand and disappeared. The rest got up and began to shove their chairs back to make a full circle, breaking out at the same time into a clatter of conversation. Johnny found himself next to Chad.

"He talked like they caught some of us?" Johnny said. Chad looked at him.

"Yes," he said. "A hundred and twenty-nine didn't make it to the sea. They're holding them at Congress Territory on Manhattan. It'd have to be there. The only shred of legal right they have to arrest our people would be under international law. Vant told us they may be tried as deserters."

"Deserters?" Johnny stopped shoving his chair.

"Why should they?" he heard Toby Darnley, of the Communications Dome of the Castle-Home, his slightly shrill voice rising over the others. "We can't let them put a leash around our necks. But we can't let them put those young people before a firing squad, either." Glancing across

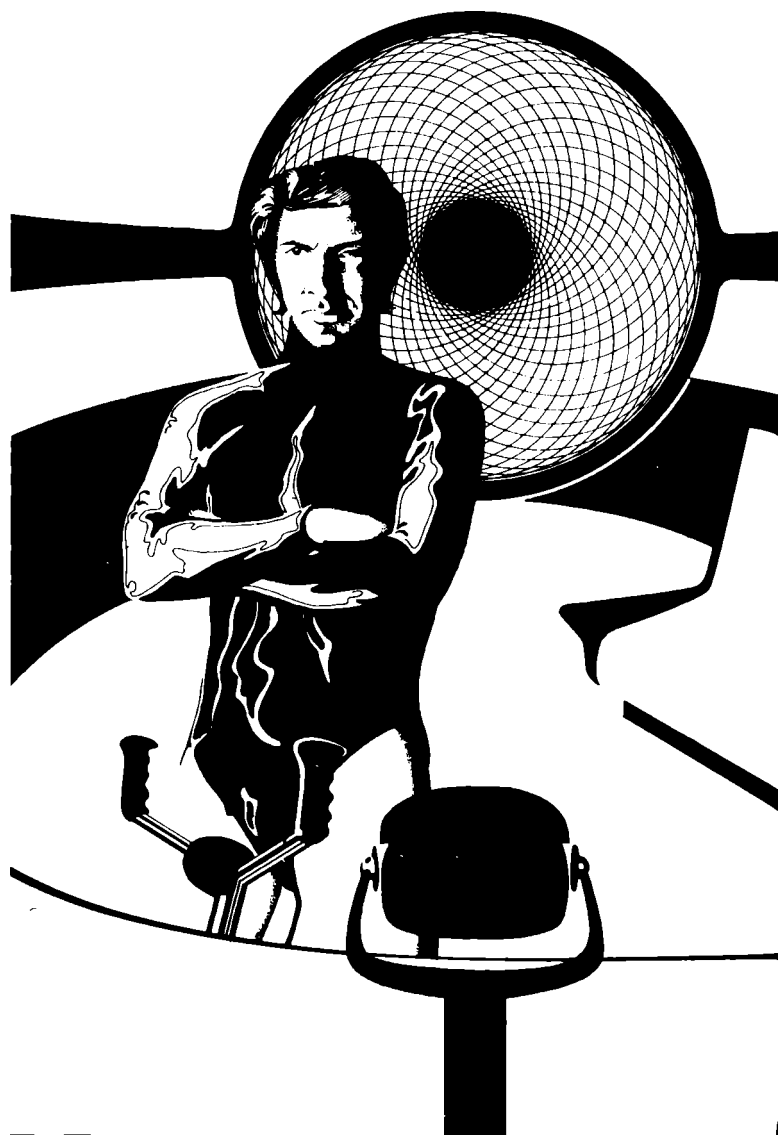
the room, Johnny saw Toby's small, square face was rigid and dark. "What can we do?"

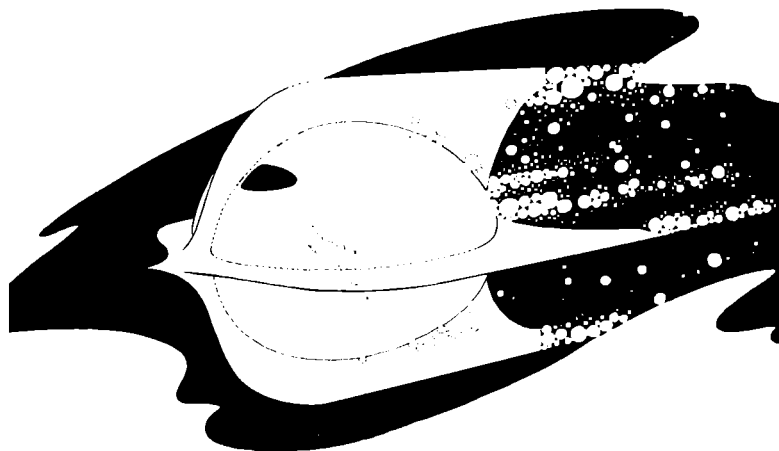
Beside Johnny, Chad sat down. The circle was formed now. Johnny saw he was the only one standing. For some reason, following the shock of what he had just heard, he found his mind filled by a memory of the eye of the killer whale, as he had seen it watching through the openings in the muzzle. The dark eye, hidden of meaning, and steady. In the same moment something moved in him. It suddenly seemed to him that he felt the distant, but actual presence of the hundred and twenty-nine imprisoned sea-born, as he had felt Tomi between his hands.

"We can save them, of course," he said. "We can go rescue our own people."

They all stared at him. The roomful of people were silent. Though the four walls of the room barred all about him, he seemed to sense the eye of the killer whale upon him, steadily watching.

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Chapter 6

"Johnny," said Patrick. "You mean take them back by force."

"Force if we have to," said Johnny. "Chad said they were holding them on Closed Congress Territory on Manhattan Island? We ought to be able to go in quickly, staying underwater right to the shore, and get them out again without trouble, before the landers know what's happened. It'd never occur to them we'd do something like that. They think anywhere on land we can't touch them. They really don't understand—even now—what we can do, so they won't be expecting anything. We may be able to get in and get our people out almost without an argument. But, even if it means trouble—we can't leave them there."

There was a murmur from the rest of those in the room. Pat looked around at them. He stood up, pushing his chair back.

"I think you're wrong," he said, simply.

Turning, he walked out. The others looked after him for a long moment. Then, almost as if they had nowhere else to look, all their eyes came back to Johnny.

"Pat may be right," Johnny said. "But I can't sit here and do nothing. If the rest of you agree, I'll go ahead."

Chad sighed.

"All right," he said to the room at large. "Questions from the rest of you? Objections? Any comment?"

There was silence.

"I agree with Johnny," said Anea Marieanna. Her voice was calm and level. "But even if I didn't, he's spent over four solid years ashore with the landers. Patrick hasn't."

She lifted her single hand briefly.

"I know," she said. "Patrick's been making trips ashore ever since he was twelve and the land started playing his compositions. But visiting is one thing, living with the landers, something else. Even if I didn't think Johnny was right, if I had no opinion either way, I'd have to go with Johnny because I think he understands better what's at stake here."

She looked around from face to face, and one by one the others spoke to agree with her.

The sea people could always move at a moment's notice. In an emergency they could almost dispense with the notice. Three hours later, a spindle-shaped formation of separate small-Homes in their craft-shape bored due east through the luminescent blueness of the hundred-fathom depth toward the New York shoreline. Before them, a vibratory weapon on low broadcast power herded the sea-life from their path. Their speed was a hundred and seventy knots.

Piloting the lead craft, Johnny stood alone at the controls. The small-Homes behind held nearly three hundred men and women of the third generation, almost every one of the ex-Cadets who had been in Castle-Home at the time. The small-Homes they travelled in were supplied with automatic controls. The ex-Cadets had explosives, the radio equipment built into their masks, and take-apart sonic rifles and vibratory weapons of the sort the people used for sea-hunting. The element of surprise was on their side, they thought they knew where the prisoners were being held in Congress Territory, and they had a plan.

In the control section of the small-Home leading the formation, facing the empty, luminous waters showing through the transparent wall before him, Johnny felt detached from the speed

of their movement. All sound was damped out and there were no signposts to gauge by, only the strange blue twilight of a hundred fathoms down that had so fascinated Beebe in his first bathysphere descent over a hundred years before. It glowed through the transparent forward wall to wrap Johnny in the unreal feeling of a dream. He, the sea, the ex-Cadets behind him—even the destination to which they were all hurtling—seemed ghostlike and unreal.

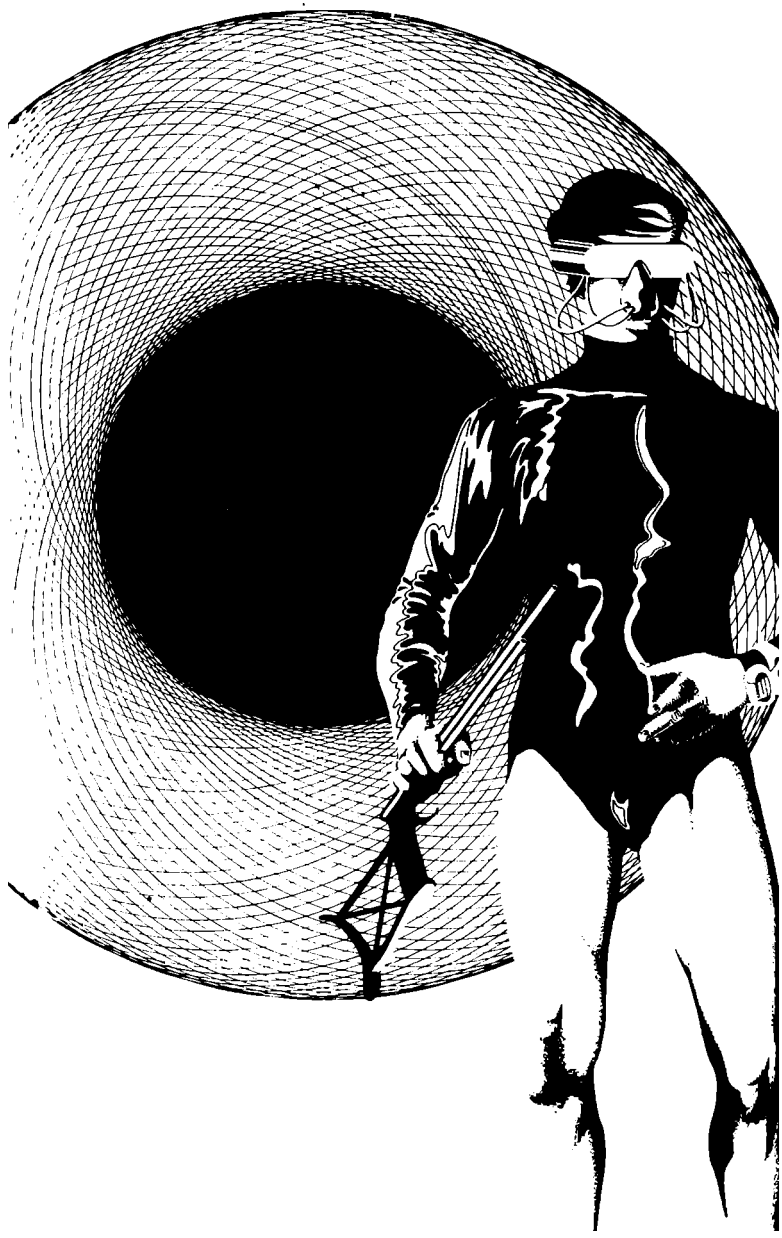
The sound of footsteps behind him, in the small-Home where he was supposed to be alone, jerked him around sharply.

"Patrick!" he said.

Patrick, dressed like all the ex-Cadets in black, elastic cold-water skins, swim mask and fins, came like some large-footed monster out of the dimness in the back of the small-Home, to stand beside Johnny.

"I stowed away," said Patrick. He was looking out at the depths through which they were rushing at cataclysmic speeds.

"Why? You were against this." Johnny gazed steadily at him. Patrick slowly turned his head, but the apparently brilliant blue was so dim that Johnny could not make out the expression on Patrick's face.



"Yes," said Patrick. "I had to. It's true, you know, Johnny. You're a ringleader."

"Ringleader?" Johnny leaned toward him, but still he could not make out the look on Patrick's face.

"Yes," said Patrick. "Just as you were at the Academy, and before. You decide something on your own. And then you push it through because none of the other sea-born will fight you on it."

"What did I push through?" Johnny let go the controls. On automatics, independently, the craft bored on, leading the formation.

"This." Patrick's voice changed. "Johnny, turn back."

"But we have to do this," said Johnny. "Why can't you see that, Pat? We've already broken away from the landers. We're different."

"You think you're different," said Patrick.

"I know it. So do all the third generation. You know it, Pat." He peered again, unsuccessfully. "You want to make me personally responsible for all this?"

"Yes," said the blur of Patrick's face.

"For a war we can't win."

"It's not war yet," said Johnny.

"It's war. War with the land. I wish I could stop you, Johnny."

Johnny stood for a second.

"If you feel like that, Pat, why'd you come along?"

Pat laughed, a short, choking laugh. "I knew you wouldn't turn back. I had to ask you one last time, though."

He turned and walked back, away. In the dimness, the shape of him seemed to melt, rather than go off. Left alone, Johnny seemed to feel a coldness from the blue illumination as if it was shining x-ray-like through his flesh and bones.

Here, in this moment, it was almost hard to remember how he and Patrick had been as alike in their thoughts as twin brothers, back in the years when they had gone off on their expeditions, alone with their dolphins and sonic rifles, living off the open sea like dolphins themselves. Now, in this new dimness, he could not even call clearly to mind his cousin's face. What he remembered was overlaid by the picture of Patrick he had seen on the paper jacket of the Moho tape in a music store ashore.

Johnny turned back to the controls, and put his mind to the coming work.

At a safe distance offshore and fifty fathoms deep, they halted and clustered for a final council before going in to the land.

Johnny locked the controls and turned from them. The small-Homes of the expedition had

welded their changeable bodies back into a single structure with connecting irises, at a touch of the proper electric current through their plastic structure. Johnny went back into the rear rooms of his own small-Home and found Patrick lying on his back on the sleeping mattress there, but with his eyes open, focused on the ceiling.

"Pat—" said Johnny.

Pat's lips barely moved.

"Yes?" he said.

"Patrick, I've got to get together with Mikros and the others for last minute decisions and planning. As long as you've come, do you want to join us, and help?"

"No," said Patrick, still looking at the ceiling. "I'm sorry, Johnny. No."

Johnny stood looking at him for an empty moment.

"All right, Patrick," he said, gently.

He turned and went forward again through the small-Home to the new iris connecting him with the small-Home adjoining. He stepped through it and found himself facing Walda Antoyan, already waiting with a pad of drawing paper under his arm. Walda was one of the in-betweens, those who had been too young to go with the third generation to the Space Academy, but too old to be considered part of the fourth generation to which Tomi and

those Tomi's age belonged. He was a slim, eager, sixteen year old with a brush-end mop of coarse black hair that did its best to stand on end whenever it was not soaked by sea water.

"Come on, Walda," Johnny said. "We've got to find Mikros and the other group leaders."

"They're on their way here, already. All the group leaders are," said Walda.

"Oh?" Johnny said. "Who decided that?"

"Everyone," said Walda. "We've been talking back and forth on the command circuit all the way here. Everybody agreed it was easier for the rest to come find you, than for you to go find them."

"I see," said Johnny. He started to turn back to his own small-Home, to hold the council there. Then he remembered the presence of Patrick.

"All right," he said. "We'll talk right here, then." He sat down on one of the room's two hassocks.

"Let's see your drawings," he added.

Walda passed him the pad and Johnny flipped through it. Walda was a superb sketch artist, in spite of his youth. Moreover, he was well acquainted with the Closed Council Territory they would be going into—Walda had visited an older second cousin of his, a lander who was one of the Closed Council delegates, there a number of



times. If it had not been for that and his artistic genius, Johnny would have preferred not to have someone that young along. Although, as Walda was technically third generation, it would have been difficult to keep him from coming if he had insisted, in any case.

The sketches were excellent, picturing every step of the way they would have to follow to the old blast shelter beneath the Secretariat building, where it had been decided that the captured ex-Cadets would probably be held.

"Fine," he said to Walda, handing the sketch pad back. "Make enough copies for each of the group leaders to take back to their own people."

Walda went off to make the copies with the equipment in the control section of his own small-Home, just as the first of the group leaders began to come through the iris in the opposite wall of the room.

Of all the class representatives, Mikros was the only other to make it safely back to sea from the Academy; which was unfortunate, since the representatives were not only natural leaders, but recognized as such by the other ex-Cadets. Johnny needed a minimum of two lieutenants he could trust to know how he himself would decide, in case something happened to him, or in case he was not available to make decisions in an emergency. To match Mikros, he had picked an older third-generation hand—almost an in-between, one generation up from Walda—named Eva Loy. Eva had been too old to go to the Academy, but she had been one of the early spokesmen for the third generation, and she was known and respected by all the ex-Cadets.

The small-Home around Johnny was filling rapidly, now. There was a group leader for every fifty individuals in the expedition. Walda came back with copies of his sketches for everyone;

and Johnny waited until these had been passed around, then spoke briefly to all of them as they sat, for the most part, cross-legged on the carpet of the small-Home, listening.

"I've written out the general plan for you," Johnny said, standing. "You should all have had copies of that before we left Castle-Home. If you haven't, get Walda to make you copies from some one here who's got his copies along. Deliberately, I haven't spelled things out. We'll rendezvous by part-groups of four and five, as indicated, at points surrounding Closed Congress territory and less than four blocks away. At click signals over the mask intercoms—you'd probably best keep your hand on the swim-mask in your pocket, so you can read the vibration of the transmission through your fingertips—we'll all move together into the Territory, each group on its own taking care of any problems it runs into along the way. Don't put on your masks until you have to. There's no point in attracting attention until we have to. Once we're all inside the Territory, everyone but Mikros', Eva Loy's groups and mine will spread out through the Territory, except the Conservatory. The three groups which will be holding the Conservatory have already been told who they are. The rest of you simply keep control of the Territory until my group, with

Mikros' and Eva's, have got our people free; and we can all take off directly into the East River."

He looked around the faces in the room to see if they were all understanding him. Seeing they were, he went on.

"The small-Homes needed to take us all off will have moved into position in the River opposite the Territory by the time we all reach the Conservatory," he said. "They'll load up with everyone and carry us out to the rest of the small-Homes offshore. Then we'll spread ourselves out among all the small-Homes, if we have time, and head for Castle-Home. If something goes wrong, anyone gets lost, or there are difficulties, everyone heads for Castle-Home on his or her own."

He paused. They waited for him to finish.

"I've deliberately held the planning our moves to a minimum," he said, "for two reasons. First, none of us have any experience with this, and so I'm trusting you all to reason your way through any trouble, rather than follow some plans laid down earlier, which by the time the trouble shows up may not even apply. Second, part of our strength and difference from the land is the fact we're used to thinking for ourselves—and that's going to make it hard for the land to guess what we'll do next, if matters reach that point. So . . . good luck. Come to your group leaders or me



with any questions you've got—now. There won't be a chance later."

He stopped talking, and sat down. Surprisingly, only five of the leaders congregated around him with questions, and three of these were with the half-dozen who would be putting together some eleven of the small-Homes

into a mockup roughly the shape and size of one of the lander deep-sea submarines, resting in the Brooklyn Navy Yard a handful of miles away.

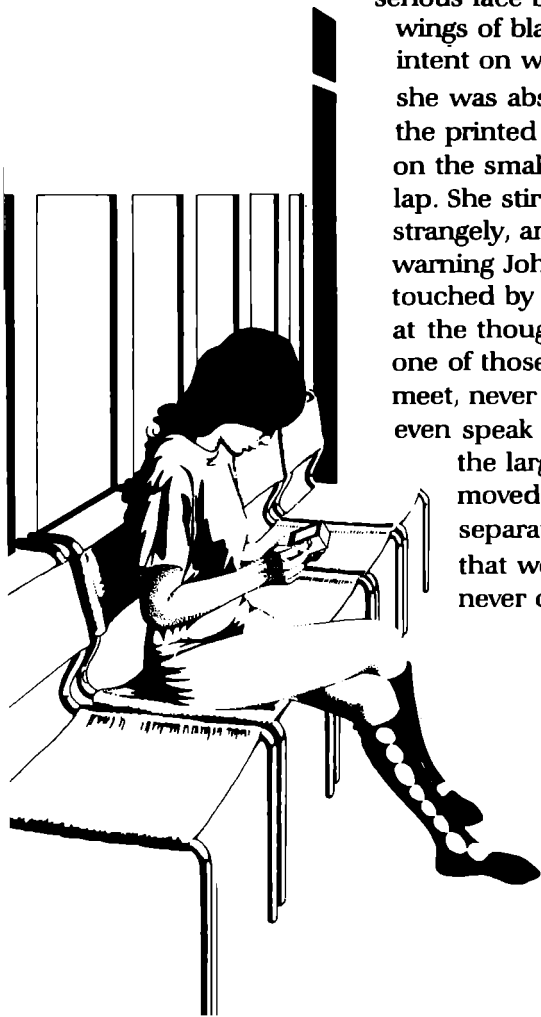
The planning and briefing completed, they went on into shallow waters. The Brooklyn Yard small-Homes split off from the others. The rest continued together to just off Jones Beach, where they were to drop all but the skeleton crew which would take them on automatic controls to their station in the East River, just off Congress Territory.

Patrick and Johnny among the others, they slipped into the water outside their small-Homes and headed in to shore, dispersing as they went, so that they emerged at last as individuals, on the early evening of a hot July day, among the lander swimmers and skin divers of the crowded beach.

Johnny bought lander shirt and loose trousers from an automatic dispenser of disposable clothing in a pullman dressing room above the beach. His disassembled sonic rifle and swim mask with its intercom were tucked, out of sight, under his belt beneath the loose shirt. He boarded one of the small six-person cars of the Personal Rapid Transit line in to Manhattan.

The car was empty, except for a young lander woman in her late teens or early twenties. She was reading a newstand tape in its throwaway

display unit as they travelled, her narrow, serious face between its two wings of black hair intent on whatever it was she was absorbing from the printed page thrown on the small screen in her lap. She stirred him strangely, and without warning Johnny felt himself touched by a sense of loss at the thought that she was one of those he would never meet, never get to know or even speak to, because of the large forces that moved them separately on tracks that would never cross.



She left the P.R.T. car at a stop less than halfway in to Manhattan. Johnny continued to the destination he had programmed for the car, two blocks from the Closed Congress Territory.

The Territory covered what had formerly been an area of twenty-blocks, running south from where the old Queensboro bridge had been. It was a show place, beautifully terraced and landscaped, and quite open, its grounds running down to the edge of the river. At midnight, Johnny reached the broad boulevard entrance at the north end and saw Mikros and Eva Loy come up to him.

"All clear?" Johnny asked.

"All clear," said Mikros. His big face under its black hair was grinning. Eva looked strangely calm under the lights of the Manhattan dome. Johnny himself felt a little as he had felt facing the killer whales with Tomi.

"The reports are that there's no one to be seen outside the buildings, in the Territory," Eva reported.

"Move everybody in, then," Johnny said. They went in. Half an hour later, without being stopped, they were all within the Territory, with Johnny's, Mikros' and Eva's groups spread out around the otherwise deserted Conservatory, surrounded by office buildings, that lay before

the Secretariat. The pool in the center of the Conservatory was black and still.

"What if they aren't in the blast shelter under the Secretariat Building?" Eva asked as with Tommy and Mikros they moved toward the entrance to the Secretariat followed by the members of their groups.

"We just have to hope they are and we don't have to search. Where else could they hold a hundred and twenty-nine people?" answered Johnny. "But if they aren't, we'll just have to search." Leaving Mikros in charge outside, Johnny and Eva, with a dozen of the ex-Cadets, went into the building and down the regular ramp escalators to a special old fashioned, mechanical elevator in a sub-basement. They descended the final distance in this; and it let them out into a guardroom filled with Closed Congress soldiers, half-dressed and wholly unready to fight.

The soldiers submitted without protest. They were lined up and disarmed. The inner doors to the blast shelter were broken open and the captured ex-Cadets poured out.

"That's good," said Johnny to Eva. "Now, get them upstairs as quickly as we can."

He was turning back to the elevator—when the dull, heavy sound of a sonic explosion from above rattled the elevator in its shaft.

For a second no one moved. Then Johnny snatched his swim mask out of his pocket, thumbed the controls and spoke into his intercom.

"Mikros?" he said. "What happened?"

Mikros' answer was broken, blurred by the buzzing of a distorter.

"... soldiers up in the buildings!"

"Take charge," said Johnny to Eva. He leaped into the elevator, rode it up, then ran up the humming escalators to the ground floor.

Through the glass front of the building, he could see the Conservatory, lush with flowers, trees and other plants. Looking up through the foliage, Johnny saw most of the dome lights were out. In the dimness, the sea people had taken cover where they could behind hedges and ornamental trees surrounding the pool. From the buildings on three sides of the plaza military gunfire was reaching for them.

Mikros was not to be seen. The springing of the trap that had been obviously laid for them had evidently caught him somewhere out of sight. The ventilation was off; and as Johnny watched, smoke drifting out of the building on Johnny's right began to thicken and fog the air in layers that did not move. An explosion or something like it had splashed water out of the pool, darkening one of the terraces as if the concrete



of which it was made was itself bleeding. But of actual blood, there was no sign; for the sonic and vibratory weapons that were being used wounded and damaged internally.

"Yes." Johnny climbed automatically to his feet. He glanced along the Secretariat's front and dimly, through the smoke, saw an armed figure waving to him and pointing aside. For a second Johnny stared, recognizing only from general signals about the figure that it was one of the sea-born. Then he forgot about making an identification as memory clicked in his head from the sketches Walda had made. The passageway down which the figure was pointing, a passageway between two of the buildings, led toward the river.

"Follow me," he snapped to Eva.

"Bring everybody."

He ran toward where he had last seen the figure but it had already disappeared in the smoke. However, when he reached the passage entrance and looked down it, the smoke here was light enough for him to see it was clear of enemy. He snatched his swim mask from his pocket, pressing the sending control.

"Everybody out!" he shouted into it. "This is Johnny Joya! Take the passage north of the Secretariat. I'll be standing just outside it.

Look for me."

He was suddenly conscious of Eva standing at his elbow.

"Everybody out!" he repeated to her, and pointed to a flowerbed beside the passage entrance. "Explosive! There!"

Eva ran to the flowerbed and dropped to her knees on the soft earth. From under her own loose lander shirt she fumbled a number of the yellow cubes of explosive jelly the sea-born used for deep-sea mining. She scooped a hole and



tumbled the cubes in, pushing earth on top of them. Sea-people began to throng past, running, staggering by them through the smoke. Gradually the escaping figures thinned out and ceased. Mikros loomed up out of the smoke and stopped before Johnny.

"Are they all out?" Johnny asked.

"All but you and me," shouted Mikros, hoarsely.

Johnny, putting on his mask, glanced at the flowerbed and saw Eva, too, was gone. The passage loomed empty except for smokehaze.

"I'll be along in a—"

The swelling impact of another explosion shuddered through the square. Johnny looked and saw Mikros' lips move, but he heard nothing. They were deafened. Johnny waved Mikros on toward the river, saw him leap up, then run off through down the passage.

Johnny waited. Mikros did not appear. There was no more time. Johnny turned and ran, pressing the detonator transceiver at his belt. Behind him the smoke billowed and swirled in an explosion he could not hear. He ran for the river.

"All over, into the water," he shouted into his mike; but he could not even hear himself. He felt an unexpected fear. If they could not hear him . . .



But then he reached the balcony, fifty feet above the river; and all was going well. The unhurt ex-Cadets were going over feet-first. The wounded were being slid down escape chutes of plastic. The small-Homes were waiting in the water below. He could see little of this in the smoke, but he knew it was so. Suddenly he seemed to hook in on a network of awareness. It was as it had been when he had stood in the conference room and felt the hundred and twenty-nine prisoners as if he held them like Tomi, between his hands. In this emergency some new instinct of the third generation was taking over; and they were all a unit.

"Keep moving," he said automatically. With his new awareness he felt they had heard him. Then he realized that also his own numbed hearing was beginning to recover. A little moving air off the river cleared the smoke from the balcony. Only Mikros was standing with him. He motioned Mikros over, then turned to go himself. Then he felt one of the People still coming from the direction of the plaza.

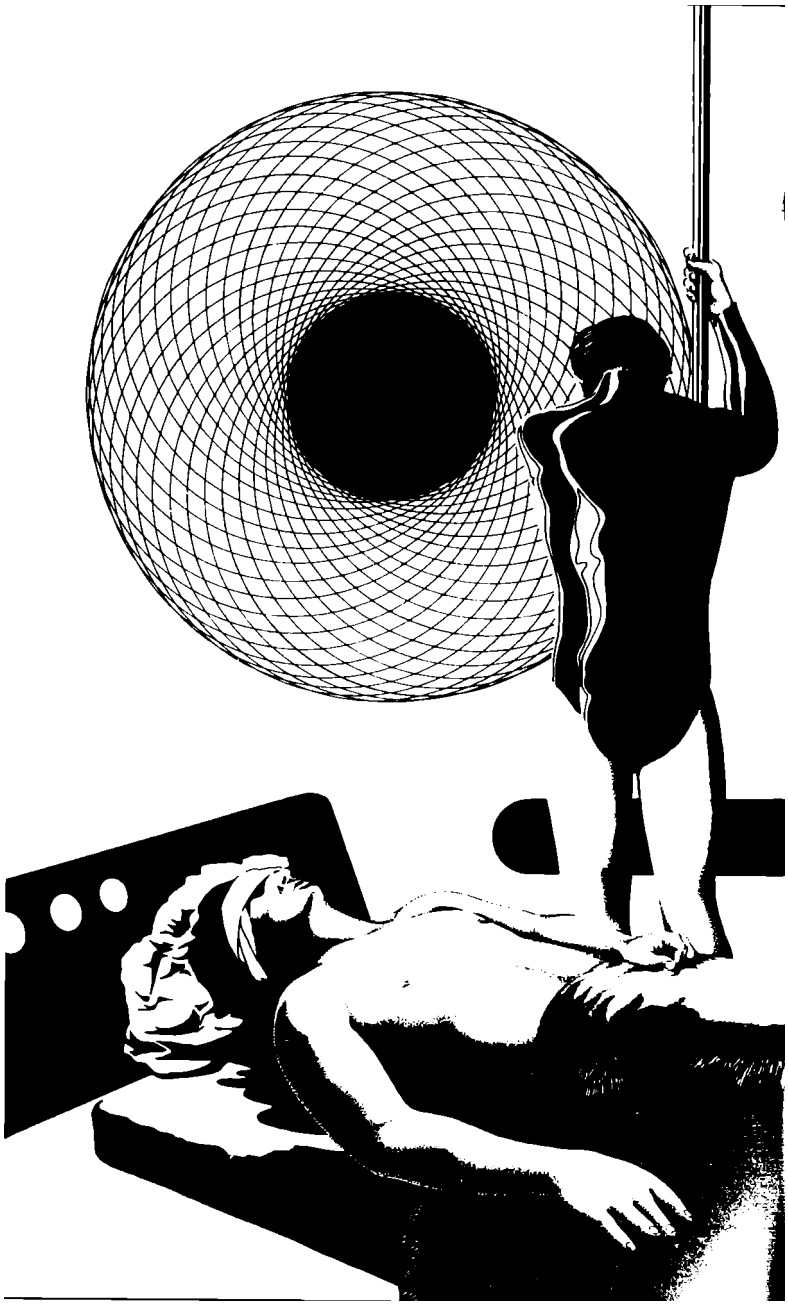
"Who—" he said, turning. Through the smoke he saw the figure that had waved that the passage was clear. Then another breath of air cleared the smoke for a moment and he saw that it was—as it had been earlier—Patrick with a soldier's

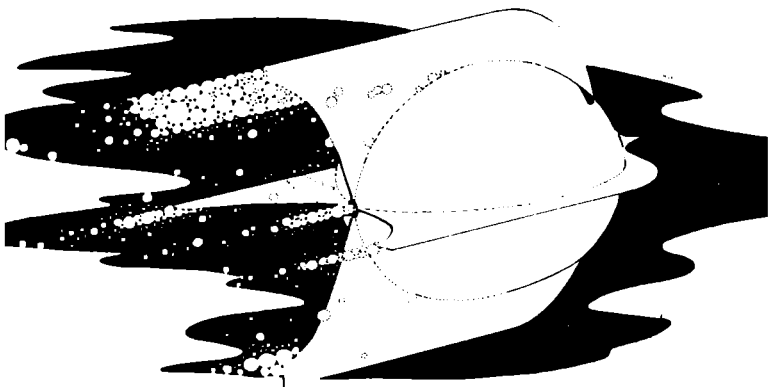
vibrator rifle in his hands.

"You, Pat?" said Johnny, staring. Suddenly it broke on him. Suddenly he understood a great many things. "You told the Land we were coming!"

Pat stopped a few feet from him. The rifle wavered in his grasp, pointing at Johnny. Then, with a sob Patrick threw the gun from him, grabbed Johnny and, stooping, threw him back over the balcony. Johnny turned instinctively like a cat in the air. And the water smashed hard against him.

He caught himself, readjusting his mask, six feet under. Below him he saw the small-Homes waiting. He turned and swam down to them.





Chapter 7

There was no way to assess the cost of the expedition until they were once more safely and deeply at sea. The individual small-Homes waiting in the river fled each on its own toward open ocean, with whomever they had crowded aboard them. Finally, they rendezvoused with each other eight miles out in the Atlantic and below the four hundred fathom mark of depth. There, at last, they combined once more into a single unit and headed toward Castle-Home.

Johnny walked through the individual small-Homes in which the wounded and the untouched had sorted themselves out. There was a thick feeling of numb disbelief that wrapped about him like a heavy blanket. In spite of the necessity of what they had needed to do, in spite of his own personal effort to privately anticipate the worst that could

happen, the thought of the dead and possibly the wounded they had left behind, as well as the actuality of the wounded sea-born around him now, left him stunned.

Troubled as the world had been for forty years, it had not experienced organized fighting and killing in all that time; and this had been organized fighting and killing. It had been war—war he himself had set in motion. Around and around in his head as he went from small-Home to small-Home, from bed to bed of the wounded, the question hammered at him of what he could have done differently to avoid it all.

Always, the question returned unanswered. There must have been something he could have done. Anything would have been preferable to this. But every time he went around with it he came back to the fact that he would have been forced to the same decision again. Simply, it had been a choice between death and submission. If they had let the land get away with arresting the hundred and twenty-nine ex-Cadets, they could no longer have called themselves free. And, being what they were—what their sea-birth had made them—they could not survive otherwise than as a free people.

And where was Patrick now, back on the land? What did the landers feel about him, now that

the sea-born had rescued their own? Did the land know how he had helped the rest of them to get away . . . ?

Unexpectedly, Johnny's mind cleared a little; and he suddenly understood the two contradictory things Patrick had done this day. A lifetime of growing up with his cousin had made it almost possible for him to think the other's thoughts.

No more than he could have, himself, could Pat have given the land the information of where and when they were coming ashore if Patrick had known of the manner in which the land would be waiting for them. When Patrick had seen the armed landers, when he had heard the firing and seen the sea-born dying, that was when Pat must have changed sides again, somehow cleared the soldiers from the passage along which they had escaped, and led the rest of them to safety down it. Then, having done that, he had—as might be expected of someone like him—refused to return to the generation he had betrayed. He had stayed ashore instead, to face the landers, alone, with his betrayal of *them*.

Grief for Patrick stirred powerfully in Johnny, to blend with other grief for the dead and wounded sea-born. He paced back and forth through the combined small-Homes, until Mikros and Eva Loy came and forced him to go back to his own small-Home and lie down.

He had not dreamed that he would be able to sleep. But sleep he did, almost immediately. A sodden, dreamless sleep of utter exhaustion.

"Don't hang to your father," said Sara to Tomi, when Johnny was once more back in the small-Home with them.

"But—"

"Not now," Sara said. "They're waiting for him in the Conference Room. Daddy just came by for a minute, and we have to talk.

Go swim outside."

Tomi hesitated, standing on one foot, face screwed up.

"You go!" said Sara. Her voice had a hard note in it Johnny had never heard before. Tomi's eyes went wide and he left.

Johnny watched him go numbly. The Lander subs had chased them out into open sea. The decoy they had made out of the small-Homes had drawn them off. On automatic controls, it had led the subs three miles deep to the Atlantic ooze and then blown itself up, taking at least one sub with it. A Lander sub carried over two hundred men. There had been more than a hundred of the ex-Cadets who had not come back.

Riding home after that in the rest of the small-Homes, those that returned had begun to sing "*Hey, Johnny!*" And the song had spread over

the radio circuit from ship to ship until they all sang. Johnny had turned his face to the rushing blue beyond the transparent wall of his craft to hide the fact he could not sing along with them.

Patrick's voice had sounded again in his ears. *"You're a ringleader—"*

"... I've got to talk to you about Tomi," Sara was saying.

"Now?" he said dully.

His real reason for detouring by here on his way to the Conference Room was that he had wanted to hide for a few moments. At the sound of his son's name he shivered unexpectedly. The dark eye of the killer whale had come back to his mind. But now it gazed without change and without pity on the still shape of the young ex-Cadet he had seen die in the conservatory ashore.

"I've never told you why I didn't let you know about you having a son, all these years. Do you know why?"

"Why?" He focused on her with difficulty.

"No—no, I don't." He became aware, for the first time, that her face was stiff and pale.

"Sara, what is it?"

"I didn't tell you," she said as if she were reciting a lesson, "because I didn't want him



to be like you."

He thought of Patrick and the men who were now dead.

"Well," he said, "I don't blame you."

"Don't *blame* me!" Without warning she began to cry. It was not the easy, relief-giving sorrow of the People. Her tears were angry. She stood with them running down her cheeks and her fists clenched, facing him. "I knew what you were like when I fell in love with you! I knew you'd always be going and pushing things through. No matter what it cost, no matter who it hurt. You say things and people do them—it's something about you! And you just take it all for granted."

He put his hands on her to soothe her, but she was hard as a rock.

"But I wasn't going to let you kill my baby!" she thrust at him. "I was going to hide him—keep him safe, so he'd never know what his father was like and want to go and be like him. And go away from me, too, without thinking of anything but what he personally wanted to do, and get himself killed for nothing."

"Sara—" he said.

"And then you came back. And he told me about the business in the killer whale corral. And then I knew it was no use. No use at all. Because he was born just like you, and there was

nothing I could do to protect him, no matter what I did. *My child . . .*" and with that, at last she broke down. All the hardness went out of her; and he held her to him as she cried.

For a moment or two he thought the crisis was over. But she stiffened again and pulled away from him.

"You've got to make me a promise," she said, wiping her eyes.

"Of course," he said.

"Not of course. You listen to what I want. You make me a promise that if anything happens to me, you'll take care of him. You'll keep him safe. Not the way you would—the way I'd keep him safe. You promise me."

"Nothing's going to happen to you."

"Promise me!"

"All right," he said. "I promise I'll take care of him the way you would."

She wiped her eyes again. "You'd better go now. They'll be waiting for you. Oh, wait." She turned and hurried from him, back into the bedroom. She came back in a second with a tangle of smashed plastic and dangling wires.

"Patrick left it for you," she said. "He said you'd understand."

Numbly he took the ruined banjo.

When he finally reached the Conference Room,



it was full of Council members.

"It's war," said Chad Ridell, looking at him bleakly. "We got their announcement of it an hour after you landed at Jones Beach—an hour before one of our gull-cameras picked up this."

He touched a button on his chair. The end of the room blanked out. Johnny saw a gull's-view image of the Atlantic surface in the cold, gray-blue light of early dawn. His sea-instinct recognized the spot as less than a hundred miles south.

"Look," said Chad. There was a flicker in the sky, and a hole yawned suddenly, huge and deep in the ocean's face. For a moment the unnatural situation lasted. And then leaping up through the hole moved a fist of water. It lifted toward the paling sky of dawn like a mountain torn from the ocean floor; and a roar like that of some huge, tortured beast burst on the Conference Room.

The fist stretched out into a pillar, broke and disintegrated. A cow biscay whale drifted by on her side, trying to turn over, blood running from the corner of her mouth.

"Sonic explosion," said Johnny. "Big enough for all Castle-Home."

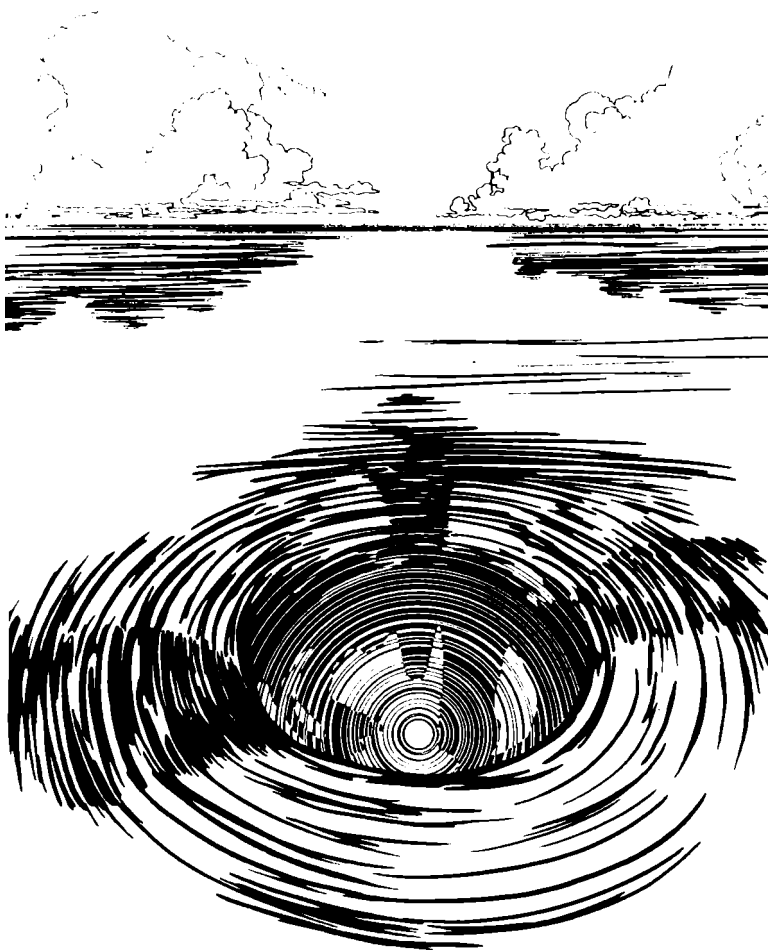
"They meant that announcement of war," said Chad.

"But why bomb empty ocean?" Johnny said.

"Castle-Home was there three hours ago," put in Eva Loy, who was standing close by Chad. "They must have spotted us from a satellite and thought we were still close. We can stay deep from now on, though."

Johnny nodded. Castle-Home had been at a hundred fathoms when the expedition had come back. He remembered what he was carrying.

"No," he said, "even that won't work." He handed the tangle of broken plastic and wires



to Chad, who stared at it, blankly.

"It's Patrick's banjo," said Johnny.

"Pat went in with us. He was the one who tipped off the Congress soldiers so that they laid that trap in the plaza for us. He's on their side now."

"But Patrick—" Eva Loy stared at him across Chad. "Patrick's third generation! He can find Castle-Home as well as any of us."

"That's right," said Johnny.

"But I don't understand it!" Chad got up abruptly from his chair. He faced Johnny.

"Why Patrick?—Patrick of all people?"

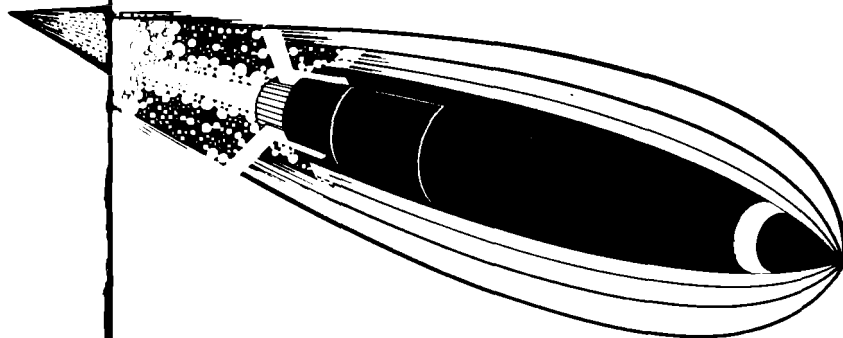
"I don't know," said Johnny. "He thinks we're wrong to fight the land. It's what he believes, I guess." He shrugged his shoulders unhappily. "Maybe I was wrong."

"You don't believe that," said Eva.

"No, I guess not." Johnny tried to smile at Eva. His promise to Sara was still strong in his mind. "At any rate, the only thing that seems to make sense to me, now, is for me and anyone else who wants to come with me to give ourselves up to them." He glanced at Chad. "If they get what they call ringleaders, maybe—"

Cutting through what he was going to say, came the sudden, brazen shrieking of the alarm bell.

"Missile!" cried a voice from the wall speaker of the room. "This is the Communications Dome. Missile approaching! Missile—"



A sound too great to be heard folded all around them. Johnny felt himself picked up and carried away at an angle upward. He ducked away from the ceiling, but the ceiling was no longer there. For a second, still moving, he was in a little box of air, with water all around him. Then the water closed in on him, he felt himself seeming to fly apart in all directions, and he lost track abruptly of what was going on.

. . . At some time later when he came back to his senses, he and the world about him were moving very fast. He was rushing through the water in the black suit of cold-water skins he had never taken off and his mask was over his face, in position. Baldur was with him. He had hold of the dolphin's reins and Baldur was towing him swiftly through debris-strewn water at about the fifteen-fathom depth. They came at last to Johnny's own small-Home, sheared almost in half and floating loggily in the surrounding water.

The pool entrance was missing. Neta, Sara's dolphin, was frantically trying the impossible feat of entering the small-Home through the air-iris, all unmindful of Tantrums beside her. Johnny pushed her aside and dove through himself.

Across the room, beyond the pool, he saw Sara lying on a couch covered by a drape. Tomi was sitting huddled with his knees together on a hassock beside the couch. Johnny ran around the pool and dropped on his knees by the couch.

"My mommy's not feeling good," Tomi said.

Johnny looked at Sara. The world, which had been moving so fast about him, slowed and stopped. All things came to an end, and stopped.

Sara lay still, on her back. There was a little blood dried at the corners of her mouth. Her eyes were not quite closed. They looked from,

under her eyelids at nothing in particular and her cheeks seemed already sunken in a little under her high, cold cheekbones.

He stared down at her and a slow and terrible chill began to creep gradually through him. He could not take his eyes off her still face. Slowly he began to shiver. The shivers increased until he shuddered through his whole body and his teeth chattered. He saw Tomi coming toward him with arms outstretched to put them around his father. And suddenly Johnny broke the spell holding him and shoved the boy back, away from him, so hard he staggered.

"Stay away from me!" Johnny shouted. The room tilted and spun around him. The eye of the killer whale rushed abruptly like death upon him through the wall behind the couch, and he fell forward into roaring nothingness.

When he came back after this, it was to find Tomi clinging to him and sobbing. Johnny awoke as somebody might who had been asleep for a long night. The great gust of feeling that had whirled him into unconsciousness was gone. He felt numbed and coldly clear-headed. Automatically he soothed Tomi. Reflexively he went about the small-Home, pulling out a sea-sled and loading it with clothing, medical supplies,



weapons and other equipment for living off the sea.

When it was loaded he took it outside and left Tomi, now also dressed in cold-water skins, fins and mask, to harness Baldur to it. He himself went back inside.

He set straight the drape over Sara and stood a little while looking down at her body. Then he detached the governor from the small-Home's heating element and went back outside. Together, he and Tomi watched as the small-Home caught fire inside.

Collapsing inward, as its walls melted, it sank away from them, a flickering light into dark depths, with Neta and her pup circling bewilderedly down after it.

"Where are we going?" said Tomi, as Johnny handed a rein to Tomi and took one himself.

"Where you'll be safe," said Johnny. He put the boy's other hand on a rail of the sled.

"All by ourselves?" said Tomi.

"Yes." Johnny broke off suddenly. Inside Tomi's mask, he saw the boy pale and frowning, the way Sara had been used to frown. Something moved in Johnny's guts. "All right," he said; but he did not say it to Tomi.

He touched the radio controls of his mask with his tongue, turning the circle of reception up to full. A roar of conversations sounded like surf in his ears.

"This is Johnny Joya," he said into the mike. "Are there any Council members listening?" The surf-sound of voices roared on unchanging. "This is Johnny Joya speaking. Are there any Council members who can hear me?"

There seemed no change in the sound coming into his earphone. He turned to Tomi, shrugging. And then the roar began to diminish a little. It slackened. "This is Johnny Joya," he said. "Are there any Council members listening?"

The voices dwindled, faded and disappeared. Silence roared instead in his earphone. From far away, blurredly, a single voice spoke.

"Johnny? Johnny, is that you? "This is Eva Loy. Johnny, we're the only Council members left. I found the room. None of the rest got out." She hesitated. "Johnny, can you hear me? Where are you?"

"North of you," said Johnny. "And swimming north." There was a cold, clean, dead feeling in him, like a man might experience after an amputation when the pain was blocked. "I'm taking my son, my dolphin and sea-camping equipment and I'm heading out."

"Heading out?"

"Yes," said Johnny.

He touched the rein and moved it and Baldur began to swim, pulling the sled and the two

humans with it. Through the rushing gray-blue water, Johnny saw the young arm and hand of Tomi in its black sleeve clinging to the sled rail; and he remembered Patrick's arm, older and larger, seen in the same position. "The rest of you should do the same thing."

"Head out?" Eva's voice faded for a second in the earphone. "Out into the sea without small-Homes?"

"That's right," said Johnny. He watched Baldur sliding smoothly through the water. "Castle-Home is gone. By this time the other Castle-Homes are probably gone, too. We're Homeless, now. Everybody might as well face that."

"But we're going to have to build new Homes."

"We can't," said Johnny. "With Patrick helping, the Landers'll just go on destroying them."

"But we've got to have Homes!"

"No," said Johnny. A strap on the sled was working loose. He reached forward automatically and unbuckled it. "That's what the Landers think. But they're wrong. Everyone of the third generation and lots of the second have lived off the sea without Homes, for the fun of it. We can do it permanently. We can take care of the older people, as well, if necessary."

"But," Eva's voice came stronger in the

earphone for a second, "we'll be nothing but a lot of water-gypsies!"

She fell silent, as if she had suddenly run out of words.

"No," said Johnny. He pulled the strap tight and buckled it again. It held well this time. "Our Homes were something we brought to the sea from the land. Sooner or later we were bound to leave them behind and live like true People of the sea. The Land's just pushed us to it a little early." He checked the other straps. They were all tight. "I'm only telling you what I think—what I'm going to be doing myself. You can all make your own choices."

There was a long moment of rushing silence in the earphone. Then Eva's voice called out.

"Johnny! You aren't leaving us?"

"Yes," said Johnny.

"But some day we'll be carrying the fight back to the Landers. We need you to plan for then. We need you—"

"No!" The word came out so harshly that Johnny saw Tomi flinch alongside him and stare in his direction. "I've helped too much already. Get someone else to make your plans!"

He felt Tomi's eyes reach into him, and Sara's ghost hand on his shoulder. He reached into himself for calmness. For a moment he had

almost come back to life, but now the safe feeling, the cold, clean, dead feeling, took him over once again.

"No," he said, more quietly. "You don't want my help, Eva. And besides, my wife is dead and I made her a promise to keep our boy safe. That's all the job I have now. I wouldn't take any other if I could. If you'll take a last piece of advice, though, you'll all scatter the way I'm doing. Spread out through the seas, we'll be safe."

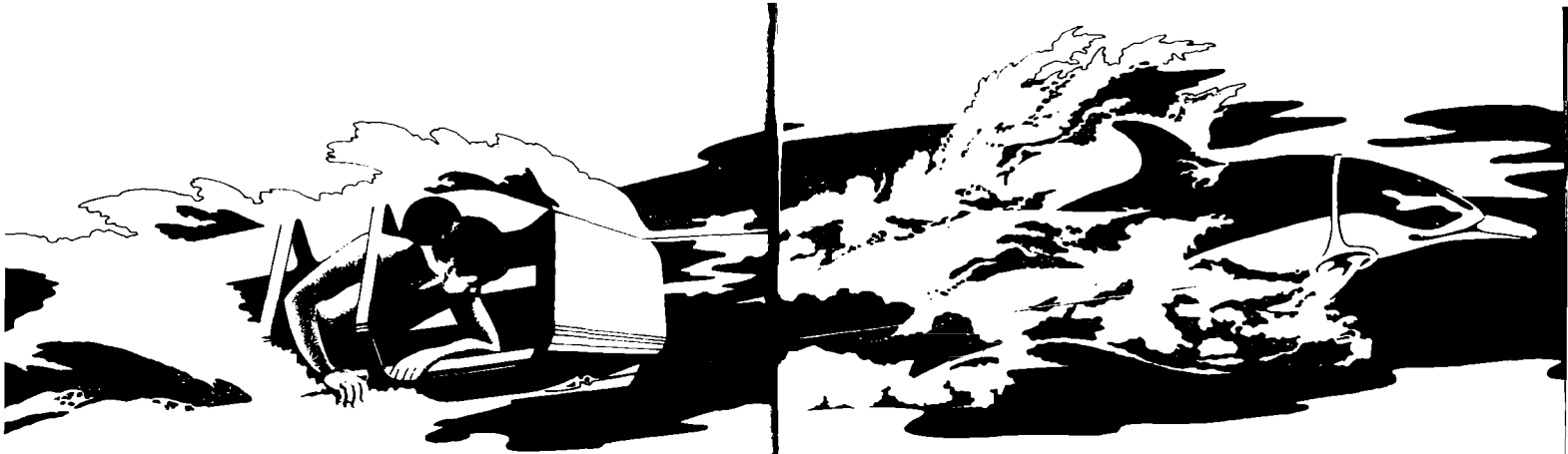
He turned off his mike, then turned it on.

"Good-by, Eva," he said. "Good-by, People. Good luck to you all."

Eva's voice spoke again, but Johnny no longer listened. He picked up the reins and turned Baldur's head a little to the northeast, along the water road of the North Atlantic Current. He shut his mind to all the past.

Baldur responded smoothly. He swam easily and not too fast, in the graceful underwater up and down weaving motion of the dolphin that brought him occasionally to the surface to breathe. In the earphone, the perplexed conversations picked up once more.

Johnny did not listen. He felt emptied of all emotion. Of sorrow, of bitterness, of fear, of anger. He looked ahead and northward into a



future as wide and empty as the Arctic waters. Only the wild wastes of the endless oceans were left now to the people of the sea. They would gather at Castle-Home no more.

He thought that he had no feeling left in him; and that this was a good thing. Then, in his earphones, he heard one of the parting People begin to sing:

Hey, Johnny! Hey-a, Johnny!
Home from the shore . . .

And other voices took it up, joining in. The earphone echoed to a spreading chorus.

Hey-o, Johnny! Hey, Johnny!
To high land go no more!

The song blended in many voices. It reached through the cold, dead feeling of amputation in him to the awareness that had come as he stood in the Conference Room and felt the beating lives of the hundred and twenty-nine prisoners as if he held them in his hands.

It took hold of him as he had been taken hold of, in the moment of perception that had linked him with the other ex-Cadets as, deafened and smoke-blinded, they made their escape into the East River. He had cut himself loose from his people. But he saw now he could not escape them. No, never could he escape them, any more than a molecule of water, in its long journey by sky and mountain and field and harbor-mouth, could escape its eventual homecoming to the salt sea. And the knowledge of this, discovered at last, brought a sort of sad comfort to him.

He opened his mouth to sing with them; but—as in the small-Home returning from Manhattan Island—he found the words would not come. He held to the sled, listening. About him, three fathoms of water pressed against his passage. Baldur swam strongly to the north. The Atlantic Drift was carrying them east and north and in time they could come to the Irminger Current, swinging north between the Iceland coast and the Greenland shore . . . he, his son, and his dolphin. They would survive.

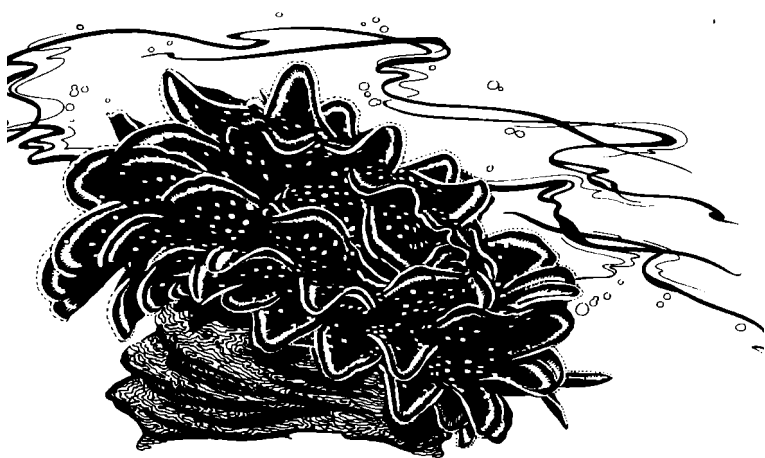
Baldur swam strongly, as if he could sense the purpose of their going. Behind, in his earphone, Johnny could hear the voices of the singers beginning to fade and dwindle as they

moved out of range. The number of their voices lessened and became distant.

The sun was going down. The three of them broke surface for a moment and the cloud-heavy sky above was darkening gray. Soon it would be full dark, and somewhere in the black water under the stars they would camp and sleep. Tomi held without a word to the sled. The dolphin swam with strength to the north and east. Behind, the last voices were failing, until only one still sounded, faintly in the earphone:

*Long away, away, my Johnny!
Four long years and more.
Hey-o, Johnny! Hey, Johnny!
Go to land, no more.*

And still the three of them swam to the north, under a gray sky that was like a road, and forever-flowing.



Editor's note:

Ms. Miesel, noted sf critic,
is considered by the author
to be the foremost critical
authority on his work.

An Afterword

by Sandra Miesel

"Land and Sea have got to get together—or destroy each other. They're . . . the same people! Maybe with different shells of flesh and blood, but with the same human spirit in them, fighting, crying to break free!"

—*The Space Swimmers*,
by Gordon R. Dickson

Just as the Land and Sea must come together in order to free the common spirit they share, so must *Home from the Shore* be read along with its sequel *The Space Swimmers* to fully grasp the message contained in both stories. *Home from the Shore* sets up the problem—the hostile divorce between Land and Sea—which is solved through a welcome reconciliation in *The Space Swimmers*. Taken together, the novels show humanity facing crises of survival and growth. Mankind finally begins to acquire the power of controlling its own evolution and must decide how to use this power wisely. Balanced growth proves to be the only route to species survival.

Land and Sea represent that familiar pair of Dicksonian opposites, the unconscious/ conservative and conscious/ progressive sides of human nature. Unless the warring factions of the race achieve a bond of unity, they will perish. Unless the conflicting tendencies within a person form a single Self, he cannot be sane. Dickson expresses his

theme of polarities uniting by setting pairs of groups, characters, phenomena, ideas, and images in parallel and recording their interactions. Duality becoming identity provides both the message and the medium for these two novels.

First, there is the fundamental distinction between the peoples of the Land and the Sea. The Land owns man's past. It is heir to the accomplishments of all previous generations but at present has largely given up trying to accomplish anything further itself. Unable to colonize the stars, the frustrated Landers put all their energies into a futile status-scramble called the Game of Life. They find little satisfaction in ordinary work or play or even in personal relationships. Their society is highly class-conscious. The quasi-feudal Groups (occupational organizations) offer their members security in exchange for wearing a Mark (badge).

On the other hand, man's future belongs to the Sea. In only four generations, the Sea-dwellers have grown larger, stronger, quicker than the Landers. Rapid evolutionary changes have sharpened their senses and awakened new kinds of perceptions in them. "It was not here as it was on the land, where men relied on mechanical devices and social order, but by their own strengths and skills his People were lords of the sea." The Sea People are as proud of their freedom as of their talents. Their egalitarian, vibrantly personal society is held together by strong communal loyalties.

But the Land envies the Sea its gifts and fears eventual domination by it despite a thousand-fold advantage in population and incalculable superiority in wealth and technology. The Sea People are too

busy being elite to reassure them properly. The opening chapters of *Home from the Shore* show the prejudices of both sides in action.

Finally, the Landers try to deny the Sea People's humanity and hunt them down like animals. The pogrom is aptly symbolized by a leopard seal's pursuit of a tame dolphin in the first pages of *The Space Swimmers*. The seal tries to kill its irritating quarry so it can be left alone to eat, sleep, and "forget strange things." But the mentally and physically superior dolphin refrains from killing the other because it has obligations to fulfill elsewhere.

Land and Sea face a tragic dilemma: each side has the means to exterminate the other yet each has fatal deficiencies only the other can supply. The stagnant Land must expand off-planet; the progressive Sea needs a stabilizing cultural matrix. This is why the closing of the Space Academy and the scattering of the Sea People are such traumas, aside from the accompanying loss of life. Only when Land and Sea pull back from Armageddon and recognize their common human identity can all mankind share the best qualities of both sides. Then humans will be able to reach the stars—and even beyond.

The traits of each bloc are embodied in human and non-human characters. Two huge animals stand for the most ominous tendencies of Land and Sea. In *The Space Swimmers*, Mugger, an immensely old giant squid who is weak with hunger and obsessed with nothing but food, represents the Land while an unnamed killer whale represents the Sea in *Home from the Shore*. The latter is the more dangerous of the two because of its high intelligence. The fearless, pitiless killer whale follows an ethic in which

there is "neither wife nor child, nor friend nor enemy—but only truth and what the mind desired." One beast clings to marginal survival without progress; the other pursues a selfish, rootless freedom. Due to the structure of their heads, only one eye of each creature is shown at a time in symbolic warning of their incompleteness.

But young Tomi Joya can communicate with both monsters. He turns the squid's thoughts to something else besides food for a moment and makes a killer whale his personal "sea-friend." These unprecedented feats spring from Tomi's gift for total identification with all other living things. Remember, Tomi is short for Thomas which means "Twin."

This gift equips Tomi to make contact with the Space Swimmers. These intelligent, space-dwelling aliens are virtually immortal, spectacularly free, and unshakably responsible—noble role models for evolving man. The Swimmers themselves resolve the issue their presence raises. Man must develop to an equivalent ethical level in order to copy their method of travel between the stars. The requirements of fictional plot and philosophical principle unite here.

Since Tomi's communications breakthrough answers the questions asked by *Home from the Shore* and *The Space Swimmers*, he is the novels' true hero. As the first born—and best born—of the Sea People's fourth generation, he is the most highly evolved member of the human race. This son of "Joy" and "Light" is a sign of hope for the future. He is "the bud and the shoot and the bloom of eternity itself."

On the other hand, Tomi's father and precursor Johnny Joya is the novels' protagonist. Although wonderfully endowed in mind and body, he is not as perfect as Tomi. He has a streak of killer whale recklessness within him to overcome by learning responsibility for others. Johnny accomplishes this by meeting himself in Tomi and by inheriting the protectiveness of his wife Sarah Light after her death. In every sense, Johnny makes Tomi and hence Tomi's victory possible. He creates situations in which Tomi can exist and triumph.

As the pivotal character in the two novels, Johnny pairs in turn with each of the other major characters, the four fuses capable of detonating the world like a bomb. He and his cousin Pat grow up with the closeness of twin brothers, become estranged in *Home from the Shore*, and reforge their bond of unity in *The Space Swimmers*. Johnny and Matig Marieanna recognize an inner identity that instantly makes them lovers in *The Space Swimmers*. This compensates for the lack of mutual understanding between Johnny and Sarah in *Home from the Shore*. (Apparently, love at first sight is lasting among the Sea People because of their keen intuition.) Pat avoids looking too closely at Matig lest he feel the same attraction Johnny does and spoil his match with his own beloved Mila Jhan.

These pairings result in happy unions but Johnny can find no common ground with Construction Baron Barth Stuve and Transportation Baron Kai Ebberly. Therefore he must destroy them. Johnny's seasoned personality with its rough-hewn harmony of progressive and conservative qualities makes him the uncompromising enemy of both men. Stuve,

whose Mark is the compass and plumb bob, champions the evolutionary status quo. Ebberly, whose Mark is two interlocked wheels, is an irresponsible megalomaniac. Each is as incomplete as the squid and the whale. Each offers a fatally false blueprint for man's future.

The phenomenon of magnetism and the principle of balance undergird the novels as prime expressions of Dickson's duality into unity theme. A magnet is a single entity with two oppositely signed, mutually attractive poles. A balance exists at one point between two offsetting forces. The author plays clever variations on these concepts, interpreting them in every sense, from the proverbial to the scientific to the philosophical. He builds them directly into the plot. For example, balance gives Johnny victory over Stuve, magnetism over Ebberly.

Magnetism as a physical phenomenon is a key feature of Sea technology: boats and people alike are enclosed in protective magnetic envelopes. (The same treatment is later extended to spaceships and spacesuits.) At the physiological level, sensitivity to magnetic flux is the basis of the Sea People's uncanny powers of orientation and location. These powers also make them ideal spacemen, both in the conventional manner planned by the Landers and in the unconventional one discovered by the Joyas. Because sea and space are comparable environments, mastery of one leads to mastery of the other.

Easy familiarity with the properties of magnetism in devices and talents links the Sea People to the Swimmers. The space creatures are essentially sentient gas clouds enclosed in natural magnetic envelopes. They glide across the galactic seas on cur-

rents of magnetic force just as Sea Homes follow ocean currents. Evolution is pointing the Sea People in the same direction as the majestic, mature Swimmers—forward. Both groups are hated, then feared by the Land because they possess marvelous powers the Landers cannot share. " 'We were like the space bats to them,' " says Johnny, describing the Landers' attitude.

The Sea People's instinctive feelings of kinship and sympathy toward the Swimmers trigger their rejection of the Land in *Home from the Shore*. Because they protested the netting and death of the Swimmers, they, too, are liable to be captured and killed. Neither Swimmers nor Sea folk will submit and yield up their secrets to the Land. The Joyas' success convincing the Swimmers that they and the Sea People "be of one blood" parallels their efforts to convince the Land of the same thing and brings *The Space Swimmers* to its happy conclusion.

The Swimmers' method of space travel depends upon magnetism and balance. They move along the web of magnetic forces by introducing temporary imbalances into the system and allowing the correction to propel them onward. (This also illustrates the evolutionary principle that progress is made in response to stress.) To seaborne senses, the web looks like a system of roads or girders—but neither Transportation nor Construction Baron will ever rule them.

Not only does the web maintain its internal equilibrium, it balances the properties of the physical universe which it pervades and surrounds. The relationship symbolizes the harmony between the immaterial and material aspects of existence. Each

microcosmic balance repeats the macrocosmic one. Every atom in a lodestone, every cell in an organism, every individual in a society pursues its own kind of balance.

Johnny's initial problems with personal relationships exemplify this issue. He must struggle to attain the spiritual equanimity that comes naturally to Tomi. In *Home from the Shore*, Johnny and Sarah are incompatible extremes—he too rash, she too cautious. But the shock of her death restructures his life because it forces new responsibilities upon him. Being a father is a greater challenge than being Cadet Representative at the Space Academy. Only after stabilizing his own personality during a self-imposed exile can Johnny come home to his People in *The Space Swimmers*. Only then can he become the wise leader he was born to be.

The patterns of separation and reunion experienced by Johnny, Pat, and their People illustrate the necessity of balance in social dynamics. Other types of balance can be treated as arrays of linear forces—picture a scale or see-saw. But the interaction between centripetal and centrifugal forces provides a better model for the relationship between the whole and its parts. Too much centripetal force will draw an orbiting component toward the center of the system; too much centrifugal force will drive it off at a tangent. Pat resists domination by Lander values while living among them. Johnny alters his independent course. Both return to play useful roles within their community. Likewise, the Sea must be neither slave nor master of the Land; neither absorbed by it nor aloof from it. The two sides must form a stable partnership.

Humanity can only survive if its members strike a healthy balance among themselves. The group and the individual need one another. A responsible group permits individual freedom; a free individual shows responsibility towards his group. This is why the Sea's divorce from the Land and Johnny's exile from his People are futile as well as dangerous steps. Johnny realizes this even as he flees. "He had cut himself loose from his People. But he saw now he could not escape them. No, never could he escape them, any more than a molecule of water, in its long journey by sky and mountain and field and harbor-mouth, could escape its eventual homecoming to the salt sea."

Furthermore, the leader and the followers within any group also need one another. They imply and define each other. As Matig explains: "The same instincts that make us follow Johnny as our natural leader make it impossible for him to refuse to lead us—if he knows the People really need and want him as a whole." This mutual psychological magnetism resembles the social order in migratory birds, creatures whose instincts are believed to operate under the influence of the earth's magnetic field. Thus, mentions of geese flying south in autumn and swans flying north in spring which open and close *The Space Swimmers* tie the concepts of balance and magnetism together on several levels. They recall the gladness with which the People follow Johnny from shore to sea and from sea to shore. By ending with a glimpse of the nobler and rarer species, Dickson expresses his confidence that one day the age-old condition of mankind will be transformed so that: "More swans than geese will live/ Less fools than wise."

The two flocks of birds migrating in opposite directions are one example of many paired images the author uses to establish an atmosphere of duality. Season and time provide thematic cues in both novels. The original version of *Home from the Shore* begins in midafternoon on a bright midsummer day and ends near dusk on a gloomy day about one week later. *The Space Swimmers* opens with simultaneous midafternoon scenes on a bright spring day in Antarctica and a gloomy autumn one in Georgia. It closes on a clear morning near dawn six months later. Note that only the land feels changes in time and season. The sea, like space, knows none. Yet descriptions of these events, like the accompanying movements of characters between northern and southern hemispheres of the globe, help impart a stately tidal rhythm to the stories.

The same pattern of duality appears in details like Stuve's deformed, furclad shoulders opposed to Johnny's bare, perfect ones as well as in plot structures. *Home from the Shore* is essentially the story of Johnny's flight to his People and then away from them. The seal-dolphin chase ending in death that begins *The Space Swimmers* is matched by Johnny's friendship-forging pursuit of a Swimmer near the conclusion.

Persistent motifs like eyes, gates, boundaries, passages—interfaces of all kinds—indicate transitions from one state to another but visions of the opposing states united are mostly confined to characters' imaginations. The land-based and sea-going laboratories that couple and go into space in order to successfully complete their research is one exception. An even more intriguing one is the sym-

bolic trinity of primary colors that repeats throughout the novels: red light on land for the body, blue light under the sea for the mind, and golden light on the star roads for the spirit. No color is specified for the "unquenchable illumination" shining over *The Space Swimmer's* finale but it might be pictured as the red and gold rays of sunrise spread against the bright blue sky.

Both in theme and treatment, *Home from the Shore* and *The Space Swimmers* resemble Dickson's most famous work, the Childe Cycle. When completed, the Cycle will consist of three historical, three contemporary, and six science fiction novels. *Dorsai!* (1959), *Necromancer* (1962), "Warrior" (1965), *Soldier, Ask Not* (1968), *Tactics of Mistake* (1971), and "Brothers" (1973) have appeared so far. The concluding sf novels, *The Final Encyclopedia* and *Childe* are currently in preparation. The Cycle's subject is the maturation of the human race. It traces the course of human evolution from the fourteenth to the twenty-fourth centuries showing how the conscious/ progressive and unconscious/ conservative aspects of our collective racial psyche are finally integrated into one fully-evolved, balanced Self.

The similarity of theme between the Cycle and the pair of novels under discussion here is partly due to timing—the short version of *Home from the Shore* was published in 1962, the original edition of *The Space Swimmers* in 1967. But the most important reason for the resemblance is the author's intense commitment to the ideas themselves. Man's destiny, says Dickson, is to be free, responsible, and creative. Like all intelligent beings, man is constantly evolving towards perfection. The crucial step in

every life form's progress, the one that completes its initiation, is achieving conscious control over its own evolution. Only then can maturity begin.

Dickson always dramatizes growth as a sequence of events—separation, independent development, and reunion. In the Childe Cycle, the process occurs on an interstellar scale. Splinter Cultures develop unique talents on different planets but the whole human race will ultimately benefit from their experiments. *Home from the Shore* and *The Space Swimmers* are only concerned with terrestrial events and a single separatist group but the pattern is similar. The history of intelligent life on earth is a pilgrimage back and forth between sea and land before culminating in space. Johnny with his repeated exiles and homecomings epitomizes the process; Tomi exemplifies its fulfillment. Together they convince both Land and Sea of the evolutionary ethic which Johnny summarizes as "the concepts of *freedom, responsibility, and work*—and particularly *work*." These are the same values which will prevail with the emergence of full-spectrum Responsible Man at the Cycle's close.

Comparing personalities, Johnny most resembles Cletus Graham in *Tactics of Mistake*. Both are forerunners and prototypes of the hero to come (Tomi and the three incarnations of *Dorsai's* Donal Graeme). They divide squabbling factions of humanity which their heirs will reunite. Ebberly is like de Castries, the foe of Cletus, and Donal's enemy William is like Stuve.

But despite all these points in common, *Home from the Shore* and *The Space Swimmers* echo only the duality theme of the Cycle. These novels do not

emphasize Dickson's growth-spurring triad of Prime Characters—the Men of Faith, Philosophy, and War—or any of their attendant symbols. Concepts and characters are grouped by twos rather than by threes in *Home from the Shore* and *The Space Swimmers*.

Here the protagonist and the hero combine with a pair of allies against a pair of adversaries and they all dance intricate measures together. Pat mirrors Johnny; Tomi duplicates him; Matig does something of both. Johnny and Pat stand for the better qualities of progress and conservatism while Ebberly and Stuve stand for the worse. Matig's doomsday threat offsets Ebberly's; Pat's design for reunion contradicts Stuve's. Pat directly aids Johnny against Stuve as Tomi does against Ebberly. In every instance, counterparts who can unite, prevail.

Finally, the same system of comparative mythology that unlocks the meaning of the Cycle may be usefully applied to *Home from the Shore* and *The Space Swimmers*. A proper interpretation of the Cycle is possible only in the light of recent work by controversial European mythologist Georges Dumézil and it is important for understanding the other two novels as well.

Dumézil maintains that all Indo-European-speaking peoples characteristically divide their gods, heroes, and social orders into three basic categories which he calls "functions." These functions are sovereignty, force, and nourishment. The first function splits into two halves specializing in magical (magicians, priests, poets—rule of inspiration) and legal (sages, kings as lawgivers—rule of reason) sovereignty. The second function includes

all expressions of physical strength (warriors and kings as leaders). The third function covers fertility, peace, and well-being (food producers and artisans). Slaves, barbarians, outcasts, and popular entertainers occupied a fourth category outside the system.

Although Dickson wrote his stories without any knowledge whatsoever of Dumézil's theories, interesting relationships appear when the cast of *Home from the Shore* and *The Space Swimmers* are placed in their functional slots.

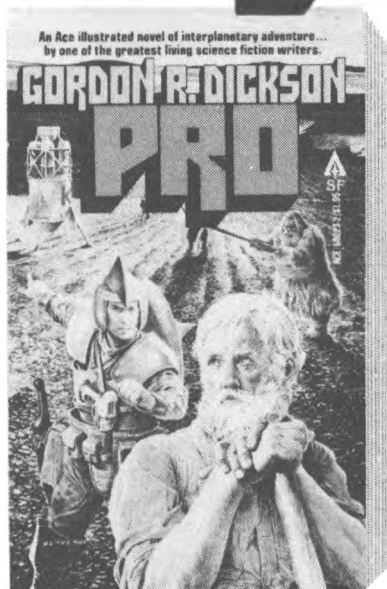
functions	characters	Cycle Prime Characters	
1 (magic) 1 (law)	Pat the Bard Johnny as Thinker	Man of Faith Man of Philosophy	Tomi
2 (force)	Johnny as Leader	Man of War	
3 (nourishment)	Matig the Scientist		
4 (outsiders)	Mila the Entertainer		

Potentially at least, Tomi combines all functional qualities like an ideal king. The pair of adult couples cover the full range of human activities at work and at play. They can organize, defend, maintain, and amuse their community. Intuitive, artistic talents match rational, scientific ones. Abstract and concrete gifts meet. The inmost and outmost, highest and lowest levels join.

Such completeness is not always found in Dickson's fiction. The movers and shakers in the Childe Cycle occupy only the first two levels while their opponents usually cluster in the third. However, all functions are represented favorably in *Time Storm* (1977), an independent novel which expresses views on evolution and unification similar to those in *Home from the Shore* and *The Space Swimmers*. *Time Storm's* hero is as persistent as Johnny and as capable of identifying with other beings as Tomi.

Thus, from scientific foundation to mystical summit, Dickson builds his stories with an efficiency that is almost relentless. The message emerges naturally and inevitably from the medium, a literary approach the author calls "consciously thematic." Every component—great or small—is raw material for the author's purpose: the names, faces, personalities, garb of human and animal characters; time, place, season, weather, and scenery; technology and social customs; even verses of songs and allusions to Kipling. No detail is merely gratuitous. Each element fits into Dickson's grand design, a vision of the murky, destructive conflicts within man yielding to creative, light-drenched harmony.

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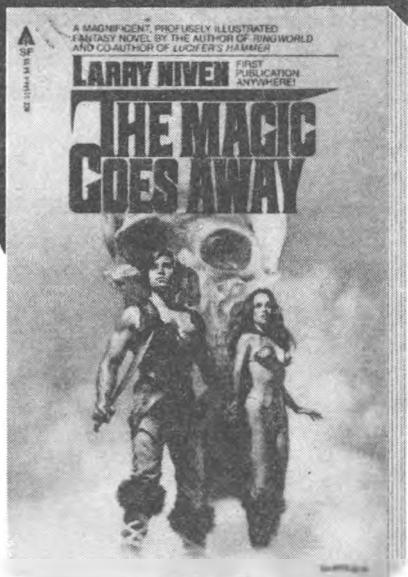
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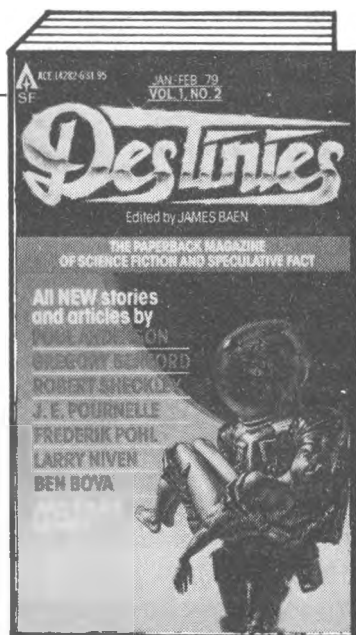
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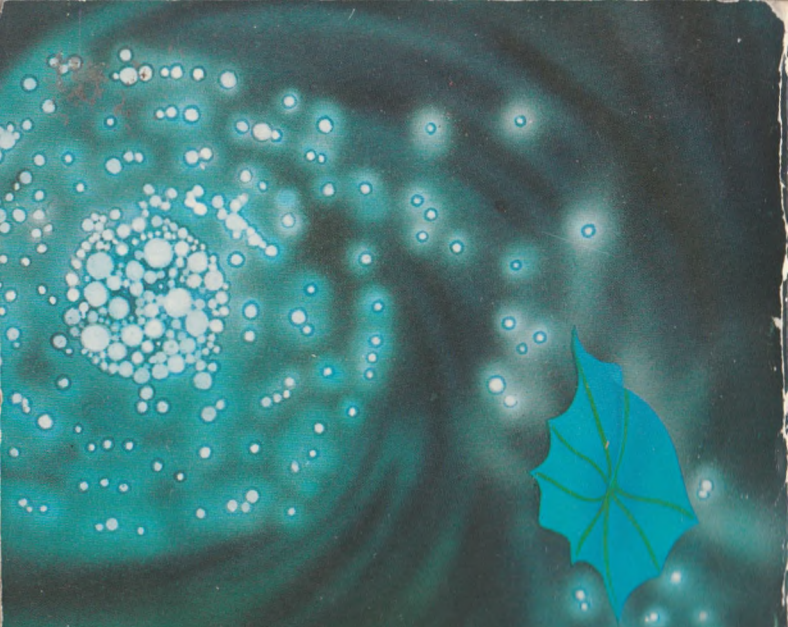
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